The Pre-Service Teachers' Reflection-on-Action during Distance Practicum: A Critical View on EBA TV English Courses

Öğretmen Adaylarının Uzaktan Staj Uygulamasında Eylem üzerine Yansıtmaları: EBA TV İngilizce Derslerine dair Eleştirel bir Bakış

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Abstract. This study touched upon a current issue; online education offered during the pandemic: Pre-service teachers' observations of the EBA lessons offered via online platform to the students were focused on. In that context, the pre-service teachers' reflections on the EBA TV English lessons in K12 were examined. To describe the offered online teaching process and reveal the good and problematic sides as well as to have the suggestions for better practices, the reflection-on-action approach was adopted and the participants' critical reflections were analyzed through the qualitative case study. The overall results indicated that the participants appreciated some of the practices in EBA lessons while they were mostly critical to material and activity choices. As for the overall evaluation, they were also emphasized the lack of interaction as the disadvantage of the online education, particularly for language learning. The suggestions to improve the teaching practices on this platform were explained.

Keywords: Reflection-on-action, qualitative case study, pre-service teachers, online education

Öz. Bu çalışmada pandemi süresince verilen uzaktan eğitim konusuna değinilmiştir: Öğretmen adaylarının, bu süreç boyunca EBA TV üzerinden verilen derslerde yaptıkları gözlemlere odaklanılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, öğretmen adaylarının ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise düzeylerinde verilen dersler üzerine yansıtmaları incelenmiştir. Uzaktan eğitim sürecini tanımlamak, iyi ve sorunlu yönlerini ortaya çıkarmak ve iyileştirmeye yönelik önerileri ortaya çıkarmak için, eylem üzerine yansıtma yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir ve katılımcıların eleştirel yansıtmaları nitel durum çalışması yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar katılımcıların, EBA derslerindeki bazı uygulamaları takdir ettiğini öte yandan material ve etkinlik seçimlerini eleştirdiklerini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, uzaktan eğitimde etkileşim eksikliğinin özellikle yabancı dil öğrenmde ciddi bir dezavantaj olduğunu vurgulamışlardır. Uygulamayı geliştirmeye yönelik önerileri sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eylem üzerine yansıtma, nitel durum çalışması, öğretmen adayları, uzaktan eğitim

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Introduction

With the rise of information technologies in every division in life, far-reaching and practical solutions to unexpected problems and crisis are easier to handle. Particularly in the field of education, as required both with the information age and students' updated needs, many different applications of information technologies have been used so far. However, till 2020 academic year, in which Covid-19 pandemic crisis broke out, the significance of information technologies and necessity of online and distance education to reach all individuals at once have not been so much appreciated (UNESCO, 2020).

All sections of education have been switched from face to face education to online education due to the pandemic. Almost all countries in the World have tried to find a solution to the education during the lockdown days (UNESCO, 2020). In that case, the countries decided to offer distance education to all educational levels from early education to higher education. Many education institutions all over the world have offered different online modules and courses to the students and online education has been approved as a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face education (Bao, 2020; Telli & Altun, 2020). Although these online implementations seem to happen due to the outbreak of health crisis, credibility and applicability of online education have been discussed and searched widely so far. Many studies indicated that online education is a feasible alternative to face-face education with the advantages to students such as flexibility, convenience and access to education (Bowers & Kumar; Nguyen, 2015; Raza, Khan & Rafi, 2020).

Considering the good practices of the online education (i.e Tømte, 2019) and in order to reduce the impact of the epidemic on education, the schools at all education levels have been closed since March, 2020 and online education has been offered to the students at different age groups. Online libraries, TV broadcasts, guidelines, resources, video lectures, online channels were introduced in at least 96 countries by different countries worldwide as various solutions during the pandemic to continue the education process.

To increase the coverage of the school lessons to the population, the Ministry of Education in Turkey also strengthened and flourished the infrastructure and content of Education Information Network (known as EBA Eğitim Bilgi Ağı –in Turkish), which was launched to deliver education online at all levels. Both teachers and students make use of it very well and while teachers may download their own contents for the courses, they may also use the contents downloaded by other teachers. Similarly, students using the system have a great chance of reaching a variety of contents they are interested in (MEB, 2020). EBA has been using TV and web opportunities to deliver the courses to students. The EBA TV has been providing courses for primary, secondary and high school students and the students are required to attend the online courses via TV. Teachers are also required to form and deliver online courses for their own students. By doing so, Education Information Network (EIN) which is developed by MEB (National Education Ministry) contributes very well for the issue to educators and students (MEB, 2020).

In addition to K-12 schools, the tertiary education has had online transformation with the regulations of Council of Higher Education. According to the report announced by the council, 90.1% of the theoretical university courses were delivered through online education. Moreover, 75 % of the universities in Turkey offered the practical courses as online courses (HEC, 2020).

For teaching practice or practicum courses which are the practical course for education faculties, teacher training programs, it was regulated to add an online theoretical component.

In practice, for the department of English Language Teaching Program, the senior students are normally required to attend, observe and teach full courses the number of which is determined by the mentors in order to graduate and get the diploma to be teachers of English in Turkey. Of the significance of practicum, it is defined as the 'major opportunity for the student teacher to acquire the practical skills and knowledge needed to function as an effective language teacher' (Richards & Crookes, 1988). During practicum, student teachers are encouraged to critically assess teaching strategies, how their own school, pre-service experiences may affect their classroom techniques and beliefs, and to take the wider social implications of classroom dynamics into account. Practicum is a kind of opportunity for them to put their theoretical knowledge into practice.

In 2019-2020 Spring term, the schools were determined, the students were assigned to the schools and everything began as usual until the pandemic hit and schools were closed for face to face education. Therefore, the pre-service teachers would miss the opportunity to go, observe and teach courses at schools. Considering the possible drawbacks of this disconnection with the actual teaching for the pre-service teachers, different tasks were given to the pre-service teachers of the training programs. Within the framework of this study, it was aimed to sustain the pre-service teachers' involvement with the teaching practices through online observations. Thus, the reflection-on-action approach was adopted, and the pre-service teachers were asked to watch the online courses on EBA TV and reflect upon it. It was believed that such observations of experienced teachers could contribute to their teaching practice repertoire. Although they were not in actual classrooms and they did not have any chance to observe the students' reactions and classroom atmosphere still they could evaluate the teaching process. To ensure the pre-service teachers' involvement in that process, they were asked to reflect upon the lessons they observed critically. Specifically, the class dynamics of the EBA lessons, teachers' manners, instructions, the activity types etc. were focused to cover all teaching-learning processes.

As Brooke (2012) underlined through the development of reflective practice, pre-service teachers can construct links between the attributes that describe quality teaching to form an increasingly complex mental schema. For Chant, Heafner and Bennett (2004), on the other hand, reflection is a difficult process, since it requires critical thought, self-direction, and problem solving coupled with personal knowledge and self-awareness. They believe that in order to help pre-service teachers develop into reflective practitioners, reflection is a skill that has to be delivered from the beginning of the learning-to-teach process so that student teachers can get the idea and develop themselves as practitioners. According to Black and Plowright (2010), reflection is defined as the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity to critically analyze and evaluate that learning or practice (p. 246). In that sense, the pre-service teachers could develop professional knowledge, understanding and practice. Melville, Bowen and Passmore (2011) supported this idea that reflection provides to build student teachers who were better able to absorb course content, and to link this to their own personal experience as well as their classroom practice. Furthermore, through reflections, pre-service teachers are supposed to be aware of themselves and get an idea what they have learnt in theory and what they observe in classroom situations (Cochran-Smith, Lytle, Lieberman & Miller 2001). Lee (2007) also indicated the effect of reflection on their self-awareness that pre-service teachers become more aware of themselves as prospective teachers

and of the pedagogical context that influences directly on teaching and learning. Yalçın Arslan (2019) expanded the reflection studies as a longitudinal case study and observed how the pre-service teachers' reflection progressed from outer factors such as environment, behavior to more inner concerns such as mission, being teachers. So, reflections could open windows for pre-service teachers' reconstruction of the teaching profession as a mission.

Considering the cognitive and pedagogical contributions of reflection during teacher education, many teacher education programmes have identified reflective practice in teaching as a performance competency for teachers and a kind of accreditation standard for teacher education programmes (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013). In Turkey, Council of Higher Education and Ministry of Education revisited the teaching programs to enhance the reflection triggering components. As the increase of proportion of teaching practice and identifying the teacher competencies that reinforces critical reflection during teaching practice are some of the steps to widespread the reflective thinking and teaching (Eğmir, 2019).

The configurations of the teaching programmes on the basis of reflective thinking and teaching are grounded in mostly Dewey's (1933) argument that teaching experience is required as a catalyst for reflective thinking, which necessitates identifying problems or issues for possible explanations that can be embedded in future teaching practices. As Schön (1987) re-phrased Dewey's model and included reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, locating reflective thinking at a time (i.e., either while teaching or after teaching), the role of reflection for pre-service teachers' professional development has been emphasized more. While 'Reflection in action' relates thinking and doing; the teacher develops on-the-spot strategies to improve or adjust previous experiences during teaching. 'Reflection on action', on the other hand, is viewed as teachers' thoughtful considerations and analysis of teaching in order to achieve knowledge from the experiences.

Adapting the reflection framework of Schön (1987), the reflection process of teachers (Marcos, Miguel & Tillema, 2009) and pre-service teachers (i.e. Yalçın Arslan, 2019) have been studied and it was agreed that reflection-on-action yields both cognitive and metacognitive changes which trigger professional improvements. While most of the studies were designed as action research and the participants mostly reflected upon their own practices, Salajan and Duffield (2019) studied the pre-service teachers' reflection-on-action of others. The results also revealed how the reflection, when observing on others' practices, could contribute the professional development of pre-service teachers. Additionally, reflections are regarded as significant in adult learning (Stevens, Gerber, Hendra, 2010). Reflecting, when integrated with education or training, enhances the relevance of practice and understanding for the learners. Along the same lines, it was suggested that thanks to reflective practices, the learners can apply the knowledge outside the training context by establishing links between theoretical knowledge and practice (Stevens, et al., 2020). Although the literature offers a new research perspective on reflection-on-action studies (Salajan & Duffield, 2019), pre-service teachers' reflection upon the experienced teachers' actions has not been searched yet.

Addressing this gap and re-conceptualizing Schön's (1987) reflection framework, this study was designed to examine the pre-service teachers' reflections on the action of experienced teachers teaching English through broadcasting; the EBA TV. Through this study, it was aimed to reveal the pre-service teachers' reflective practice through distance practicum on the basis of the argument that reflection triggers the construction and reconstruction of experience either through observing and practicing the actual learning-teaching processes and generates professional

knowledge. Although pre-service teachers were away from the actual classrooms, they could observe the teachers' teaching styles and evaluate the observed teaching practice reasoning their own teaching beliefs, experience. Through the qualitative analysis of the critical reflections on the EBA lessons, the following research questions were addressed;

1. How do the pre-service teachers reflect upon the English lessons on the EBA TV in terms of good and problematic teaching practices?

2. What are their overall evaluation about the English lessons on the EBA TV

3. What are the pre-service teachers' suggestions on the English lessons on the EBA TV?

Method

Research Design

This study is designed as a qualitative research adopting a single case study approach. A qualitative research is a way for understanding and exploring the meaning that a person or a group of people ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007). Within this qualitative approach, the case study design is used to provide an in-depth description of the process reflective practice experience during practicum. A case study is a deep exploration and analysis of a single unit or bounded system in which the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries (Creswell, 2005). Case study is a qualitative research design which deals with a current topic in its real life framework (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Also, a case study is mostly used to focus on a programme, event, or activity involving individuals and "they may be more interested in describing activities of the group instead of identifying shared patterns of behavior exhibited by the group" (Creswell, 2005, p. 439). It is beneficial, especially in the first stages as it presents a thorough description of the experience of the participants to identify categories and themes to describe the case and introduce contemporary issues for future studies.

Considering all, qualitative case study design is the most suitable research design to reach rich description and explanation of the reflective practice experience of the pre-service teacher through the distance practicum in this study. Thus, this study was designed as a single case study to explore a group of pre-service EFL teachers' reflections on action of teaching practices broadcasted on TV during the lockdown in detail and figure out group members' reflections.

Participants

The participants of the study were selected via purposeful sampling through which individuals are identified and selected that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). Thirty-two senior students of ELT Department were included in the study. They were the fourth year students who were to attend the practicum as compulsory for their graduation.

As the requirement of English Language Teaching program, as in other teacher training programs, they completed the School Observation at the state school, at which they did micro

teaching for 10 weeks for the fall term and then they were assigned to the different state schools for Teaching Practice/Practicum course, during which they did macro teaching at the actual classroom. Till the outbreak of the pandemic, they completed macro teaching for 5 weeks during which they taught 40-minute-lessons under supervision of a mentor teacher. During this process, they prepared lesson plans and wrote reflection diaries after their teaching and they received feedback from two supervisors, academics at their departments.

As a result of lockdown due to the pandemic, they had to quit their face-to-face macro teaching. With the regulations launched by Council of Higher Education in April about sustaining the practicum at least with a theoretical component through the distance/online education, the participants were assigned to continue their observations of English lessons delivered on the EBA TV. In this way, it was aimed to continue the participant pre-service teachers' involvement to the actual teaching implementations. They had a chance to observe the actual teaching environment that all students and teachers faced and experienced those days. To help the participant pre-service teachers nourish their teaching experience so far and to make them discern that they might teach such online courses in the future, they were asked to write reflections.

Data Collection Tool

As the data collection instruments, the reflections written by the participants weekly after observing the English lessons on the EBA TV were collected. 32 participants wrote reflections on different lessons for different education levels, that is primary, secondary and high school levels each week, during five weeks. Totally, 160 reflections written by the participants were analyzed for the study. Out of 160 reflections, 103 reflections were on the lessons for the primary level students (2nd, 3rd and 4th year), 32 reflections on the secondary level (6th and 7th year) and 25 (9th, 10th and 11th years) were on the high school education level.

The guideline for reflection writing was given to the participants to help them apply the reflection on action approach. As Schön (1983) defined reflection-on-action as reflecting on how practice can be developed, changed or improved after the event has occurred. In line with Schön's (1987) steps of reflection on action, the participants were guided firstly to define and describe the situation, teaching practice, they watched, then the participants were asked to think about whether the situation was a positive experience or not, and to write down what made the situation effective or not. If the student was not happy with the experience, note what action was taken and then what action s/he would have preferred to have done. Lastly, the student covered up the whole situation, referring to the key points from the reflection-on-action and they were to suggest what they do differently.

Data Analysis

In this study, reflective journals were read and analyzed using open coding procedure to categorize the recurrent themes that appeared in the reflections (Saldaña, 2009). The qualitative analysis of the reflective journals was conducted through the emerging themes. Through this procedure, the themes that corresponding to the aim of the study and revealing the participants' critical reflections on the good practices and problems of the observed lessons were described.

During data analysis, the researchers deeply read the reflective journals and deeply explored and analyzed their content employing several extensive steps. Firstly, the reflections were categorized into three parts as best practices, the observed problems and suggestions as addressing the research questions. Then, the emerging themes in each part of the reflections were identified. Similar and interrelated ideas or concepts are highlighted. Lastly, the themes under the three generic categories were organized.

For the trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis procedure, independent coding process was applied by the researchers and the emerged themes and findings were compared after each phase. After negotiations, the coding was continued till reaching the consensus. Two researchers evaluated an entire set of the data separately, and any discrepancies were discussed until they reached agreement. The initial inter-rater agreement was 81.8 %.

Results

The results are presented in accordance with research questions. First, the participants' reflections about the teaching practice in EBA lessons in terms of good and problematic practices are stated. Then, the pre-service EFL teachers' evaluations of the mentioned classes are given. Finally, their suggestions for improving these lessons are demonstrated. The analysis revealed that the themes mentioned below were common across different grade levels. In other words, pre-service teachers observing EBA courses on different grade levels wrote similar remarks about the lessons.

Good Teaching Practices in EBA lessons

In this part, the participants' observations regarding the best practices were presented. Use of body language was the most frequently occurring theme. The participants provided details about the way the observed teacher utilized body language to facilitate the understanding of the students and to enhance lesson procedures. Most of the pre-service teachers indicated that seeing the teacher use the body language effectively was their favorite part of the lesson.

> In my opinion the best thing is that the teacher acts as if students were there as in a face-to-face class. He greets the students, asks several personal questions to draw attention, makes repetition, and praises the students. I think he is energetic (P7, 4th grade)

> I think the teacher was enthusiastic and her body-language was effective. She was cheerful, which was important for me (P15, 3rd grade).

Since the classes were conducted through distance education tools, the participants regarded using body language important. They believed that effective utilization of body language was a factor in determining student engagement and motivation. Another common theme for the best practices was employing realia in the lessons. The pre-service teachers thought that using realia during distance education was motivating and attractive for the students.

> As I mentioned above, the topic was weather, and the teacher was well- prepared for the lesson. She greeted the students with a big smiling face and asked them how they feel. She was wearing a raincoat and holding an umbrella and there was a rain sound in the background. There was a context of the lesson and I liked it. She demonstrated her clothes and objects and said that she wasn't happy because of the rain. With the help of the

context, students had a chance to elicit the topic and make connections at the beginning of the lesson (P3, 3rd grade)

The participants believed that using realia could be helpful for creating a context for the lesson, which in turn supports student engagement and involvement. The participants also mentioned realia use would help teachers to create a link between the previous knowledge and the new topic. By starting with something already familiar to the students, the teachers could attract the students' attention to the lesson, as observed by pre-service teachers. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the most frequently mentioned themes were use of body language and realia for best practices. In addition, they appreciated the varieties of the activities offered in the lessons and they evaluated that the activities mostly covered the topic of the lesson. Although they criticized the activities as being mostly mechanical, they reported that including many activities (more than three) was a good way to reinforce the students.
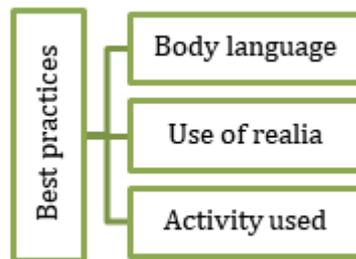

Figure 1. Overview of the themes for "best practices" category

The Observed Problems in EBA lessons

The study also investigated the problematic aspects of EBA lessons, as observed by pre-service EFL teachers. For this category the participants provided five main themes: materials, activities, pronunciation, complex language use and duration of the lesson. The most recurring themes for this category are materials and activities. The pre-service teachers reported several problems with material and activity selection. The participants believed that the materials could have been more colorful and engaging for the students. Others pointed out that the activities were not varied and appropriate to the learners' level.

As for the activities, he does not give a purpose to the students to do the activities. There are matching and sentence completion activities. Students are to match the words with pictures and complete a short sentence with one of two options according to the given pictures. So, activities are not diverse and challenging (P7, 4th grade).

She could have talked about the activities that are done in different weather conditions. (For example, I eat ice-cream in hot days or I make a snowman in snowy day etc.). Also, I didn't like her activities apart from weather –wheel activity. There was a listen and circle activity (there was a song related to topic, students listen to the song and circle the pictures that were mentioned in the song). This activity wasn't sufficient for practicing the target structure and checking their comprehension. Maybe, it would be more beneficial for students if this one hadn't been the first activity. Because students even weren't sure about the writing of them and they passed to the listening activity quickly after the presentation part (P15, 3rd grade).

> There could be a song in the beginning of the lesson which could provide a root for whole lesson and would accelerate the process not only for students but also for teacher. A song could make them familiar with the target words (animals, actions, animals' sounds) easier (P12, 2nd grade).

> The song was bad. There could be a more natural and meaningful song in the lesson. The tune was so high that the lyrics were not listened clearly (P5, 3rd grade).

The pre-service teachers observed that the materials and the activities could be redesigned in accordance with the topic of the lesson and the student profile. Additionally, they also stated that the pronunciation of the observed teacher was problematic. They believed that the teacher may have caused difficulties for the students due to pronunciation mistakes s/he had made.

> I think they feel confused for that and pronunciation of "answer" was wrong in my opinion. Teacher said insistently "enswır" instead of "ensır" which is wrong, I think (P9, 4th grade).

> The worst part was the crucial pronunciation mistakes T made. For example, T asked ''Do you have a parrot?'', but it sounded like ''Do you have a parent?''. At first, I didn't understand why she asked this question, what was the relevance and so on, but then she showed a picture of parrots so that I understand at some point (P14, 2nd grade).

> I liked this particular lesson but if I had to name one bad thing, I would criticize the teacher's pronunciation and her choice of words from time to time. Although I understand some of the mistakes she made, since intonation is a matter of huge importance while teaching to young learners, she did her best to emphasize the words as well as she could. But I believe that was her downfall. While trying so hard to emphasize, she did some crucial pronunciation mistakes which could lead to fossilization in the future (P19, 3rd grade).

The pre-service teachers deemed teacher input to be significant for learners and believed that the mistakes in pronunciation could hinder the learning process and lead to fossilization. The significance of teacher input becomes more evident considering the language learning context in Turkey. In foreign language context (EFL), the learners have limited access to regular and authentic language input, and this is provided by the teachers in most of the time (Ellis, 2008).

Another point raised by the participants was the complex language use of teachers. Similar to the previous theme, teachers' complex language use may also hinder the learning process. This was reported as one of the problematic aspects of the observed lessons. Teachers' use of advanced language items and structures could be demotivating and discouraging for the students, as underlined by the pre-service teachers.

> The teacher made some grammar mistakes and she formed complex sentences (P3,2nd grade).

> I noticed some of the words she used was kind of over their level. For example, she said "options". Students may get lost easily, when they don't understand what is going on especially when they are young learners like 2th grade students (P4, 2nd grade).

In addition, the duration of the classes was also problematic for the pre-service teachers. They believed that 20 minutes is not enough to cover the lesson topic and complete all the tasks in the lesson.

> There is no doubt that teacher gave her best while teaching. However, the lesson duration was so short, 19 minutes. Maybe it is because it was a lesson for TV. I don't really think that 2nd grade students can fully comprehend what is thought in 19 minutes. I think the duration should be 30 minutes at least (P18, 2nd grade).

The pre-service teachers suggested that the duration of the lessons should be increased to have better and more fruitful classes. An overview of the common problems can also be seen in Figure 2 below.
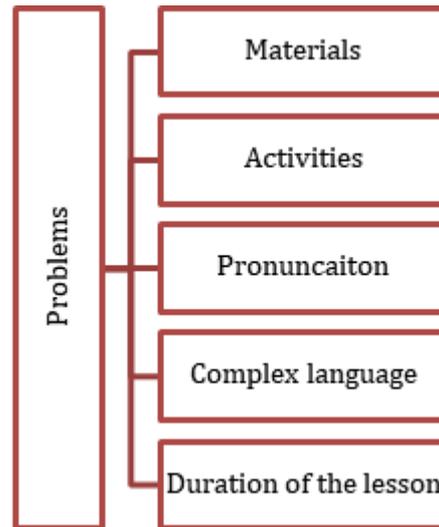

Figure 2. An overview of the common problems

The Critical Evaluation of EBA Lessons

Another focus of the study was to investigate the pre-service teachers' critical evaluations of EBA classes. Related to this category, there were 4 main themes, which can be seen in Figure 3 below.
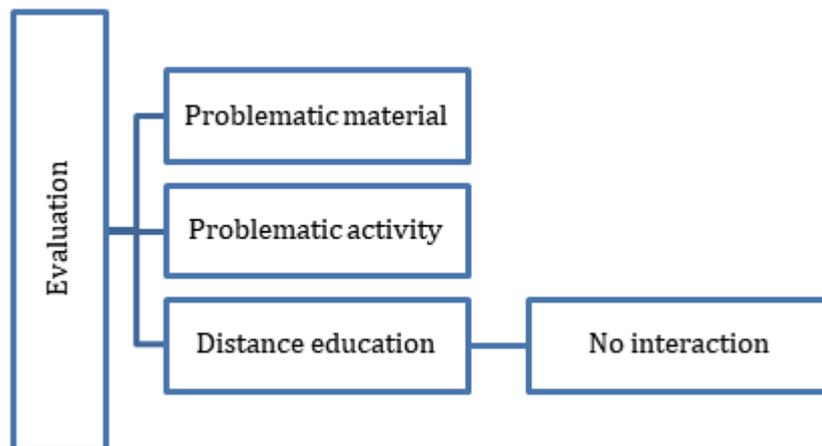

Figure 3. Overview of the themes for "evaluation" category

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Related to the previous category, again the participants commented on material and activity selection in the observed classrooms. They believed that the materials and/or the activities should be in line with the studied language skill, or topic. The participants offered some solutions along with the observed activity types. While they believed there should be variety in the learning environment, they also stated that the ordering of the employed materials and/or activities should be reorganized.

> Students practice listening and speaking but reading and writing parts are a bit insufficient. There could be more comprehensible tasks including different steps. Students may listen the name of the animal then repeat the words they hear. In the next step, they could read a sentence including the name of the animal with an action, then they could create their own sentences. By this way 4 skills would be used appropriately. In addition to it, as they know some words like "ship" from the previous classes (transportation) they could make a short minimal pairs task in writing session (P4, 2nd grade).

> The lesson lasted 20 minutes and presentation part was only about 5 minutes.5 minutes presentation wasn't sufficient for the learners since this was a vocabulary lesson and the structures were new for the learners. She did repetition drills most of the time but learners needed to see how these structures were written. As I mentioned above, they passed to the listening part right after the presentation part and this was very hard to do for them. For instance, 'sunny' were mentioned in the song but they didn't know how the 'sunny' word is written and which picture to match with. That's why teacher should have provided more restricted practice for them and passed freer practice after it. If the teacher had written them on the board and stick the pictures or flashcards of them could be more easy and beneficial for the learners to pass the listening activity (P9, 4th grade).

> Lesson was mediocre in my opinion because it felt like a revision lesson. There was no teaching but only focus on activities but activities were not that appetizing for students, not vivid enough. Their level was a bit low but it included some listening texts which was pretty good for them to get some exposition. More of that should be used in lessons in my opinion (P2, 4th grade).

The pre-service teachers indicated that the materials should be more appealing and interesting for the learners as well as educational. They believed that using appropriate materials/activities to teach English was of great significance. While selecting activities/ materials, the level, age, interests, and preferences of the learners should be taken into consideration. Additionally, the participants reported some challenges linked to online education. As can be imagined, this was the first time that the schools utilized such a large scale distance education program for all ages. For this reason, the pre-service EFL teachers indicated their evaluation about this issue.

> The challenging thing for the students is that once again, they are watching this on their TV and I bet, in their room, there are many things that could be distracting for them. It can be really challenging (P17,2nd grade).

> Another negativity is that the students are not able to respond immediately to the questions asked and receive feedback since the course is applied in distance education (P1, 2nd grade).

> In my opinion, an online lesson is challenging for the teacher since there is no real communication with the students. As teacher cannot ask concept checking questions for the vocabulary items, he cannot see whether students comprehend the target topic or not. Teacher cannot focus on the errors or mistakes by the students. So teacher accepts that all the students recognize the topic and fulfill the tasks successfully and continue to teaching, which creates gaps between the topic and students at the end. Teaching English has already been challenging in real classes, so it is inevitable that online lessons are challenging for both students and teachers (P5, 4th grade).

The observed challenges stem from one-way lecture type of class conduct. The participants observed that the teachers and the students should be familiar with this type of education so that is more effective. Since the classes were conducted through distance education, the learners might have experienced motivation and attention problems. Since the mentioned tool (TV) was

not used for educational purposes, the learners may feel an urge to get busy with other programs. The learners may be easily distracted due to distance education. Along the same lines, the participants observed that due to lack of interaction between the teacher and the learners, the courses were not sufficient.

> The challenge for students is that since there is no interaction between students and teacher, students may be bored and may not focus enough (P17, 10th grade).

> The most challenging thing is, of course, being an online lesson. They would not take feedback. (P3, 3rd grade)

The findings shed a light on the fact that due to lack of interaction, it may be difficult for teachers to manage the lesson and motivate the learners. The pre-service teachers emphasized that another downfall of this is lack of teacher feedback. The students may be learning something wrong, but since there is no interaction between them (in the traditional sense), the students may practice the language point wrong. Without teacher feedback, it becomes more challenging for learners to fulfill the learning goals, as observed by the participants of this study.

How to improve EBA lessons: Suggestions

The last research question of the study focused on pre-service EFL teachers' suggestions for improving EBA classes. The participants were asked to indicate what they would do if they were the teachers of the observed classroom. As mentioned earlier, the most problematic aspect of the observed classes was found to be material and activity selection. For this reason, the suggestions indicated changing the materials and activities. The participants offered alternatives and indicated their versions of the lesson. An overview of the themes for this category can be seen in Figure 4 below.
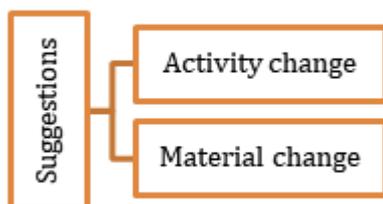

Figure 4. Overview of the themes for "suggestions" category

> I would firstly write a lesson plan with stages and include visuals. I would subtract every exercise in the lesson and prepare better looking activities/tasks that could take students' attention. We have the most useful materials ever made; smartboard. It's always good to use it efficiently, not showing the things written on book on the smartboard. (P8, 9th grade).

> I would absolutely prepare different questions. The first 3 questions might be easier and to the point questions. Then, I would prefer dialogue questions with visuals. I would start the lesson with a small memory about my

holiday. I would make role-play for every word because most of the students might forget the words since last-week. In the end of the lesson, I would revise the words by doing role-play and want students to role play such as 'let's swim' 'let's ski with me'. Additionally, I would use the synonyms like the teacher of the lesson, it was really needed for some words in the lesson (P4, 6th grade).

If I taught this lesson online, first of all, I would prepare a warm up and lead in stages for it. Showing a video or telling a story about one of the invitation or celebration parties would be a good start. Next, I would shortly explain the different types of parties and their reasons to students quickly and then I would start to do activities. Although lesson contained different visuals for different parties, I think it wasn't enough. So, I would add more pictures associated with different parties and invitations. The activities were mostly enough for the first introduction of the topic but I would definitely change the true-false activity. Instead of asking three parties and their details, I would prepare one detailed different party other than three parties for only true-false activity, and use this one detailed party solely for this true-false task. For the last part of the lesson, I wouldn't use multiple choice questions. Instead, I would do a sentence ordering activity for students. This activity would include the parts of the invitation letters such as greeting, purpose, details, and ending. Then, because with the help of this activity they would be familiar with how to write invitation letters, I would want from students to write an invitation letter about their desired type of party for a homework (P25, 9th grade).

While some of the participants provided outlines for the whole lesson, some of them stated few changes for specific activities and materials. The pre-service teachers focused on different skills such as vocabulary teaching, or they suggested that the activities would be more appropriate for the proficiency level of the students. Although complex language and pronunciation were stated as problematic, the majority of the participants chose to focus on materials and activities by devising mini lesson plans.

Overall, the results of the study provided important aspects for materials and activities in the observed EBA classes. Accordingly, while the participants were content with the use of body language and realia in the lessons, they reported material and activity selection as problematic. Additionally, the pre-service EFL teachers believed that the duration of lessons was not satisfactory and was limited in terms achieving the aims of the class. Moreover, the pre-service teachers believed that the teachers used complex language during the lesson, and this made it difficult for learners. They indicated that the teachers employed advanced grammar structures or vocabulary items throughout the class, and they thought that this might hinder the learning process. Along the same lines, the participants were asked to evaluate the observed lesson in terms of appropriateness, challenges, and facilitation. Once again, the results revealed that the materials and the activities were not satisfactory. In addition to complex language use, the pre-service EFL teachers evaluated the distance education context. They regarded this context to be somewhat problematic due to lack of direct interaction between the teacher and the learners. The pre-service teachers also believed that the learners could be easily distracted since the classes were on TV. In comparison, the study also focused on the participants' suggestions to overcome the observed difficulties. The majority of the pre-service EFL teachers offered solutions with regard to activities and materials utilized in the classroom. They provided details about the procedures of activities and recommended integrating technology and more colorful material to teach English through distance education.

The outline of the all themes identified within the scope of this study can be seen in Figure 5 below.
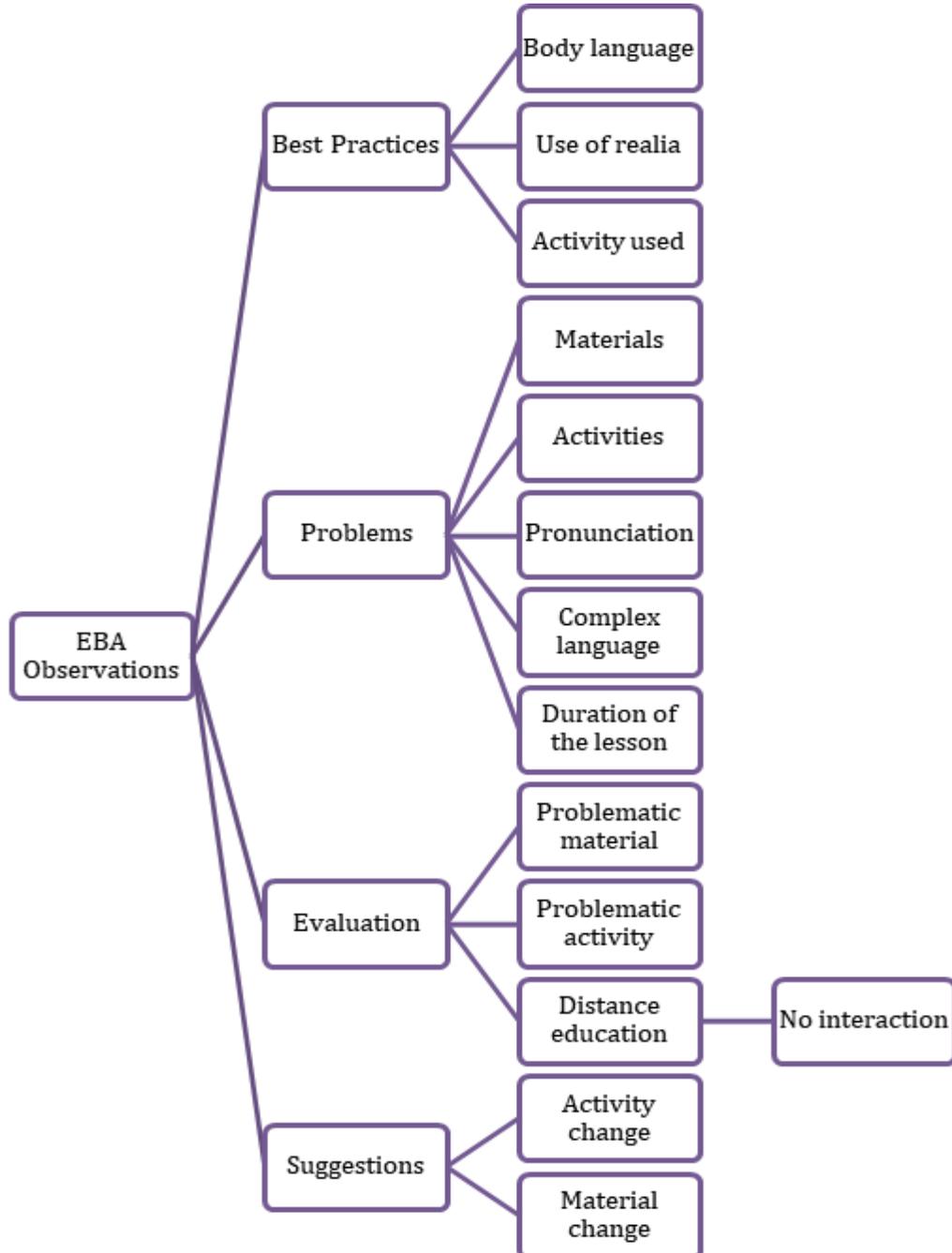

Figure 5. Overview of the all themes of the study

Discussion and Conclusion

This study touched upon a current issue; online-distance education, which was emergent remote teaching, offered during the pandemic. As a requirement of the distance teaching practice/practicum, the pre-service teachers' observations of the EBA lessons offered via broadcasting platform to the students were focused on. In that context, the pre-service teachers' reflections on the EBA TV English lessons for different levels were examined. To describe the online teaching process and reveal the good and problematic sides as well as to have the suggestions for better practices, the reflection-on-action approach was adopted and the participants' critical reflections were analyzed.

The overall results indicated that the participants appreciated some of the practices in EBA lessons while they were mostly critical to material and activity choices. As for the overall evaluation, they were also emphasized the lack of interaction as disadvantage of the distance education, particularly for language learning. The participants' reflections mostly comply with the similar studies on the distance education, which highlighted the significance of material and task used in online education and suggested different solutions to compensate the lack of interaction (i.e. Park, 2003; Hockly, 2015).

Regarding the good practices in EBA lessons, the participants' reflection revealed that they were aware of the constraints of the distance education and they evaluate the practices from the students' perspectives. Thus, they appreciated the three important components, teachers' body language, realia as material use and activities, which are the three basics of an effective lessons to involve students. About the problematic areas to improve in EBA lessons; the participants criticized the materials, activities, pronunciation, complex language use and duration of the lesson. Again, the main themes emerged in the analysis of reflection indicated that the participants mostly focused on the basic dynamics of the lesson. When their reflections were examined, the participants supported their critics on the observed problems either with theoretical background or their teaching experience. The results about the pre-service teachers' reflection on the good and bad practices of EBA lessons showed that they reflected on the lessons through teachers' lenses, their reflections are mostly professional considering the learning-teaching process and students' needs. As Lee (2007) stated reflection writing triggers critical thinking of pre-service teachers since it helps them think about different aspects of teaching in light of personal and contextual factors and revisit their understanding through a process of discovery (Lee, 2007), thus, the participants in this study could analyze the EBA lessons with a critical eye. They tended to diagnose problems and tried to provide relevant solutions by their reflection. Their reflections tended to be more critical than descriptive.

The reflections while appreciating and criticizing the practices in EBA lessons also indicated that the participant pre-service teachers tend to filter their observations through their beliefs and past experience and reflect upon the lesson accordingly. This result complies with Salajan and Duffield's (2019) comprehensive study on the reflection-on-the-action of others, which was found to elicit pre-service teachers' particular cognitive functions and affective states in recalling, reanalyzing, reconstructing and internalizing past observational experiences.

As the findings related to the pre-service teachers' suggestions about the EBA lessons indicated the pre-service teachers suggested the solutions considering their strengths and capacities. They mostly wrote "*If I were…*". Such a vision could be interpreted as the contribution of reflections. As they reflected upon the lessons, they gained insights and developed a kind of awareness and

empathy. Yalçın Arslan (2019) explained this process that the pre-service teachers recognize their strengths and weaknesses in order that they might improve themselves during the reflection period. Moreover, if EFL preservice teachers are required to systematically reflect on their teaching and teaching contexts, they are better able to reconstruct their existing knowledge and possibly transmit this knowledge to their actual teaching. Moreover, the participants' suggestions were supported mostly by their fresh theoretical knowledge that they learned from methodological courses. Through reflections, they could set on their theoretical knowledge and suggest practical solutions. This finding could be explained referring to Lee's results (2004) on how effective reflection writing for teacher preparation. As it was revealed in that study that reflection writing puts student teachers at the center of the learning process and enriches them to construct knowledge of practice based on their own beliefs, ideas, courses they have received and experiences. The effect of the theoretical courses they got during their teacher training were also evident with outnumber of the reflections on the lessons for primary educations. They mostly preferred to watch and reflect upon the primary school lessons and they were more critical about the practices they observed in these lessons. In their explanations, they mostly referred to the applications and theories of Teaching English to Young Learners course. This course was offered as both a theoretical and a practical course in the 3rd year of the department. Different from other methodological courses they got, this course provided more practical examples and they did many demo lessons. Thus, they had high expectations from the lessons for young learners and they criticized these lessons on the EBA TV more.

The problems that the participants emphasized and suggestions they offered indicated that the distance education offered to the students via EBA TV, this platform needs more improvements in terms of material, activity and some technical issues. Within a very limited time and in the case of unexpected crisis due to the outbreak of the pandemic, the Ministry of Education did a really good job and offered an effective online platform, EBA TV, to reach each student all over the country. As the results also indicated there are many good points to be appreciated in the EBA lessons. However, the issues to be improved should be also set forth and discussed so that the implementations can bring to perfection and our country could be more ready for the further situations.

It is widely agreed in the literature that the future is online-distance education (Nguyen, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). Although there are some examples of implementing online education, they were mostly limited to small cases and institutions. With Covid-19 pandemic the world has learned that we are not ready for the online education. Many countries are not ready for the complete implementation of the country wide online education (Sintema, 2020). Our country handled this crisis in education relatively well and they are upgrading the EBA implementations. This study could contribute to the upgrading process by providing the critical views and suggestions of pre-service teachers, who are the future teachers and who are more enthusiastic and equipped with fresh theory and practice.

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