

# Searching for New Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching: Turkish EFL Students' Suggestions

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## Abstract

The learning of foreign/second languages is part of all school curricula as well as social and business life. There are thousands of research articles, MA and PhD studies that have examined the impact of current approaches, methods and techniques in language teaching. Despite these studies, this area is not without its problems. First, the famous linguists' views of language learning are imposed on language learners. Second, there are limited – about fifteen – number of approaches and methods in the literature. The last problem is, among others, that the current and imposed communicative language teaching is considered the best method in the research context and in the literature. However, the study showed that not all students favoured the imposed approaches and methods. For these reasons, this study aimed to explore Turkish EFL students' views on how the English language should be taught. To this end, these students were taught the approaches and methods mentioned in the literature during a course in two terms, each lasting 15 weeks. At the end of the second term, they were required to write down their suggestions for new approaches and methods of language teaching. To assess the training, the study used a qualitative research approach to explore these views and the case study method to limit the scope of the study with the views of tertiary EFL students. Although some of their propositions are consistent with the views in the literature, some of them differ. Therefore, the study suggests that approach and method views in the literature may not apply to all types of learners and any language teaching approach and method must not be regarded as best or out of date in advance unless the learners are consulted.

**Keywords:** English, approach, method, EFL learners, language teaching

## 1. Introduction

Although there are certain differences between terms such as foreign/second language, language learning and language acquisition, this study does not participate in the already much discussed debate and uses the term 'language learning' in relation to students and 'language teaching' in relation to teachers and lecturers. The study also uses the term 'language learning' to refer to learning a language other than the mother tongue. It seems that theories are usually posed by the scientists. The thing that can be questioned is that is it solely the domain of scientists and linguists to suggest approaches and methods in foreign language teaching? Can students learning foreign languages also suggest approaches and methods? The following section reviews the context and literature to explore whether language learners are consulted to express their preferences for methods or approaches.

The history of language learning has come a long way to its current use. It begins in the 16th century (Richards & Rogers, 1993) and from then on many approaches and methods have been proposed. It seems that communicative language teaching (CLT), which is meaningful, real, conversational and contextualized (Richards & Rogers, 1993, p.67), is favored as the last proposal among others. However, the researcher's 30 years of language teaching experience and observations on language learners suggest that CLT is not without its problems. Specifically, the researcher's observation began during his doctoral studies, but he did not have time to thoroughly investigate the point he had noticed until now. Richards and Rogers (1993, p.5), in explaining the historical development of approaches and methods in ELT, state that "towards the mid-nineteen century several factors contributed to the questioning and rejection of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM)".

Yet there are also counter examples in this area. For example, the researcher involved five language teachers (English teachers) as part of his study from 1997 to 2001 and asked them how they learnt/studied English when they were students in ELT departments. Their answers were as follows: T2 was good at memorizing new words. T4 learnt English by memorizing the new sentences and using them in model sentences. T5 liked translation lessons very much. T6 used to study by writing and T7 learnt by listening, drawing and solving exercises (Tomakin, 2001, pp. 176-177). [T refers to the teacher].

Based on these findings, the question was asked at the time: 'Can we always [or still] consider the GTM being out of date and the CLT as being useful? In response, the researcher suggested that "AR-based language teaching does not consider any method, any technique as out of date, insufficient or irrelevant in advance" (Tomakin, 2001, p.120). This means that teachers or lecturers must not have any bias or reservations about language teaching approaches, methods and materials. A note on action-research-based (AR) language teaching is that one can achieve the entirety of the six principles of AR-based language teaching in Chapter Five (Tomakin, 2001).

The importance of consulting the language learners is perhaps best illustrated by an analogy. We want to have lunch in a restaurant and sit down at a table. A waiter or waitress brings/puts some kind of food on the table without taking our order? There are many questions: Should we eat it? Do we like it? Do we have to eat it without liking it? etc. Sunbul (2011) explains

that certain learning methods and techniques are applied to all students in teacher-led courses at school, but in this context, Yang & Chen (2018) states that learning activities carried out without taking individual differences into account can fail. Therefore, Duroc (2006) stresses that people can learn languages more successfully if they develop learning strategies that match their learning preferences.

The other significance of the study in consulting language learners can be explained by the views of Kumaravadivelu (2006), which can be summarized as particularity theory. It states that “post method pedagogy must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu” (p. 171). In effect, this means that we need to consider a particular method or technique for each individual in the classroom. At this point there is another issue that needs to be addressed. Are there national features and do we need to take them into account? The answer to this question is explained by Swan and Smith (2001) in their book *Learner English*. They state that learners of English have different characteristic difficulties than their mother tongues. They explain characteristic features of 22 nations such as Dutch, Arabic, Turkish and so on. The author of the chapter Thomson (pp. 214-226) states that “society and its institutions in Turkey are authoritarian, teachers’ explanations are regarded as right, learners expect teaching to be prescriptive rather than descriptive”. They also note that “Turkish learners in general are by no means meek, passive students. They tend to have a strong awareness of language...they tend to express their opinions openly” (p.226).

As can be seen in the literature review, there are some studies on tertiary EFL students in the research context, but language learners have not yet been asked about how they want to learn English. This means that language teachers and lecturers are imposing the theories of famous linguists – Skinner’s audiolingual, Wilkins et. all’s CLT, Sauveur’s and Franke’s Direct Method (DM), Palmer’s and Hornby’s Oral Situational Approach (OSA) etc. - to language learners.

Therefore, it was important to explore how the Turkish EFL students reveal their voice in a qualitative study. As the qualitative studies use bottom-up strategies, but language teaching methods and approaches make some general assumptions (top-down) about every learner in the world. For example, CTL claims that language must be taught through real communication, while ALM assumes that language must be taught through stimulus, response and reinforcement. It is clear from the above statements that language learners need to be consulted as each learner and each nation may have particular characteristics. Therefore, the views of Turkish EFL students were investigated to compare the extent to which they agree or disagree with the approaches and methods existed in the literature. In this context, it might also be useful to give a brief overview of the history of language teaching in Turkey.

### 1.1. Language Teaching in Turkey

Although studies of language teaching in Europe began in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries (Richards & Rogers, 1993), the history of language teaching in the research context goes back to the 19th century. As there were three types of schools – the sibyan (children's) school

for basic religious culture, the Madrassah for teaching Arabic and the Enderuns (university) for teaching French and Arabic with other lessons, there were no guidelines for foreign language teaching. The influence of French continued until the 1915s and the influence of German continued between 1915 and 1945. After that, English teaching has become widespread due to economic and scientific developments (Demirel, 2004).

As briefly mentioned, the following changes were made to language teaching in Turkey after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. Firstly, the Education Law enacted in 1924 unified the various educational applications into a single official institution. There was a teaching program (TP) for each lesson (course). For example, a TP for English, a TP for science, etc. from 1924 to 2011, 11 TPs were applied or tried out for English. In this period, there were different types of high schools such as normal, vocational, technical, social, etc., but from 2014, all high schools have been transformed into Anatolian high schools. This meant that the weekly hours of English classes in high schools increased compared to the previous cases (Can & Kartal, 2020). Below is a brief history of the 11 changes in 90 years.

The first English TP, produced and used in 1924-1934, gave the weekly lessons and some information about the method and process as follows: English would be taught for 5 hours in years 1, 2 and 3 of high school. The book used was Beginning English for year 1 and 2, Royal Reader and Brackenbury's English Idiom in year 3. The teaching methods used were oral and written exercises, translations, conversation, story retelling and dialogues (Can & Kartal, 1920, pp.397-399).

The second English TP, produced and used in 1934-1938, included the following information about the weekly lessons and the course book. The 3rd year of the high schools was divided into two divisions, science and literature. English for the science and literature divisions was 5 hours per week in years 1 and 2. It was 4 hours in science division and 6 hours in literature division in year 3. Royal Reader and Brackenbury's English Idiom in year 1, Reading from English and American literature in years 2 and 3 were used. In year 1 mainly oral and written exercises and conversation techniques, in year 2 and 3 letter and essay writing, reading, translation and reading techniques were used (Can & Kartal, 2020, p.400-401).

The third English TP, which was developed and used in 1938-1952, provided for the following. The weekly English lesson was increased to 5 hours for the science and literature divisions in the first and second years, while it was 3 hours for the science department and 5 hours for the literature department in year three. The books and teaching techniques were not changed in the previous TP (Can & Kartal, 2020, p. 402).

The fourth English TP, which was created and applied in 1952-1956, had the following applications. Firstly, the duration of high school education was set at 4 years. Secondly, the weekly hour of English for all grades and divisions was increased to 5 hours. It was also determined that the English books to be used should be prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), but no names are available about the books and techniques (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 402-403).

The fifth English TP, which was drawn up and applied in 1956-1960, had the following

changes. The duration of high school education was again set at 3 years, but the weekly lessons for all year groups were 5 hours. The Ministry's instruction informed teachers that they could choose textbooks according to the level of the pupils. However, even this instruction did not contain any further information about the methods and materials (Can & Kartal, 2020, p. 403).

The sixth English TP, which was developed and applied in the years 1960-1970, had the following procedure. The main difference between this program and the others was that year 2 of high school was divided into two sections, science and literature. This division was only made in year 3 until the 1960s. In addition, the weekly lesson time was 5 in year 1 for all divisions. It was 4 hours for literature division in year 2 and 3, but it was 5 hours in science division. The books, methods and materials were the same as in the 1952 and 1956 TP (Can & Kartal, 2020, p. 404).

The seventh English TP, prepared and applied in 1970-1973, had the same lessons, the same books and materials as the TP of 1952, 1956 and 1960. There were no serious changes in the TP between the years 1924 and 1973, but only minor changes in the lessons and some textbooks in the 49 years (Can & Kartal, 2020, p.404). Moreover, the number of the vocabulary to be taught at each level were identified for the first time. The weekly course hours were 5 hours in year 1, 4 hours for science division in year 2 and 3; 5 hours in year 2 and 3 for literature division (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 405-410).

The eighth English TP, which was drawn up and applied in the years 1973-1987, had the following changes. For the first time, the MoNE established a department for the improvement of foreign language teaching. The TP also defined teaching materials, objectives, teaching methods and assessment. Four levels were also defined: Introduction, Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced. The number of vocabulary words to be taught at each level was also specified for the first time. The weekly teaching time was 5 hours in year 1 for all divisions; 4 hours for the science part in years 2 and 3; 5 hours in years 2 and 3 for the literary part (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 405-410).

The ninth English TP 1987-1998 did not provide much information about the course books, lessons and methods. It was assumed that this program had the same content and instructions as the TP 1973. In this program, a new section for 'languages' was introduced for the first time in high schools, alongside science and literature. The weekly teaching hours for this section were 9. An important change in this program was that English was compulsory in the first year of secondary school and optional and graded in the following years. This type of application lasted only 1 year and was abolished with the 1989-90 academic year (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 410-411).

The tenth English TP 1998-2011 had the following changes. There were no major changes to the program in terms of lessons and textbooks. Only the topics of Atatürk and his principles were included in the program. The duration of the high school program was gradually extended to 4 years from the 2003-2004 school year. Besides, a second foreign language was taught from 2002. In addition, the normal high schools were converted into Anatolian high schools in the 2005-2006 school year (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 411-412).

The eleventh English TP in 2011 had the following changes. The weekly course hour in year 1 was 6 and became 10 hours for the language divisions. In addition, the objectives, methods, techniques and content were redefined. In particular, the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing were defined for the first time. In addition, the levels for English were defined as A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, B1.1, B1.2, B2.1, B2.2 and C1.1. The name and number of topics to be taught were also defined for each level. (Can & Kartal, 2020, pp. 412-420).

In conclusion, the curricula applied until 2004 reflected the characteristics of the behaviorist approach within their overall approach, the renewed 2004 curricula aimed to prepare students according to a student-centered/constructivist approach. However, some of the revised curricula appear to have retained the influence of the behaviorist approach in their details (Akinoğlu, 2005) pp. 41-42); Terzi, 2011, p.77). The use of the behaviorist view for about 80 years and the subsequent adoption of the cognitivist view clearly indicate that these approaches were applied through a top-down process, with students (language learners) never being consulted. The nine changes in the minister of education within the same ruling party in 25 years, along with each minister's policy changes in Turkey, have led to low achievement in national and international exams. For example, high school students in Turkey scored lower average points in Mathematics, Turkish - Literature, Chemistry, Physics, and Social Science questions on the university entrance exam in 2025 (URL-1). Additionally, Turkey ranked 64th out of 113 countries worldwide and 33rd out of 34 European countries in foreign language proficiency according to the English Proficiency Index 2023 (EF EPI, 2023). Therefore, these findings demonstrate the necessity of this study and the importance of consulting learners to teach according to their preferences.

Turkey, as an effort of becoming the full member of the European Union (EU), is trying to use the principles of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) that suggests action-oriented, plurilingual and intercultural education in language teaching (URL-2). Overall, if we impose either the CLT or CEFR, it is insufficient to use only one method which is considered the best (Prahbu, 1990). The next section – literature review – shows how the EFL learners were consulted on various topics such as attitudes, motivation, strategies, perceptions, etc. except for their views on language learning. This is the reason this study was conducted.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review has indicated that there are some studies on Turkish EFL learners as will be seen in the below, yet it seems that no study has been undertaken on EFL learners' views of approach and method. For this reason, various studies on EFL will be reviewed in order to prove the lack of the study similar to this study.

It seems that there are two studies using the term 'attitude and motivation' in their studies (Kızıltepe, 2000; Goktepe, 2014. They used them with different purposes. For example, Kızıltepe (2000) researched EFL students' attitudes and motivation towards second language learning (SLL) focusing on attitudes towards the British and Americans; motivational intensity; interest in English and foreign languages in general; instrumental and integrative orientation; anxiety in English classes; family encouragement; the English teacher and course.

Results show that students are highly motivated instrumentally as well as integratively although a moderate interest in the British and the American community and culture is reported. Respondents' motivational intensity is high, their attitudes towards learning English and languages in general are positive. They do not show anxiety in class and their families are very supportive. Results about their attitudes towards their English teachers and courses vary according to the school they attend. Besides, Goktepe (2014) interested in Turkish EFL learners' motivation and attitudes towards learning English language. The study included 90 first year students at a foundation university. "Data were collected through the use of five-point Likert scale with 43 items including demographic questions about the learners' background information such as gender, age, and how long they have been learning English. The items on the survey were chosen from Dornyei and Csizér (2006) in a variety of Hungarian researches and from a recently designed questionnaire by Ryan (2005). The domains used for the purpose of the study were: integrativeness, attitudes to L2 community, cultural interest, attitudes to learning English, criterion measures, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, family influence, instrumentality (promotion and prevention), and fear of assimilation. The data collected were analyzed through descriptive statistics in SPSS statistical program. The results revealed that Turkish first-year university students learn English as a foreign language mostly for instrumental reasons, and it also showed that integrative motivation is dominant motivational orientation for the participants in some degree (p.314).

The rest of the studies are on separate topics such as vocabulary learning strategy, language learning strategy, effective foreign language teachers, current challenges in ELT, written error analysis and students' perceptions on online learning platforms and blended language learning. Now these will be explained briefly. For example, Celik and Toptas' study (2010) aimed to explore 95 Turkish EFL learners' vocabulary learning strategies at a state university whether they change according to language levels. The study focused "specifically the frequencies and helpfulness ratings of strategy use, strategy patterns, as well as their change for students across different language levels. Data were analyzed statistically and the results indicated that the participants' general use of vocabulary learning strategies was somewhat inadequate and there was a gap between their use of strategies and related perceptions of strategy usefulness" (p.62).

Besides, Razi (2012) studied Turkish EFL learners' language learning strategy employment at a state university. The study involved 189 tertiary level students whose gender, class and period of English study were investigated with Oxford's (1990) six types of strategies. "Descriptive statistics indicated that the participants mostly preferred compensation and metacognitive strategies. Controversy, affective and social strategies were the least preferred strategies by the participants. A significant difference was found between preparatory class and 3rd year students in terms of use of strategies. However, t-test and post hoc test did not indicate significant differences among the participants in terms of their gender, age, and period of English study" p. 94).

In addition, Celik et al. (2013) investigated Turkish EFL learners' perception of effective foreign language teacher at a state university. The study included 998 undergraduate students to explore pedagogy-specific knowledge, personality traits, professional skills and classroom

behavior. Researchers summarize their findings as 11 items on page 294. These are what they found: The students perceive a successful teacher to be fair and just demonstrate enthusiasm for teaching, successful in reducing the students' anxiety, support the view that providing a comfortable learning atmosphere, treat students with warmth and kindness. Participants also expect their teachers to have a sound knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Among others they don't prefer to see an authority teacher in the classroom.

Moreover, Solak & Bayar (2015) aimed to find out current challenges in English language learning in Turkish EFL context from high to low achievers' perspective with 22 students. "Their responses were classified in terms of overall ideas, language skills, method, approach, practice, linguistic differences in two languages, personal differences, teacher, material, family and environment". It was found that "the objectives of English course should be realistic and be considered as a whole from primary education to higher education. Teaching and improving four language skills are supposed to be the focus of attention rather than grammar-centred language teaching. English courses should be designed as practice-based rather than theory-based. In addition, foreign language teachers should take into consideration the individual differences, learner characteristics and plan the activities in this regard. Foreign language teachers should take in-service training and update their professionalism from time to time. Finally, the materials such as course books, videos, and internet web sites should be chosen carefully according to the students' interest, level and needs" (p.106).

Finally, Istifci (2017) aimed to find out perceptions of Turkish EFL students on online language learning platforms and blended language learning at a state university with 167 students that had B2 language score according to CEFR. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire (Owston, York and Murtha, 2013) and interview. After the application of the questionnaire, ten randomly selected students were interviewed about their perceptions of blended learning. Data were analyzed statistically and in the form of content analysis. The following results were drawn from the study: "students liked the idea of blended learning in terms of course format and attendance". Interviews analysis showed that "students liked the flexibility of online learning, but preferred face-to-face communication with a teacher and classmates" (p.113). Students' views varied about the online platforms of course books yet they like the online language learning platforms.

On the basis of results, since the students liked face to face language learning with their peers and teachers, but they liked online learning to get instant feedback, the curriculum planners must take this issue into account in planning and producing the next syllabuses. In conclusion, the above reviewed studies indicate that the EFL learners' views of language learning does not seem to have been explored so far. Hence, it is worth investigating the EFL students' views in Turkey.

### **3. Objectives**

The study aimed to explore the Turkish EFL students' views of approach and method mainly. Yet it also aimed to briefly review the development of the foreign/second language teaching

in the research context (Turkey) in general. These objectives are important this is because one of the main sources in ELT Richards and Rogers (1993) explains only fifteen approach and method in that book. More than this not only this source, but others such as Demirel (2004), Harmer, (1995), Harmer, (2000), Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), etc. all of the suggested approaches and methods reflect academics', researchers' and linguists' view of language learning. That is, these authorities impose their views on language learners, yet we know that individual learners and differences are important in education. It is important that the article may trigger an impetus at the readers of this study and they can create an individual or globally shared blogs / webs to produce learner-based approaches and methods. Thus readers can suggest (write) their views on these blogs / webs and in this way learner-centered new methods can be produced. Briefly, the exploration of EFL learners' view of language learning seems to be neglected so far. Hence, the study had two specific objectives to explore:

- a) to review and offer a concise views of language learning/teaching theories in the research context.
- b) to explore Turkish EFL students' views of approach and method, registered with the Department of English Language and Literature in 2022-23 academic year.

The above stated first objective was critically reviewed in the research context under the title of 1.1. language teaching in Turkey. The second objective was explored by getting the participant students' views and results are presented under the title of Findings (see 5.).

#### **4. Method**

The study has aimed to uncover the EFL students' views on language learning approach and method. The qualitative studies also aim "to explore" (Robson, 1995, p.19). Thus the aims of the study and the qualitative study overlapped. Researches are classified in terms of their purposes and strategies. These are "exploratory, descriptive and explanatory" (p.42) and "case studies are appropriate for exploratory work" (p.43). Although the CS is defined as "a bounded system" (Adelman at all, 1984), In Yin's (1993, p.3) view "the case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context". The study used the CS method descriptively this is because descriptive studies are used "to portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations" (Robson, 1995, p.42). For Salkind (2000) descriptive research "provides a broad picture of a phenomenon" under investigation.

In the same way, the study consulted the EFL learners to get their suggestions on language learning approach and method. The students were taught a new content about ELT each week in two terms, each of which lasted 15 weeks (See Table A and B). As explained in the procedure section in detail (see 4.1), an exam question apart from multiple choice and true/false questions was asked during their final exam to write/produce a new approach or method in the second term. Data were collected in the written form and analyzed in order to understand if the students' views were similar to those in the literature or not. That is, their views were compared and portrayed broadly and descriptively. As a result, the possible and

potential new suggestions were taken as novel approach or method. The study was limited with the students in year 4. This point may be criticized, but only fourth year students take the course named 'Teaching Language Skills' (TLS).

#### 4.1 Rationale for Procedure

The first stage of the study prepared the EFL students in the following ways on Harmer's (1995) view. She states that "focus on the student has also led to the development of learner training and self-directed learning programs. Methodologists have turned their attention not just to the teaching of the language, but also to training students how to be good learners" (pp.35-37).

The students in year four have to take the course named "TLS" in two terms, during which they are taught principles, strategies, approaches, method and skills used in teaching a foreign/second language. Therefore, the researcher used 'purpose sampling' technique that refers the choice of cases "in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs" (Cohen & Manion, 1995, p.89). The word typicality refers to choice of appropriate samples and "there is no point in inviting people who are hostile or indifferent to your research to be in your validation group" as stated by Mcniff et al. (1996, p.109). The researcher served as the course lecturer and taught it 4 hours weekly. In the first two-hour the theoretical information was given by the lecturer; and next two hours' application, lesson plan and exercises about each week's content were done by the students. The following contents were covered weekly in two terms.

Table 1. The TLS Course Contents for the Term 1 in 2022-2023

#### The First Term

Weeks	Name of the Taught Course	The Used Reference (Source)
1	Primary Principles in ELT	Demirel (2004)
2	Secondary Principles in ELT	Demirel (2004)
3	Strategies in ELT	Oxford (1990)
4	Anthony's view of Approach, Method...	Richards and Rogers (1993)
5	British view of Approach, Method, ...	Richards and Rogers (1993)
6	Communicative & Natural Approach	Richards and Rogers (1993)
7	Visual and Audio Visual Approach	Demircan (1993)
8	Audio Lingual Approach	Richards and Rogers (1993)

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9	Cognitive Approach	Demircan (1990)
10	Topical & Situational Approach	Demircan (1993)
11	Humanistic and Comprehension Appr.	Demircan (1990)
12	Functional – Notional Approach	Demircan (1990)
13	Spiral Approach	Demircan (1990),
14	Eclectic Approach	Cross, (1995; OABT, 2017)
15	Review	-

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After the end of the term the students had final and make-up examinations, but any question about method or approach production was not asked during the final and make-up exams in this term.

Table 2. The TLS Course Contents for the Term 2 in 2022-2023

**The Second Term**

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Weeks	Name of the Taught Course	The Used Reference (Source)
1	Natural Method and The New Method	Richards and Rogers (1993)
2	Reading Method and Community Lang. L.	Demirel (2004)
3	Situational Language Teaching	Demircan (1990)
4	Direct Method & Grammar Trans Method	Richards and Rogers (1993)
5	Suggestopedia and The Silent Way	Richards and Rogers (1993)
6	Series Method and Total Physical Response	Richards and Rogers (1993)
7	Teaching Listening Skill	Pegem 2017
8	Teaching Speaking Skill	Pegem 2017
9	Teaching Reading Skill	Pegem 2017

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10	Teaching Writing Skill	Pegem 2017
11	Teaching Grammar Skill	Pegem 2017
12	Teaching Vocabulary Skill	Pegem 2017
13	Teaching Pronunciation Skill	Pegem 2017
14	Review	
15	Training and examples on producing new Lecturer' examples (see 4.2.) approach and method	

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#### *4.2 Training Stage*

In the second stage the students were given a training in the 15th week on how to produce a new EFL approach or method. To that end they were first reminded the main principle of approach, method and technique suggested by Anthony (1984) and Richards & Rogers (1993).

Table 3. Summary Views on the Terms Approach and Method

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Terms	For Anthony (1984)	For Richards & Rogers (1993)
Approach	axioms, beliefs, assumptions	the language and language learning
Method	overall plan, orderly presentation	curriculum, syllabus, teachers' view, students' view, etc.
Technique	implementation	resources, practices

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#### *4.3 Training for New Approach / Method Production*

They were given examples like this: take any word from the dictionary such as bag, umbrella, wall, whatever they choose. Then write the word “method or approach” on the right hand side of the chosen word. Hence it becomes “bag method”, “umbrella method” or “wall method” etc. Students could also write “approach” on the right hand side of the chosen word. Like this the chosen words become “bag approach, umbrella approach or wall approach”. Finally, they were told to write a logical explanation for “bag method” if they produced this pair, an explanation for “umbrella method” if they produced this pair, or an explanation for “wall method” if they produced this pair considering the Anthony’s (1984) and Richards and Rogers’ (1993) views. Equally true that they could produce an explanation for “bag approach”, “umbrella approach” or “wall approach” if they produced this pair.

#### 4.4 Application Stage

The students were demanded to answer the following question in the final exam of the second term. The question in the exam paper was worded like this:

“Propose a new language teaching method / approach that has not been suggested in the literature so far and answer / write explanation for the following five items.

- a) Name of method / approach
- b) Theory of method/approach
- c) Explanation or example
- d) Teachers’ role
- e) Students role

#### 4.5 Assessment of the Exam Question

Students’ answers to the exam question were carefully and critically assessed by considering the views in the literature. It is true that since the students are not experts in this field, some of their answers responded to two of above items as a) and b); some of their answers responded to three of the articles as a), b) and c). That is, the five of the items may not be answered by all students, Hence, each correct answer to any of the five items were assessed and a marked point was given.

#### 4.6 Limitations and Subjectivity

Readers of the study can consider both the number of participating students and the potential influence of the researcher. As stated above, the courses to be taught in the English Language and Literature program have already been determined by departmental decisions. Therefore, students are required to take the courses designated for their year, such as all courses identified for year one, and so on. The researcher or lecturer cannot increase or decrease the number of students enrolled in the TLS course. The researcher has been teaching in the department for ten years, and the average number of students in year four ranges from 30 to 50, depending on their previous year's academic success. Nearly 45 students participated in this study, and this number is sufficient given the qualitative research methodology.

These readers can also consider the researcher’s effect, that is, the subjectivity of the study. The researcher explained the EFL students' principles, approaches, methods, and skills in two terms. In the exam, students were required to produce or suggest a new method or approach. In this case, there was no possibility that the students would choose one of the explained approaches or methods. If the question had been “choose one among what is explained,” subjectivity would have been possible.

### 5. Findings

Students were coded by their initials and all students’ suggestions were included here to show importance of exploration. Some of these suggestions may inspire the teachers and lecturers.

These points will be touched in the Conclusions and Discussion section. Students' suggestions can be taken as approach, method and techniques or exercises depending on readers' interpretations. The researcher analyzed and grouped these suggestions in three groups. The first group fully include those suggestions that satisfy the five items of the exam question. The second group comprises of the suggestions that have different names, but the explanation that comes under it is similar to the views (methods, exercise, etc.) in the literature. These are briefly mentioned with a few sentences. In the last group the suggestions do not offer new views. These views are either the repetition of the views in the literature or they do not make much sense because of students' lack of explanation.

### *5.1 The First Group*

Student NK's suggestion is 'medicine method'. Theory is that language is learned through help. Teachers talk to students individually or in small group about their skills which can be improved. Teachers may also speak about their problems. Teacher serves like a doctor, students then serve like a patient and the teacher's every help, task, etc. is called medicine that's why the name derives from. The students take the medicine (tasks, teaching sessions) twice every day. In the morning the teachers give high dose of instruction by teaching and giving homework to the students. In the evening the students take a half dose by doing the tasks and repeating the morning lessons. At the end of two weeks every student has a quiz session which is called check-up. This student's suggestion seems to be a fantastic analogy. The suggestion is similar to community language learning method suggested by Curran in that the teacher plays the role of counselor and client relationship in the language classroom.

Student BD's suggestion is named 'naming method'. The idea is that language is mainly learned through vocabulary. Teacher has a list and sitting plan of the students. It is known that students have their own proper names, yet the teacher gives new names to the students and records this on his/her classroom plan. Teachers give the new vocabularies of each unit as a name to the students. In this case, for example, Ahmet's name becomes pen, Ali's name becomes pencil, Ayse's name becomes desk. Since calling the students' name is important in teaching (Demirel, 2004), the teacher calls out students' given names in teaching as giving instruction. For example, the teacher says, "pencil, answer this question", instead of saying "Ayse, answer this question". Students have to learn their friends' given names. In this way, students are imposed to learn vocabulary that make listening, speaking, reading and writing possible (Tomakin, 2008). Although BD's intention is to suggest a method, the suggestion seems to be vocabulary teaching activity.

### *5.2 The Second Group*

Student EE's suggestion is named 'radar method' that refers to controlling the learner' progress. As the traffic radars controls the speed of the car, the name is similar to the process model of writing and syllabus.

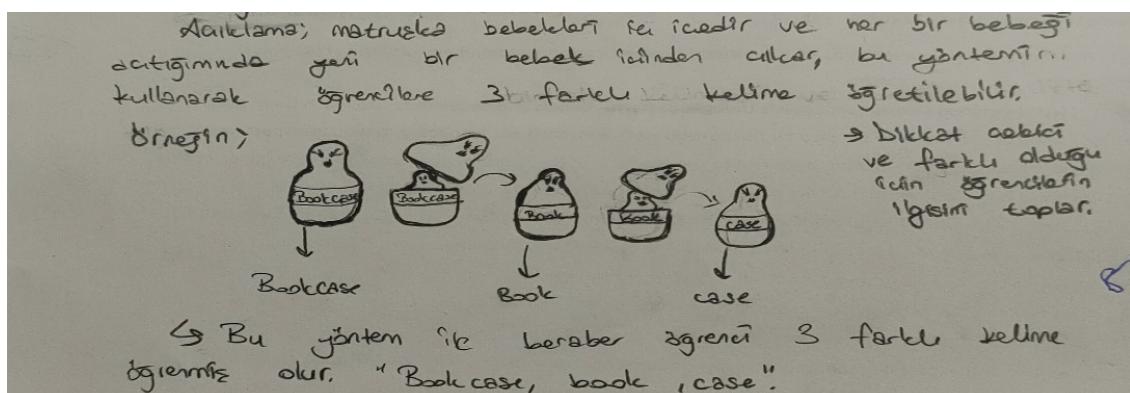
Student MEA's view with his word is 'anywhere method'. It implies that language learning is not limited to classrooms, it can be learned at anywhere. Hence his view is like exposure to language in everywhere.

Student MM's view is named 'vagon method' with her term. As locomotives carry their vagon, there is one main topic through which some sub-topics are explained. Students may get on any vagon (sub-topic) they like and move front and back vagon. Yet the students sit/travel in every vagon by the end of journey. This suggestion is like teachers' use of content-based syllabus in the literature (Pegem, 2017). Yet again the student's suggestion refers to inter-linked topics on which they talk, write or read what they want.

Student BE's suggestion is called 'remote controlled-method'. It aims to teach the language by giving directions and imperatives. For example, a toy remote control car is used at the outset and it continues with oral directions. The suggestion is like total physical response (TPR) in the literature.

Student ID's idea is that language can be taught 'matryoska' method that means a set of wooden dolls of decreasing size placed one inside another. In her view one topic requires to know another topic and process goes on like this. In her illustration, sentences are easily taught as big chunks. 'There is sth...', / 'there are sth...', is one chunk. This chunk requires an object as if it comes in another doll. Say it is 'a book or books'. Then it becomes 'there is a book.... And again it requires another doll that is 'place'. It can be 'on the table, near the table, etc. Finally, the sentence becomes 'there is a book on the table'. This suggestion is like sentence formation (word order) in teaching grammar. The next figure shows her drawing.

Table 4. A Student's Suggestion of Language Teaching Method



MK's suggestion was named cultural approach, yet it has already been suggested by Brown (1980a) under the topic of the strategies for learning and teaching second language acquisition in Ellis' (1994, p.251) book. The approach originally was named as acculturation model that refers to adaptation to a new culture.

TM's suggestion was that all element of language must be taught together. It is not clear what is meant by the word all element. Does it refer to main and sub skills? or does it refer to all grammatical topics? However, her suggestion in the literature is similar to 'whole language approach' that aims to teach main and subskills at the same time.

### 5.3 The Third Group

Some of the suggestions posed by the students seem already exist in the literature. But some

of them do not make much sense as seen in the coming pair words. That is why, just their names are cited and no more explanation are provided. The suggestions that show similarity with the literature are: craft-repetition method (BS), role play method (AG), role model approach (BS), paragraph-writing method (HA), story method (FM), mixed presentation method (BA), parrot (repetition) method (OT, NA), argumentative approach (EC), funny content method (YBP), cinematic approach (OR), telephone model role (AS), alphabetical order (AY), puzzle method (AC, SK), dictionary method (RK), theatre method (UT), mirror (reflection) method (CCP, FS)), sing and learn (SU), pattern practice (BY), cultural approach (KM), comb (spiral) method (DH).

Those that make no much sense because of students' lack of their explanations are: camping method (IHH), sharpener method (IM), fully-furnished approach (MC), aero plane method (MAA), socio digital method (EA), ghost-based approach (UA), acting method (YCU), solar panel method (BS), admiration approach (DZ), labyrinth method (SS), agricultural approach ((EA), penny box method (BD), Chernobyl method (YC), train method (BNY), funny content method (YBP), ladle method (YY).

## 6. Conclusion and Discussions

The aim of this article was to investigate Turkish EFL students' views of language learning approach and method of. For this purpose, 4th year students in the first and second terms of 2022-2023 were taught the main views on principles, strategies, approaches, methods and skills in language teaching during a graduate and compulsory course called TLS. They also received special training in week 15 (last week) on how to develop a new approach or method in ELT. In this way, the students were already made aware that a question would be asked in the final examination. When these students learnt that their answers would be the subject of an academic study and their initials would be quoted, they were all very happy. I suppose they thought they would be famous if their names were mentioned. As you have seen, the students' consent was obtained in advance. If they had not consented, their third exam question would not have been marked.

The term 'language teaching' has been used in this study to refer to the learning of a language other than the mother tongue, without involving in the discussion of foreign or second language learning. Language studies, whether L1 or L2, are one of the best known areas in social studies. Although there are observational and experimental views, it seems that the approaches and methods – CLT, ALM, structural-situational approach, thematic approach, direct method, serial method, etc. – usually impose their views on the learners. That is, there seems to be a top-down proposal instead of applying a bottom-up procedure. In the top-down procedure, the learners seem to be the subjects of the study; they have to apply what is implied in the literature, but in the bottom-up procedure, the learners are consulted, as was done in this study, because they are at the center of the learning.

The course (TLS), which consisted of two terms, has made an attempt to cover the main approaches and methods usually included in the main ELT references such as Richards and Rogers (1993), Demirel (2004), Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) in teaching the above course for the EFL students. The researcher is aware that Howatt (2000) provides a detailed

history of English language teaching between 1362 and 1980 in his book *A History of English Language Teaching*. Nevertheless, it is not possible and practical to cover and teach all these events between the mentioned dates to EFL students in two terms.

It was found that most students attempted to answer the examination question. The analysis of this examination question was categorized into groups by the researcher according to how consistent the views suggested in the literature were. Following this categorization, the views on approach and method in the first group appear to be novel ideas. Overall, two methods were suggested by the students, medicine and naming method. However, the views on approach and method in the second group appeared to be similar to the views in the literature, but the students expressed them in different terms. That is, it seems that they used some synonyms. For example, one student's suggestion of using a 'remote method' is similar to the teaching imperatives used by TPR. The views on approach and method in the third group were again divided into two groups. The views in one group reflect those already mentioned in the literature and are therefore not considered novel views, such as the parrot method (repetition) or the story method. The views in the other group seem to offer novel views, such as the camping method, the pencil sharpener method, the fully furnished approach and the aero plane method, but the students' explanations of these were not satisfactory.

A final point about the suggestions, among others, is that the study would provide some good results if students had time to apply their suggestions when learning/studying English. That is, if the students took the compulsory course TLS in year 3 instead of year 4, I would teach the above approaches and methods in year 3 and ask for their suggestions at the end of the term. This would allow me to follow whether these students can apply what they have suggested or to what extent their suggestions are applicable in year 4. They would then have the opportunity to review and revise their suggestions.

As the study has consulted EFL learners, their suggestions on approach and method have given them a kind of autonomy or freedom to express their views. The researcher is aware that this type of training with students, where learners were educated about learning methods and then consulted on their opinions about the best method or approach, is known as 'learner autonomy' (LA), where learners make decisions about what, how and when they learn. (Dickinson, 1987). Thus, it seems that the pre-condition of LA is to inform learners about the learning methods and approaches, as was the case in this study. The researcher is also aware that the data collected could be analyzed in terms of whether or not it conforms to the principles of Good Language Learners (GLL) proposed in the literature (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et. al. 1978, cited in Ellis, 1994, p.122). However, this study has not aimed to frame the study in terms of LA and GLL. In other words, this could be the subject of future studies.

To summarize, the views on the approach and method of language teaching in the literature seem to be more 'prescriptive' than 'descriptive'. These terms were used by Aitchison (1993) to explain the difference between traditional grammar and linguistics. In the former, instructions are given as to how something ought to be, but in the latter, how something it is. Current views on the approach and method of language teaching are no different from prescriptive views. Language teachers, especially academics in ELT departments, endeavor to

prove the superiority of, for example, CLT over ALM or the Eclectic Approach over DM. How do we know that everyone learns by speaking? (that is, through communication); they may also learn by reading or writing, etc. In this case, the notion of individual differences is considered, which is much emphasized both in the research context and in the literature.

It seems that no attempt has been made to explore individual EFL learners' views on language learning, although Kumaravadivelu (2006) emphasizes individuality, i.e. particularity. This individuality or particularity can be carried out by each ELT department as follows. A qualitative survey can be conducted and the key learning methods or approaches are explored in the department. From then on, these key suggestions can be used in language teaching in that department. If each department investigates the views of its EFL students on language learning in each city, perhaps a regional view of language teaching can be explored. This may eventually lead to a national view of language teaching or method. As a result, language teachers and lecturers no longer think CLT is always the best and most appropriate method and GTM is outdated or useless. Ultimately, this descriptive and pioneering study may be an impetus in the field of ELT to discover learner-centered approaches and methods.

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