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## Preservice English Teachers' Assessment Awareness: Level of Readiness for Classroom Practice

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### ABSTRACT

Only a few decades ago, language proficiency was assessed in various contexts in the area of vocabulary and in understanding and producing oral language. Today, language assessment has changed due to the widespread use of English in the business and academic worlds. This development has led to the emergence of new skills and competencies to the existing repertoire of language proficiencies -- such as processing information, reasoning for evidence, making decisions, solving problems, self-regulation, collaboration and learning. Considering the extent of the recent changes in assessment pedagogy, the purpose of the present study is to explore preservice English teachers' assessment awareness and their level of readiness for assessment practice in language classroom. Forty-nine fourth-year pre-service English teachers from the Department of English Language Education of a state university were included in the study, which adopted a qualitative research design. The data were collected through open-ended survey questions administered in the spring term of the 2015-2016 academic year, and they were analyzed with a content analysis technique. The results showed that preservice teachers were aware of newly emerging skills and competencies in ELT and most of them reported an urgent need for more training and practice to implement various assessment models in the language classroom.

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High-level skills and abilities are needed in order to perform most jobs available in today's world. When it comes to L2 education, Kahtani (1999) refers to the necessity of integration of new skills and competencies into language education due to the extensive use of English in the business and academic world. The traditional areas of knowledge of grammar, reading, and writing, listening and speaking as stand-alone skills sets to be learned and assessed are not enough. As Purpura (2016) proposes, "the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires very complex skills from the individuals. Such demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century have shaped the need to have disciplinary skills along with linguistic skills. As a result, language learners and users must demonstrate that they have skills needed to process information, reason for evidence, make decisions, solve problems, self-regulate, collaborate, and learn and they need to do this in their L2" (p. 190-191).

In addition to the existing overall language proficiencies, Stanley (2004) suggests more skills and competencies such as cooperation skills, grouping, writing joint articles, learning in-group and participation in group work and business planning discussions--from any type of language graduate are needed. Considering these developments, student assessments hold a distinctive place and present

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significant implications for language education as “language assessments help teachers and administrators make decisions about students’ linguistic abilities, their placement in appropriate levels, and their achievement.” (Shaaban 2005, p. 35).

In this rapidly changing world, pre-service language teachers need more dynamic and integrated styles of assessment. In parallel with these developments there are significant changes in language assessment. According to Leung (2004), one change in language education that has been observed is the assessment of a learner’s progress and achievement in a relaxing atmosphere. It resulted in using formative assessment rather than strictly summative practice. In parallel to these developments, “studies of assessment in recent years have indicated a shift in the focus of attention towards a greater interest in the interaction between assessment and classroom learning” (Black and William, 1998, p. 7). Regarding this stage, they stress the importance of “improvement in classroom assessment and their strong contribution to the improvement of learning” (p. 7). Moreover, Fradd and Hudelson (1995) comment: “...communicative language teaching methodologies shifted centralized authority in assessment to classroom where language teacher played a decisive role in assessing students by making it necessary for him/her to look for new assessment techniques to evaluate student’ achievement and progress (in Shaaban, 2005, p. 35).

In the new era of language assessment, alternative models have been adopted by taking into account many aspects such as students’ needs, interests and learning styles. Shohamy (2001) refers to the new era of language assessment as “... a focus on the uses, impact and consequences of tests and their role in educational, social, political and economic contexts.” (p. 373-374). As the research above demonstrates, language assessment requires comprehensive assessment of comprehensive learning. (Smith, 2003).

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The field of language assessment is dynamic, and it is open to innovations. For assessment purposes techniques such as *checklists, journals, logs, video recordings, self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessments* were presented by Huerta-Macias (1995). Three years later Brown & Hudson (1998) made new additions to the list with new tools like *portfolio, conferences, diaries etc.* A shift from a focus on knowledge and form in language teaching/learning towards a focus on function and communication (Taylor, 2006, p. 52) led to the emergence of above-mentioned alternative assessment tools. In this context, one of the most influential publications of the last decade was *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (Council of Europe, 1996, 2001, henceforth CEFR). CEFR has become the most-referred source for language teaching and learning. According to Figueras, North, Takala, Verhelst and Avermaet (2005, p. 261), upon adoption of CEFR by the Council of Europe and the European Union, testing bodies needed guidance in order to make examination more transparent. To this end, CEFR helps to “describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different systems of qualifications. For this purpose, the Descriptive Scheme and Common Reference levels were developed. Between them, they provide a conceptual grid, which users can exploit to describe their systems” (CEFR, 2001, p. 21).

Besides the application of alternative techniques, another promising area that researchers and practitioners have been interested in is the use of technology which play a significant role in both language education and assessment. These technological assessment procedures range from interactive textbooks to smart phone applications. In recent years, a breakthrough in language education has been observed in the incorporation of computer technology into language assessment (Alderson, 2000). It is obvious that technology has facilitated language assessment through computer-based and computer-adaptive exams since there are a great number of people who are to take high stakes exams at the same time as in TOFEL worldwide and the Centralized Foreign Language Exam (YDS) in a Turkish context.

These new techniques and opportunities are not without their obstacles, however. In his study, Ockey (2009, p. 836) discussed developments and challenges in the use of computer-based testing for assessing second language ability. In the study, he argued that since the introduction of Computer-based Testing (CBT), more authentic and reliable tests have been achieved through CBT than traditional paper-pencil tests. Despite the drawbacks of CBT such as limited usability and a failure to solve problems with statistical techniques and lack of resources necessary to implement, it continues to be used in second language assessment. It is seen that, despite the inclusion of technology, language education cannot be thought without teachers. Cirit (2015) points out that “the lack of teacher training in technology integration presents the portrayal of inexperienced and unqualified teachers who do not know how to make use of technology to improve the language developments of their students” (p. 9).

The challenge with assessment is not limited to application of technology and proper technology training of instructors, however. There are also challenges related to the development and evolution of language globally. Recently, one significant change has been witnessed within well-established varieties of English language (i.e. standard British or North American) through the emergence of new varieties in many parts of the world (Taylor, 2006, p. 51). This status of English should be tackled carefully in language teaching and assessment (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, 2012; Crystal, 2003; Taylor, 2006). It means that practices in language teaching and assessment should correspond to learners’ needs and preferences for the type(s) of English they wish/need to learn. For that reason, language teachers, both native and non-native, need to consider learners’ motivations, expectations, and aspirations about ‘standard’ or ‘non-standard’ varieties of English language.

Another newly emerged phenomenon in assessment in language education is the teacher based-assessment (TBA hereafter) as Davidson and Leung (2009) pointed out, “[it] is currently being promoted in educational policies internationally with English language teachers being called upon to plan and or implement appropriate assessment procedures to monitor and evaluate student progress in their classrooms” (p.393). On the other hand, Cheng, Rogers, & Huiqin (2004, p. 360), by stressing the important role of student assessment in teaching and learning, “provide insights about the nature of assessment practices regarding classroom teaching and learning at university level” (p. 360). Taken altogether, the research shows that more comprehensive and potentially more effective techniques for language learning in a modern context are possible but require a flexible and adaptable approach.

Considering all these developments in language teaching and assessment pedagogy, language teacher education becomes much more important since assessing the language skills of language learners at varied levels requires the use of more diverse and complicated assessment tools. For this situation, Vogt and Tsagari (2014, p. 374) point to the importance of training pre-service language teachers and quality insurance of language testing and assessment (LTA). In this context, they refer to the need of necessary expertise that can be provided by training measures. Their study aimed to identify the current level of FL teachers in LTA literacy and identify their training needs.

In a study, Fulcher (2012) indicates “an increasing need for the language testing profession to consider more precisely what it means by “assessment literacy.” There is also a call for the profession to articulate its role in the creation of new pedagogic materials and programs in language testing and assessment in order to meet the changing needs of teachers and other stakeholders in this new age” (p. 113). This article describes the stages of development of a survey instrument to uncover the training needs of language teachers. Similarly, Davies (2008) tries to seek an answer to what language assessment literacy is and presents “a “skills+ knowledge” approach to assessment literacy. Here, skills refer to the practical know-how in test analysis and construction and ‘knowledge’ of “the relevant background in measurement and language description” (p. 328). Taking a different approach, Xu and Liu (2009, p. 493) aimed to explore teachers’ assessment knowledge and practice through a narrative inquiry technique.

Another study conducted by Jannati (2015) examined assessment-related perceptions and practices of Iranian EFL teachers.

There are studies in a Turkish context, which tackle the assessment and evaluation issues of language teachers at pre-service and in-service levels. In their study, Öz and Atay (2017) studied Turkish EFL instructors' perceptions towards in-class language assessment and its reflections in practice. Hatipoğlu's (2015) study holds a distinctive place as it studied English language testing and evaluation (ELTE) training in language education. The aim of the study was to explore what preservice English teachers knew about language testing and what they thought their ELTE course should include in terms of content and teaching methodology. Presented with all of the new and emerging techniques, technologies and assessment approaches in language education, are future teachers ready to implement them on the ground?

With this question in mind, the present study aims to reveal the extent of student teachers' awareness of new trends, challenges and innovations in language assessment and their perceived level of readiness to face them in an actual language classroom. The present study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What do pre-service English teachers think about the new competencies and skills to be considered in the language classroom?
2. To what extent are the preservice English teachers aware of assessment expectations in language education?
3. Do pre-service English teachers feel competent in language assessment?

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1. Research Design*

This study adopted a case study approach by using a cohort of preservice teachers at a Turkish University as a case. As Yin (2003, p. 2) notes, 'the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena'. Its uniqueness, boundaries, the significance of the context, the accessibility to various knowledge sources, observability and in-depth analyses of a case or a phenomenon are the reasons why this research design was preferred in the study (see Paker, 2015).

#### *3.2. Participant Profiles*

The participants were 49 fourth-year preservice English teachers who joined the study on a voluntary basis. Purposive sampling was used in the recruitment of participants to carry out the study with "individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 126). These student teachers completed seven semesters and had taken two courses in testing and evaluation, one given in Turkish in their third year of education as a part of educational sciences component of the program. The purpose of this study program is to help student teachers to grasp the importance of testing and evaluation in education and learn the basic concepts such as validity, reliability, practicality. Additionally, they receive knowledge about commonly used testing techniques in education - both traditional ones (written exams, short answer, true/false, multiple choice, matching) and those alternatives aiming to get to know the students from various angles (observations, interviews, performance assessment portfolios, research projects, self-and peer assessments). Carrying out some basic statistical procedures for test results, assessment of learning outcomes, grading, and developing assessment tools in their own fields are among the contents of the course.

The next course in the program is given in English and is much more area-specific. In this course, student teachers are supposed to be familiar with the principles and constructs of classroom-based

assessment, different types of tests and testing (proficiency, achievement, diagnostic, and placement tests, direct versus indirect tests, discrete vs. integrative testing, objective vs. subjective testing, communicative language testing etc.). They also learn question types for a wide range of language assessment purposes; development and evaluation of language tests and other available options (e.g. portfolio, self-assessment, and learner diaries); and language tests for various ages and language levels. Moreover, they learn the stages of test construction, item analysis and interpretation of test scores, standardized tests (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS) and exams accredited by the council of Europe for the European Language Portfolio, teacher-prepared language tests and beneficial backwash. For the contents of the courses, see (YOK 2006-English Language Teacher Education Program).

### 3.3. Data Collection Tools and Analysis

The data were collected through open-ended survey questions such as:

- 1) *According to you, what are the contemporary language assessment techniques, approaches and methods currently used in language assessment and evaluation?*
2. *To you, what are new skills and competencies to be considered in language assessment today?*
3. *To you, what is the role of technology in language assessment and evaluation? Explain briefly.*
4. *Do you feel competent in the domain of language assessment? Explain the reasons in either case of your answers as positive or negative.*

Open-ended survey questions were preferred because no pre-predefined options or categories are provided. The participants are asked to supply their answers. Moreover, the participants can reply questions exactly how they would like to answer them. Via this technique, the researchers can investigate the meaning of the responses, which is ideal for qualitative type of research (see, Sincero, 2012). Moreover, Dörnyei (2007) summarizes the merit of using open-ended questions by stating that ... “open-format items can provide a far greater richness than fully quantitative data” (p.107). He also adds that it is useful when the open-ended questions contain some guidance. Moreover, McKay (2007, 37), classifying open-ended questions as fill-in and short-answers, suggests that the latter can be used to obtain information regarding the respondents’ thoughts on some aspects of language learning or teaching.

As the purpose of the present study was to identify student teachers’ assessment awareness and readiness level for assessment practices, the data obtained was limited to the scope of the course “Testing and Evaluation” in the program only. The open-ended survey questions were subjected to the expert opinion in the field while developing and analysing the items in the questionnaire. The interrater reliability was found to be 0.85, which is considered acceptable (see, Dörnyei, 2007). Finally, the open-ended survey questions were administered during the class hour and responding to the questions lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

To analyse the qualitative data, content analysis was used. The statements obtained were used as a guide in the process of classifying the data. In so doing, the researcher aimed to identify the recurring themes in students’ accounts (McKay, 2007). Having cleared the data, the emerged themes were given in the tables as percentages and frequencies. The extracts from the individual preservice English teachers’ responses were used to support the results in the tables.

## 4. Results

In Open-ended survey questions were answered by 49 student teachers, and the findings obtained from these questions were presented as follows:

Table 1

Major contemporary assessment techniques reported by preservice English teachers

Question	Name of Technique	Out of 49	Freq. %
According to you, what are the major contemporary assessment techniques mostly used in language assessment?	Portfolios	37	76
	Scales	24	49
	Performance Tasks	14	29
	Project Work	6	12
	Quizzes	6	12
	Diaries	4	8
	Peer Assessment	4	8
	Self-Assessment	3	6

As shown in the table above, it is seen that a majority of the student teachers report that the most popular assessment technique is the use of portfolios in assessment practices. Next to portfolios, scales are preferred by 27 student teachers (49%) and performance tests by 14 (29%), while project work and quizzes are reported by 6 (12%). Apart from the above-mentioned techniques student teachers stated that there are less frequently used techniques such as the use of diaries, peer and self-assessments with percentages ranging from 8 to 6. In addition, when the data obtained from the student teachers were investigated in more detail, it was seen that they report the use of several assessment techniques in language education. Assessment techniques referred to are multiple choice, short answer, attitude and interest scales, consideration of multiple intelligences, digital product portfolio and in-class observation. It is also notable that most of the student teachers state that alternative assessment models should be preferred as language assessment is a complex process, and one technique is not enough to assess the actual language growth of a learner. For instance, ST9 reports:

*“mostly written exams, multiple choice, portfolios and true/false, gap-filling techniques are used in language classroom. To me these are not enough as we must assess our students while they are actually using language in real context.”*

On the other hand, ST22 suggests, *“a mixed assessment model including traditional and alternative techniques should be preferred.”*

In addition, ST26 indicate, *“contemporary assessment models are based on performance. In this approach, the students’ process and progress in the target language are assessed. For that reason, we need rubrics, portfolios and project work to assess.”*

ST11 adds *“... there are alternative and performance-based assessments. There is also portfolio assessment for the long-term assessment of language development.”*

Table 2

New skills and competencies to be considered for assessment in language classroom

Question	Skills and Competencies	Out of 49	Freq. %
For you, what are the new skills and competencies to be considered for assessment in language classroom?	Speaking Skills	21	41
	Listening Skills	11	22
	Writing Skills	9	18
	Reading Skills	7	14
	Communication Skills	7	14

It is obvious in Table 2 that nearly half (41%) of the student teachers (21) think that speaking skills should be given priority in language assessment. It is also seen that student teachers present listening skills together with the speaking skills.

ST9 indicates the importance of speaking skills by stating, *“even student teachers had difficulty in communication skills. For this reason, English should be spoken in the lessons. Our ultimate target must be speaking skills in both teaching and evaluation. I think that current assessment models are mostly based on grammar.”*

Accordingly, ST4 extends his/her ideas for new skills and competencies as *“language is learned by being exposed to that language and by using it in real context, productive skills should be taken into account.”*

It is a fact that the students are aware of the importance of these two skills and that they cannot be separated from each other.

Similarly, ST10 is of an opinion that *“as grammar-translation method was used in the past, listening and speaking skills were ignored. Today with the advent of new methods and approaches, listening and speaking play a significant role in foreign language education. For that reason, pronunciation, cohesion and coherence in writing, fluency in language are the factors to be assessed carefully.”*

In addition, writing and reading skills hold a considerable value in student teachers' reports regarding new skills and competencies in language assessment. Apart from the skills given in Table 2, student teachers referred to the integration of technology, skills related to seeing the language as a whole, interactive software skills, selection of accurate vocabulary items, skills about using technology accurately, and skills using language within daily life effectively.

For this aspect, ST19 presents statements like *“what is important in language education is that it should be used in proper contexts. Reading and listening skills are being assessed. Next to them speaking skills should be added. Knowing a language means to speak it. Speaking and communication skills should be included.”*

On the other hand, ST41 puts emphasis on social environment by saying *“especially using language in daily life interactions should be taken into account because language is developed with an interaction in social environment rather than cognitive processes.”*

When student teachers were asked about the role of technology in language assessment, they all agreed that it played a considerable role (100%) in language teaching and assessment by stating that it could both shorten the evaluation processes and yield more objective results when high stakes exams were applied.

For example, ST1 mentions, *“if language teaching and assessment are supplemented by technology-enhanced materials, it becomes enjoyable by making learning more permanent.”*

On the other hand, ST20 points out that *“today technology is an indispensable resource and it helps us get access to the knowledge in seconds. With the advent of computer-assisted language teaching, it is possible to apply computer-based assessment as well. In so doing assessment becomes much more economical.”*

Some student teachers think that using technology in language assessment can provide validity, practicality and reliability as seen in the statement of ST11: *“we cannot think about an educational activity without technology. The test conducted by technological devices can yield faster, more practical and objective results.”*

Reports by the student teachers show that technology facilitates the development and assessment of both listening and speaking skills. It is reported that language learners' speaking performance can be recorded for assessment purposes through technological devices. As ST29 notes: *“songs, videos and podcasts play a significant role in language education. Technology helps us bring these to classroom. In the assessment of process language especially for speaking skills recordings or videos can be used for the assessment purposes.”*

After these three questions, student teachers were asked to rate themselves and evaluate their readiness level in assessment competencies and skills in language education. Results are illustrated in Table 3.



Table 3

## Perceptions of Preservice English teachers about their assessment competences and skills

Question	Statement	Out of 49	Freq. %
How do you perceive yourself for the assessment of your students in language classroom?	I do not feel qualified	25	51
	I feel qualified enough	18	37
	I feel neutral	6	12

The important finding is that more than half of the student teachers report that they do not feel competent enough to carry out the assessment procedures and processes when they actually start to teach in schools. Accordingly, those who felt incompetent attributed this situation to the lack of experience and practice rather than self-confidence. Moreover, they emphasized that they received enough theoretical knowledge throughout their faculty education. On the other hand, teacher candidates who saw themselves both competent and incompetent focused on experience while attributing their beliefs. Student teachers' actual statements can reinforce the reflections regarding this item.

For instance, ST4 reports his/her opinion regarding how s/he rates himself or herself, as *"although we have theoretical knowledge in language assessment, I do not feel competent enough at the moment. However, I am not pessimistic about this subject as we will gain experience in process of using this background in teaching profession."*

Similarly, ST38 has comments, *"I feel competent in language assessment in theory. I need professional development when practice is the case. This situation results from the fact that we learn theoretical aspects in the course. I think that practice part is limited due to the duration of the courses."*

One interesting reflection comes from ST11: *"I do not think that I can evaluate all language skills. The currently practiced assessment techniques and methods are not adequate to assess language skills and subskills. Assessment require more practice and experience."*

On the other hand, ST8 takes a different approach by stating, *"I have always seen myself as a good teacher candidate in practice. I think that testing and evaluation seems to me as a mathematical side of this profession. I feel that I need to take help in the first years of my teaching profession."*

However, some students feel competent enough in language assessment. Their comments are worthwhile to share. ST9 expresses his or her ideas, *"I feel competent as I have taken many courses in ELT department. As a prospective teacher, I can assess my students' language skills by using many techniques we learned in the courses."*

Accordingly, ST16 mentions similar ideas by saying: *"... I think that I have fresh knowledge in this area and it helps me think positively."* Moreover, ST22 is of the opinion *"if I am a senior student in this department, I must achieve this. While I was thinking negatively, I built up my confidence I was required to develop a rubric in the course of my teaching practice."*

It is worth citing the statements of ST26 to highlight how some student teachers perceive themselves in language assessment: *"I feel competent in terms of knowledge. However, I need practice. I know what to consider while developing a test."* ST27 refers to a different aspect with the following statements *"I feel competent but I need practice and experience. When you say I am qualified enough it will block your progress."*

## 5. Discussion

Results of the present study show that most of the student teachers do not feel ready to assess their students properly in an actual language classroom. They think that they have enough background, but when it comes to the actual assessment of language performance in a real language classroom, they express the need for more practice and experience in the field. This aspect reported by the student teachers in the present study is congruent with the findings of a study conducted by EFL instructors in a

Turkish context. In their study, Öz and Atay (2017) found that “although most of the teachers were familiar with basic classroom assessment, when it comes to classroom practice, there is an imbalance between assessment literacy and classroom reflection” (p.25). This may be interpreted that they find their training adequate and feel themselves secure in terms of assessment. However, they do not believe in themselves when it comes to apply their knowledge to their classes. They also found that there is not much of a relationship between the experience and assessment perceptions.

Another study, which supports the findings of the present study, is Vogt and Tsagari’s (2014). The data were collected from seven European countries, including Turkey. The findings showed that despite the slight differences across countries; only certain elements of Language Testing and Assessment (LTA) expertise could be developed in teacher education programs. Teachers included in the study revealed a need for a “training across the range of LTA features identified in the study, with varying priorities depending on their local educational context” (p. 374). However, one thing can help us to be hopeful here: the student teachers report that they are knowledgeable and self-confident enough when they are asked to assess their prospective language students. Considering the theory and practice dichotomy referred to by student teachers above, language teacher education programs need to search for a language teaching theory which is more practical, based on observations, practice teaching, and curriculum and materials development to fit themselves into the appropriate place in the digital age (Crandall, 2000 in Cirit, 2015, p. 9).

All the participants of the present study think that technology is an indispensable part of language education and assessment. In literature, there are some studies which put an emphasis on the use of technology in the assessment practices of language teachers. For example, Cirit (2015) who investigated the perceptions of ELT pre-service teachers towards traditional, alternative and online assessment methods finds out that when participants are given the chance of experiencing web 2.0 assessment tools they can develop positive attitudes towards the use of technology for assessment. It is important to refer to Fulcher’s (2012) study which is done to elicit the assessment needs of language teachers. This study contributed to the improvement of training in language assessment in two ways: “First, it provides new empirically- derived content for the concept of assessment literacy within which to frame materials development and teaching. Second, it uncovered methodological problems with existing survey techniques that may have influenced earlier studies” (p.113).

From the findings of the present study, it is seen that language teacher education has become much more important since assessing learners’ language skills involves much more complex processes, which requires the use of more varied alternative assessment tools. The area of language assessment with its dynamic nature has witnessed unprecedented developments through the incorporation of new technologies and addition of new skills and competencies into the testing world and increasing need for the comprehensive assessment of comprehensive learning (Smith, 2003). It is also seen in the studies that there is an urgent need for the provision of training in language assessment both for pre- and in-service teachers.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study was conducted in an English language teacher education department of a state university with fourth-year students who took the course Testing and Evaluation in ELT in the last semester of their teacher-training program. The findings of the study show that the great majority of the preservice teachers were aware of the importance of language assessment and reported their willingness to use portfolios, scales, performance tasks and project work in their future assessment practices. They put an emphasis on the importance of using alternative assessments in order to evaluate their students’ language growth. This finding contradicts what they have observed in their practicum experiences. Although they attached great

importance to alternative assessment tools, they have mostly observed that their mentors in their practice schools used traditional testing techniques such as gap-filling, short answer, matching, true/false and multiple-choice in their assessment practices. They also pointed out that they are not against the use of these techniques as they present alternatives depending on the aim of the teachers to assess student learning. However, they stress the importance of using various assessment tools (portfolios, project work, diaries, etc.) to collect data from various sources in order to achieve a more valid and reliable assessment of comprehensive learning. They further reveal the necessity of the assessment of process, progress and product of learning in an integrated way in language education.

It is also considerable that preservice English teachers mentioned the importance of the assessment of productive skills, communication skills and they emphasize that speaking skills as well as listening skills should have a priority over other language skills in language assessment processes. It is obvious from the findings that the participants of the present study are aware of newly emerged skills such as assessing language learners in a group regarding their contribution, their collaboration, and writing joint articles, learning as a group and presentation skills (Stanley, 2004). The findings also demonstrate that the student teachers think that technology can make great contributions to the assessment practice by providing faster, reliable results.

In the present study, while a great majority of the preservice teachers feel ready for assessments in terms of theoretical background and knowledge content, they do not feel qualified enough to carry out the assessments required when they start their teaching profession in an actual language classroom. The finding is also supported by Hatipoğlu's (2015) study. In this study, it is stated that "... a serious lack of professional knowledge and training among language teachers, may lead to deepening discrepancies between "the new learning cultures" targeted in educational curriculum reforms in 2005 and 2014, and the traditional testing and assessment practices followed by teachers in Turkey" (p. 125). Moreover, student teachers in the present study stress the importance of gaining practice and experience in time in the actual classroom. They also report that assessments require expertise and it will be achieved in time through both training and experience. Interestingly, some student teachers mention that they have already built up self-confidence through four-year academic teacher education, and they believe that they can fill the practice gap quickly.

The present study has some limitations. First, it is a case study, which is limited to the data obtained from one ELT department and 49 student teachers. However, being qualitative in nature, this study provides insights into the existing ideas, thoughts and perspectives regarding their future assessment practices. This study has attempted to gain a general view of the assessment needs of language teachers that can be used as a basis for the development of language teacher education programs. As such, it aims to fill a gap in the field, and speak to the urgent need for reevaluation of contents of testing and evaluation courses in the program.

Regarding the results of this and similar studies, new skills and competencies should be included in the syllabi of testing and assessment courses in ELT programs. Technology should be incorporated into language teacher education at faculty and an emphasis should be placed on technology-integrated practices in assessment. In so doing, preservice English teachers can develop assessment tools for specific outcomes of a specific language skill or skills and they will be able to activate their skills and competencies by getting constructive and informative feedback from the language educators in the related courses. It can be suggested that preservice language teachers be provided with opportunities for faculty education through small group workshops and seminars on a regular basis for them to be equipped with recent developments in the testing world. Otherwise, language education in our local context will continue with only limited assessment tools and language skills such as grammar, vocabulary and reading. Moreover, it is important to note that pre-service teachers' assessment education cannot be seen

as separate from that of the in-service teachers as they are in close contact with them in their teaching practice in schools.

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