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A Qualitative Study into English Language Teachers' and Students' Beliefs and Practices in Turkey

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Abstract: This study aims to understand the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about effective ways of learning English and elucidate whether teachers' and students' beliefs are congruent with their self-reported practices in Turkey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to 5 teachers of English and 6 of their students and qualitative analysis of the interview protocols revealed consistency between their beliefs about effective ways of learning English. On the other hand, teachers and students were in agreement about the disconnection between their beliefs and practices. Although they believe that English should be learned communicatively, they claimed that their current practices solely focus on structural and lexical units of English. Different factors were discussed leading to this mismatch such as the content of university examination, course books, the status of English, overloaded syllabus, etc. and the disconnection between beliefs and practices is reported to be a factor hindering the satisfaction gained from current teaching and learning procedures.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, Learners' beliefs, English language teaching in Turkey, Beliefs and practices

Introduction and Background

Beliefs are foci points of research studies aiming to understand individual's intentions for particular points because beliefs are propositions which are held consciously or unconsciously and accepted as true by individuals (Borg, 2001). In this vein, investigating beliefs provide a deep insight into individual's inner world. This is also emphasized by Hancock and Gallard (2004) highlighting the role of beliefs as guiding individual's intentions for action.

This function of beliefs determined the scope of studies in the field of education where teachers' and students' beliefs are investigated with the aim of understanding individuals' thoughts and behaviours. In this respect, Shavelson and Stern (1981) asserted that what teachers do is governed by their thoughts and teachers' decision making are determined by their theories and beliefs. In this context, regarding the characteristics of any teaching procedure being comprised of various decision-making processes, investigating teachers' beliefs are significant to understand the reasons behind providing a particular teaching environment.

In this vein, Calderhead (1996) proposed five main areas that teachers hold particular belief as *beliefs about learners and learning, beliefs about teaching, beliefs about subject, beliefs about learning to teach, and beliefs about self and the teaching role*. Concerning these five main areas, teachers' belief system is comprised of their conceptualisations about different issues such as the characteristics of learners, effective learning and teaching processes, field of study, teaching experience, self-efficacy and characteristics of good language teacher.

Apart from teacher's beliefs, understanding learner's beliefs is also important for profiling the effectiveness of a classroom environment since "learners have their own agendas in the language lessons they attend" (Nunan, 1989: 176). In other words, learners bring particular beliefs into classroom and they contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning environment. Richards and Lockhart (1994, cited in Maiklad, 2001:86) identify nine different areas in the belief systems of English language learners:

- Beliefs about the nature of English: the significance and difficult aspects of the language
- Beliefs about speakers of English: their attitudes towards native speakers of the language
- Beliefs about the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Beliefs about teaching: effective and ineffective teaching methods
- Beliefs about language learning: ways to learn a language, and useful activities and approaches

- Beliefs about appropriate classroom behaviour: appropriate forms of classroom interactions and behaviours
- Beliefs about self: their own abilities to learn a language
- Beliefs about goals: their goals of language learning

These areas show that learners hold beliefs about different issues related to classroom environment. These beliefs play important roles in determining the effectiveness of classroom environment where the congruency between learners' and their teachers' beliefs affects the quality of teaching procedure because it might not be probable to expect learners to be motivated in a learning process which mismatches their beliefs. In this respect, Richards (1998) highlights that learners' and teachers' beliefs might be different and this causes misconceptions about teaching in various areas. In similar vein, Bada and Okan (2000, cited in Maiklad, 2001) revealed that learners tend to be more motivated to methods or activities that are congruent with their beliefs.

Considering this function of the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs, different studies were carried out with the aim of understanding the congruency between beliefs hold by students and their teachers. For example, Nunan (1989) found mismatches between learners' and teachers' views about important issues of learning process. While teachers value communicative activities, learners place greater value on traditional activities. In the same vein, Spratt (1999) revealed that only 54% of activities carried out in their teaching procedures are favoured by learners in a Hong Kong university. On the other hand, Kern (1995) elucidated positive and negative relationships between learners' and instructor's beliefs in his study including students enrolled in French lessons at a university in the USA. The quantitative analysis of the data revealed that both students and instructors are optimistic about the language learning process. On the other hand, mismatches were found about issues concerning pronunciation, error correction and the importance of rule learning.

The results of previous studies illustrate the possibility of connection and disconnection between teachers and students' beliefs. However, Richard and Lockhart (1996) emphasized the role of social and institutional contexts on teachers' beliefs. This is also important for students' beliefs because there is a strong consensus about the context-specific nature of beliefs (Brown & Cooney, 1982; Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, it is not useful to generalise the findings of beliefs studies to other social and cultural contexts.

Although different studies were devoted to understanding the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs in different contexts, no study has been carried out in Turkey within this scope. In this respect, this study is the first type of its form focusing on the relationship between beliefs hold by students

and their teachers of a secondary state school in Turkey. In doing so, this study attempts to understand students' and teachers' beliefs about effective ways of learning English and their current classroom practices and aims at elucidating whether there is a congruency between their beliefs and practices. Considering Calderhead's (1996) and Richards and Lockhart's (1994) proposals about areas that teachers and students hold beliefs, this study addresses teachers' beliefs about subject, learning/teaching and students' beliefs about four language skills, language learning and goals. The nature of these beliefs seems comparable and interrelated. For instance, teachers' beliefs about subject might address students' beliefs about four language skills and students' beliefs about language learning and goals might be related to teachers' beliefs about teaching. In this vein, the current study seeks for elucidating teachers' and students' beliefs about ways of learning English efficiently, the effectiveness of their current English teaching/learning practices and factors determining their teaching/learning procedures.

The Context

In Turkish educational system, there are four types of schoolings as pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education. Primary education is compulsory and it encompasses two levels as first (5 years) and second phases (3 years). After completing primary education, students are enrolled in secondary education considering their scores in Secondary School Placement (SBS) test.

Secondary education is provided at different types of schools such as Anatolian High Schools, Anatolian Teacher Training High Schools, Science High School etc. This level of education is also comprised of two phases as: common (1 year) and division-based education (3 years). In common phase, students take common courses such as Turkish Literature, Mathematics, Physics, History, English etc. After completing this grade, students select their fields of studies and they take intensive division-based courses. There are four main types of divisions as Science, Social Science, Turkish-Mathematics and Foreign language. This selection is of critical importance because students can only select departments of universities according to their divisions of graduation. In this context, it is not possible for students to be enrolled in foreign language departments unless they are graduated from language divisions at secondary education.

In Turkey, English teaching starts at 4th grade of primary education when students are at the age of 10. During primary education, students take 3 hours of English classes at 4th and 5th grades and 4 hours at 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The intensiveness of English classes differs according to the type of school in secondary education. Considering the population of the study, students studying at Anatolian High

Schools take English classes 10 hours per week in 9th grade and in language divisions, 12 hours of English classes are provided in the division-based phase of secondary education.

After completing the secondary education, students graduated from language divisions take two university examinations as Student Selection Examination (ÖSS) and Foreign Language Test (YDS). These examinations are administered centrally by Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM). ÖSS encompasses various tests concerning students' knowledge in different disciplines such as Turkish, Mathematics, History, Geography, Philosophy. On the other hand, YDS deals with students' competencies in English by 80 multiple-choice type of questions.

The content of YDS seems ineffective in terms of representing the communicative perspective of curriculum designers in Turkey because according to the regulation of foreign language teaching, foreign language teaching should focus on developing learners' four skills as reading, writing, speaking and listening (MEB, 2006). However, YDS only refers to students' competencies in reading, vocabulary and grammar. For that reason, students do not need to develop their productive skills but they just need to improve their lexical and structural competencies to be enrolled in universities.

This conflict between the perspectives of curriculum designers and accuracy-based exam policy is one of the preoccupations of the current study aiming to understand the role of these factors in determining the teaching procedures followed in a secondary state school in Turkey. In doing so, this study aims to profile the roles of these two perspectives in determining the teaching procedures followed in Turkey through investigating teachers' and students' beliefs about ideal ways of learning English and the effectiveness of their current practices referring to the factors determining their learning/teaching procedures.

Methodology

Purpose of the study

This study aims to understand the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about effective ways of teaching English. In doing so, the relationship between teachers' and students' espoused beliefs and self-reported practices will be investigated with the intention of revealing factors influencing teachers' and students' preferences in following particular type of English language learning and teaching procedure. In this vein, this study attempts to identify whether English language teaching procedures are designed according to the communicative perspectives of curriculum designers or to the content of university examination.

To address this, the current study seeks for answers to following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about effective ways of learning English?
2. What is the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about their current English language learning and teaching practices?
3. What are the reasons for connection or disconnection between students' and teachers' espoused beliefs and self-reported practices?

Participants

The participants in this study were 6 Turkish students and 5 English language teachers of those students. The type of the school was Anatolian High School which is located in Northwest part of Turkey. This town is selected because of its accessibility to the researcher. The school was selected on purposive accounts because it is the most prestigious school in the town. The statistical documents show that 81% graduates were enrolled in universities in 2009. This ratio is also high for students graduated from language division 90% of whom enrolled in foreign language departments at universities.

5 teachers out of 7 were selected randomly and they all accepted to participate. On the other hand, 3 volunteer students from 12th grade and 3 from 11th grade participated in this study. Students were selected from language divisions because English is their field of study and they take intensive English language courses to be enrolled in foreign language departments of universities. The demographic information of participants is tabulated below:

Table 1: The demographic information of teacher participants

	Gen der	Degr ee	Year of Experience
1	Fema le	M.A	11
2	Fema le	B.A	11
3	Male	B.A	19

4	T	Male	B. A.	9
5	T	Female	B.A	10

Table 2: The demographic information of student participants

	Gen der	Age	Grade
1	S le	Female	18 12 th grade
2	S le	Female	18 12 th grade
3	S	Male	18 12 th grade
4	S le	Female	17 11 th grade
5	S	Male	17 11 th grade
6	S le	Female	17 11 th grade

Data Collection and Analysis

Although it is seen that beliefs can be investigated quantitatively and qualitatively, using quantitative methods in investigating beliefs receive criticism. According to Maiklad (2001), using quantitative methods is not suitable for issues that require reflective thinking. Considering the nature of beliefs, it is clear that they have complex nature which might not be investigated through pre-determined questions. A fortiori, it is essential to interact with individuals so as to ask questions according to their responses which will enable researchers to understand individual's beliefs thoroughly.

To address this, a semi-structured interview was used in this study. This type of interview is useful for creating natural conversational environment because researchers do not ask pre-determined questions but talk about themes related to the scope of the research study. For that reason, it allows the researcher to explore tacit and unobservable aspects of participants' lives (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, cited in Borg, 2006). In this respect, I did not ask direct questions during interviews but I wanted participants to talk about general themes within the scope of the study. I only intervene when the talk become irrelevant for the scope of this study and I always ask 'why' questions to understand the reasons behind a situation.

Before the data collection, I met school administrators to take permission to interview with teachers and students. After that, I met prospective participants to explain the scope of my study and asked them to sign a consent form which shows that the interviewees participated in the study voluntarily. This form also assures that the data collected will be used for this study and their personal privacy and anonymity will be preserved by the researcher.

The interviews were conducted in Turkish which was essential for participants to express themselves thoroughly. Interviews with teachers lasted about 17 minutes because different issues were also negotiated such as their reasons of becoming an English teacher, beliefs about pre-service and in-service training. On the other hand, interviews with students lasted around 5 minutes because they are only asked to talk about their beliefs about ideal ways of learning English and their current learning processes.

To analyse the data, the audio-taped data was transcribed verbatim and coding was used to categorise the recurring themes issued by the participants.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of interview protocols revealed consistency between students' and teachers' beliefs about effective foreign language learning where all participants agreed the essentiality of presenting communicative language learning and teaching environment. On the other hand, this study revealed that both students' and teachers' self-reported practices are not congruent with their espoused beliefs. This inconsistency between beliefs and practices is also supported by some previous studies (e.g. Duffy & Anderson, 1984; Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Yim, 1993; Karavas, 1993; Seban, 2008; Gahin, 2001; Maiklad, 2001). In the current study, all informants claim that despite their beliefs about ideal ways of foreign language learning, they learn and teach English traditionally as a result of different reasons such as exam-based policy, course books, the status of English etc.

As a result of the disconnection between beliefs and practices, all participants reported dissatisfaction from their current English language teaching procedure. For example, considering the effectiveness of their current English language teaching practices, the most experienced teacher participant declared that ‘I believe that our current way of teaching English is very bad’ (T3). Likewise, student participants remarked that they are not satisfied with current English learning procedure emphasizing that the objectives are limited to getting preparing for university examination which neglects students’ productive skills. In this vein, a student participant asserted that ‘I cannot improve my different English skills because I am studying for university examination. I want to read English books, listen to English music. But when I spent time for these kinds of activities, I cannot study for university examination’ (S2).

These assertions show that, in general, both teachers’ and students’ are not satisfied with their current practices of English learning and teaching which are designed according to the content of university examination. On the other hand, different factors were also addressed by the participants, which will be discussed below in detail as students’ and teachers’ beliefs about ideal ways of teaching English, current practices and reasons for disconnection between espoused beliefs and self-reported practices.

Teachers’ and students’ beliefs about effective ways of teaching English

Table 3: Beliefs about effective ways of teaching English

Teachers	Students
Communicative (5)	Communicative (5)
All skills integrated (2)	Four skills (1)
Pronunciation (2)	Grammar (1)

Table 3 displays the categories of answers. The numbers in parentheses show the times each categories were mentioned by each interviewee. As tabulated above, both teachers and students consider language as a tool for communication. All informants reported that using the target language is more

important than knowing its structures. In this respect, one teacher participant stated that, ‘the objective of learning a foreign language is communication’ (T4). In the same vein, another participant claimed that ‘developing speaking skills of students should be our main concern’ (T5). Additionally, one participant emphasized that, ‘I want students who do not know what the present simple and past simple are. They are not very important. But I want my students to be able to speak with people from other countries. I want them to express their feelings thoroughly and introduce our culture and country effectively’ (T3). Students are also in agreement with their teachers about this issue and they claim that language should be learned communicatively: ‘No matter how proficient we are in grammar, we cannot be proficient unless we develop our speaking and pronunciation skills’ (S5). In the same vein, another student remarked that ‘native speakers do not pay attention if we are speaking accurately while speaking in English’ (S6).

In doing so, two teachers consider pronunciation as the main tool for developing students’ speaking skills: ‘I believe that the basis of any language is pronunciation. If you cannot pronounce vocabularies correctly, then, it is not possible to express yourself accurately’ (T3). On the other hand, another participant remarked that English should be taught by referring to four skills: ‘Grammar should be presented in developing students’ four skills. These four skills should be integrated and students should study structures gradually and meaningfully’ (T1). One student also remarked this point and she asserted that ‘all four skills should be emphasized while learning and teaching English’ (S2) and only one student stated that grammar should be the main focus (S1). But she supported this on condition that the learner will not go abroad but work and study in Turkey.

These extracts show that students hold similar beliefs with their teachers about the ideal ways of learning English. They both believe that English should be learned with the objective of developing learners’ communicative skills. In doing so, they highlight the significance of developing students’ pronunciation skills and integrating four language skills and teaching grammatical structures meaningfully.

Teachers’ and Students’ beliefs about current teaching and learning practices

Although both students and teachers believe that language should be studied communicatively, they also remarked that the only focus of current teaching and learning practices is reported to be reading, grammar and vocabulary (see Table 4).

Table 4: Teachers' and Students' beliefs about current teaching and learning practices

Teachers	Students
Grammar (5)	Grammar (4)
Reading (4)	Vocabulary (3)
Lack of writing activities (3)	Reading (2)
Use of mother tongue (2)	Multiple-choice tests (2)
Following the course book (2)	Course book oriented (2)

Considering the focus of current practice, the recurring theme which was emphasized by both teachers and students was the overreliance on grammar. In this respect, one participant said that 'our teaching solely relies on grammar' (T1). In the same vein, another participant remarked that 'half of our teaching procedures refer to grammar; the other part is concerned by reading, listening and speaking' (T5). Student participants also supported their teachers' assertion: 'Classroom activities solely rely on grammar. We do not do anything to improve our speaking or pronunciation skills' (S1). Correspondingly, another student remarked that 'we do not have opportunity to carry out speaking or writing activities, just grammar and vocabulary' (S4).

Besides grammar, reading is reported to be most commonly emphasized skill by both teacher and students participants: 'In general, we emphasize reading and grammar. Writing activities are very limited. For speaking activities, no matter how you encourage students, they do not speak, so you give up' (T4). These quotes illustrate that teachers are faced with a dilemma in deciding the skills to refer while teaching English: 'We attempt to use different activities referring to different skills of students such as reading and

listening' (T2). However, teachers remarked that students' expectations play an important role in this process where 'students think that writing is boring and demanding. Therefore I give them as homework, and then I collect them and give feedback' (T5). Another participant also supported this and she said that 'students do not want to write in English. They think that it is very difficult.' (T1). For those reasons, teachers reported that they are urged to rely on reading, vocabulary and grammar. In the same vein, students reported that reading and vocabulary are other issues that are highlighted in their English language learning processes: 'In general, we do not do listening, speaking and writing activities. We only do vocabulary, grammar and reading activities' (S6).

Another issues reported about current teaching practices highlighted by teacher participants were the use of mother tongue in the class and following the course book: 'You lecture in Turkish. When you lecture in Turkish, you teach grammar' (T3). One participant also talked about her insistence of lecturing in English: 'In the past, I really tried hard to lecture in English. Nevertheless, students reacted against this and they see you as an enemy who wants to make English more difficult for them' (T1). These two quotes show that teachers design their practices according to students' expectations. In Turkish context, since students think that using English is very challenging for them, they are not eager to deal with activities which will develop their productive skills.

On the other hand, considering the role of course books in teaching processes, two teacher participants highlighted the overreliance of course books: 'we just follow the course book because you do not have time to teach anything apart from the course book activities' (T4). This is also supported by two student participants stating that 'in my all English classes, we always follow the course book' (S2&5).

Another issue which was highlighted by student participants was the reliance of multiple-choice type of questions. Considering the content of university examination, students remarked that they deal with this type of questions in most of their English classes: 'we learn the topics in the course book and then we practice multiple-choice type of questions which will be included in the university examination' (S5).

This dichotomy illustrates the fact that classroom practices do not represent the theoretical approaches proposed by curriculum designers. This problem of implementability of theoretical views followed in Turkey was also addressed in a quantitative study conducted by Grossman et al. (2007). They concluded that the majority teacher educators' think that education in Turkey is too political and they do not find the educational reforms useful. To address this, it is vital for policy makers and curriculum developers to develop a practice perspective by considering the characteristics of state schools, teachers and students in order to design implementable syllabi.

Teachers' and students' beliefs about reasons for the disconnection between beliefs and practice

In discussing the reasons hindering the consistency between their beliefs and practices, students mostly rely on university examination as the only reason for this accuracy-based language teaching procedure. Additionally, two student participants consider limited class hours as the problem hindering the consistency between their beliefs and practices. On the other hand, teacher participants discussed various factors influencing their choices in teaching English such as course books, the status of English in Turkey, exam-based policy, students' educational backgrounds, teachers' competences, no legal obligation for personal development, no opportunity to going abroad and overload syllabus (see Table 5).

Table 5: Reasons for the disconnection between teachers'/ students' beliefs and practices

Teachers	Students
Course book (5)	University examination (6)
The status of English (4)	Limited class hours (2)
Exam-based policy (3)	
Students' educational background (3)	
Overload Syllabus (2)	

As seen above, all student participants are in agreement that the content of university examination determines their current English language learning procedures. In this respect, one student participant asserted that 'we are concentrated on university examination now. Therefore, all studies we carry out are

for being successful in that examination' (S2). In this context, another participant emphasized that 'we are living in an exam-oriented country. That's why our priority is university examination and the only proficiency I have now is solving multiple-choice type of questions' (S3). In the same vein, another participant reported that 'we can carry out different activities such as listening to music or watching movies in English but our teachers only focus on grammar and vocabulary. They do not value other activities. Neither do we. This is completely because of university examination' (S5).

This exam-based policy was also one of the recurring themes of teacher interviewees. Most teacher participants agreed that their main objective is to prepare students for the university examination because being successful students is dependent upon their performances in the university examination. They claim that the way students are selected to the university is very determinative in terms of students' expectations and attitudes towards English: 'I believe that English examination for university is very ineffective. They just rely on students' vocabulary knowledge and grammatical skills. Therefore, students do not want to speak in English. They do not care about pronouncing vocabularies correctly because they do not need to speak effectively to enrol in universities' (T3). In this respect, another participant stated that 'students do not feel the need of learning English now. They are concentrated on university examination. They think that they will learn English effectively in future, after they enrol in universities' (T2).

Another factor highlighted by student participants is the limited class hours. Two informants claim that they need to study on English more intensively and separate skill courses should be provided which focuses on their different skills: 'Because of limited class hours, we can only cover structural topics. Therefore, we cannot carry out different activities. If we had more class hours, we could focus on different skills' (T5&6).

In spite of students' emphases on these two factors, teacher participants discussed a variety of issues which lead them to present a teaching procedure which mismatches their espoused beliefs. Among those factors, course books are considered to be the main reasons for neglecting communicative skills in teaching English. All participants highlighted that course books are very unsatisfactory and under-theorized: 'As teachers, you have to use course books which are not methodologically appropriate and lacks suitable evaluation criteria. You do not have any other alternatives. Course books only include grammatical structures and it covers a wide range of structural topics in one unit. Reading texts and dialogue activities are not useful. There is no guidance in writing activities where only instructions are given such as it is your time to write but there is no information about how to write that paragraph' (T1). According to another teacher, 'I believe that the course books are above students' level. Vocabularies and reading passages are very difficult. And speakers in listening activities speak too fast. It is very demanding

for students to cope with these activities and therefore, students find it very boring' (T3). Another participant talked about the adaptability of the course book. He gave some information about a seminar which is hold by authors of the course book and he said that the authors do not expect us to follow the course book but adapt it. However, he does not think that this is possible because 'it is very difficult for teachers lecturing around 28 hours in a week to design different activities' (T4).

On the other hand, one participant stated that he is not satisfied with the designing process of these course books: 'We know that these course books were not designed by experts but teachers working at state schools. These colleagues are like me. So, they designed this book as I could have designed it as a teacher by myself' (T3). Apart from these, two participants complained about lack of voice about reporting weaknesses of these course books. They stated that 'when you complain about weak points of these course book to supervisors, they overreact to this and ask me to write a course book by myself' (T4&5). This attitude potentially de-motivate teachers because it is not wise to expect teachers to present effective teaching procedure where they do not even have a voice to criticise the weak points of materials that they have to use.

The status of English in Turkey is reported to be other determinative factor for the disconnection between teachers' beliefs and practices. In this vein, one participant suggested to question our objectives while teaching English: 'Do we learn English to show that we know its grammatical rules better than English people or to exchange information, to introduce our country, to communicate with people from different countries. Our current objective seems to be learning English grammar better than English people' (T3). Correspondingly, another participant highlighted the characteristics of good English language teacher in Turkey: 'If you know English grammar very well, if you can ask very difficult grammatical questions, then you are considered as a good teacher' (T1).

Students' educational background is another factor which affects teachers' teaching practices. Participants stated that students have learned English for five years by focusing on grammar before they enrol in secondary school. Therefore, they expect their teachers to teach English in the same way they had learned it in primary schools: 'Students have studied English through learning vocabularies, grammatical structures. And now, they do not want us to teach communicatively. They just expect us to show forms and structures. Otherwise, they find it very difficult' (T1). Another participant also stated that 'Before they came to this school, they had been studying English for five years. And when they come here, their pronunciation skills are very bad. So, it is very difficult to correct them because they already got used to pronounce that word wrongly' (T3).

Overload syllabus and time constraints were also reported to affect teachers' practices. Two participants highlight that they have to cover the topics of the syllabus on time which makes them be in

rush while teaching English: ‘The syllabus is much overloaded. You do not have any time to present different activities’ (T5). In this respect, another participant also stated that ‘we are racing against time to complete the syllabus. If it were not so overloaded, then we could have time to present communicative activities’ (T2).

As discussed above, while students think that university examination and limited class hours are only reasons for accuracy-based English classes, teachers discussed various reasons which obstacles the possibility of providing a communicative teaching environment. This might be because of students’ current objectives of being successful in university examination. For that reason, they see English as a tool for being successful in university examination and they study English to be successful in that examination. On the other hand, because of their experiences as being both learners and teachers of English, teachers can distinguish different reasons underpinning the disconnection between their beliefs and practices.

Implications

This study seeks for understanding the relationship between teachers’ and students’ beliefs about effective ways of English language learning and their current practices. Both predictable and unexpected outcomes were thrown up by this study which might generate some pedagogical recommendations.

Firstly, this study revealed that students hold similar beliefs with their teachers about the effective ways of English language learning and the usefulness of their current practices. In this context, both teacher and student participants believe that language should be learned communicatively and they reported that their current practices solely rely on structural units of target language.

As a result of this disconnection, both teacher and student participants highlighted that they are not satisfied with their current practices which mismatch their beliefs about effective ways of learning English. They addressed different external factors hindering the possibility of studying English communicatively.

The content of university education is reported to be main reason. For that reason, besides university examination, the content of English language examinations should be shifted to testing learners’ proficiencies in using the target language. Otherwise, how communicative the syllabus is, it is not probable for both teachers to implement that curriculum unless learners need to prove their competencies in productive skills to be successful in English examinations.

On the other hand, in this study, it is observed that Turkish teachers of English have no voice on their teaching procedures. They just follow the course book which is designed by MEB and naturally, this

causes a dilemma because using an ineffective course book contradicts their beliefs. This leads to teachers' dissatisfaction and they become de-motivated to teach English effectively. Therefore, teachers should be given a 'say' which will bridge the gap between theory and practice (Gahin, 2001). In doing so, "language teacher education should not just suggest new teaching techniques, but that teacher educators need to allow teachers to explore their existing beliefs and try to assimilate new ideas by constructing new beliefs" (Maiklad, 2001: 296). In the light of this, constraints which acted against the implementation of teachers' beliefs should be taken into consideration so that teachers can present effective teaching procedure which is congruent with their beliefs about ideal way of teaching English.

Teachers were also concerned about the expertise of authors of the course books. To overcome this, it is vital for using course books which are designed by experts in material and course book design. In addition, both students and teachers declared that they are racing against time in order to cover topics. To address this, it might be useful to provide an adaptable curriculum where teachers can select to carry out particular activities according to the characteristics of their students.

Another point revealed in the current study is about the disconnection between students' primary and secondary education. Considering the nature of languages, it is very difficult to change learners' habits such as correcting wrongly pronounced words. For that reason, the emphasis on the use of target language should be the main policy of Turkish educational system where teachers aim at improving students' communicative skills starting from primary education.

Conclusion

Although this study has shed light on different issues in English language teaching practices provided in a secondary state school in Turkey, there are some limitations which should be taken into consideration in designing further research studies in this context.

First of all, the data was not supported by different data collection methods. As a result of this, the current study did not deal with teachers' and students' observed beliefs and practices. Participants' beliefs and practices were determined through their responses during the interviews. To address this, further research studies are needed which observe students' and teachers' practices in English language teaching practices.

As mentioned above, there is a shortage of research studies investigating the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs. To address this, further studies in different fields are required to understand the relationship Turkish teachers' and students' beliefs about different issues.

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