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THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH TEACHING METHODS COURSE OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF
KABUL EDUCATION UNIVERSITY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS

A Thesis Presented By

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Section One

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the basic principles that can promote education and to build capacity in educational institutes in Afghanistan. In order to bring comprehensive changes in all aspects of education such as administration, curriculum, content, and instructional design, it is important that educators have access to up-to-date resources, computers, the internet, and other technologies that can aid in the educational process. Faced with the reality English is the language of science and technologies that Afghans need an education that will prepare them for the globalized world. In this respect, teachers, students, and educators all need to know English. Moreover, knowing English increases the opportunities for Afghan students and educators to participate in international exchange programs which will help and facilitate the process of bringing new ideas and perspectives back to Afghanistan.

To meet this crucial need, Afghan educators should look for ways to improve English language capacity of student in elementary and secondary school, and reevaluate the effectiveness of current English instructional methods in Afghanistan schools. In this regard, the English teaching methods has a fundamental role in learning English; and I found it worthwhile to explore the English teaching methods course which is taught in the English department of Kabul Education University. I explored how the English teaching method course meets the needs of secondary school English teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Due to current situation in English language proficiency is a basic need in the field of education. To meet this need, the Afghanistan Ministry of Education has shifted teaching English

language from seventh grade (middle school) to fourth grade (primary school). This revision in curriculum and teaching syllabus has brought profound changes along with new expectation for teaching English in secondary schools in order to meet the needs of English in higher education programs.

An English teaching methodology course is a venue where changes and expectations regarding how English should be taught can be formulated and explored. In the other words, teaching English can be thought of as carrying out a project, English teaching methods course is the is training for the project managers and implementers. Thus, the overall purpose of this research study is to investigate the influences of the 'English teaching methods course' of the English department of Kabul Education University on English teachers of secondary school, as well as explore the positive changes that this course can bring in the way of teaching English in secondary schools. Thus, this study portrays the current state of teaching English methods course in in-service classroom of the English department of KEU and evaluates the influences of the course on secondary school English teachers.

Rationale

Kabul Education University is the largest university in the country which trains roughly 1,000 secondary school teachers each year. KEU serves as a model university for all other teacher training universities in Afghanistan. The results and findings of this study will be useful for all English instructors of English teacher at training institutions; as well as by English teachers of secondary school throughout Afghanistan.

Format of the Research Study

This research project is designed to explore the extent to which ‘the English teaching methods course in the English department of Kabul Education University meets the needs of secondary school English teachers. In this respect, this research explores to what extent the content of the course is compatible and applicable to Afghanistan secondary school English programs. To explore the coherency and relevancy of the ‘English Teaching Methods course’ with the secondary school English program, the study uses qualitative research methods, and an ethnographic approach.

The research participants of this study include the head of the English department of KEU, English instructors from the university English departments (the instructors who taught English teaching methods course), and in-service students (in-service students are the current teachers of Kabul high schools who simultaneously teach English and pursue their teaching certificate at Kabul Education University).

Exploring the effects of English teaching methods course on English teaching proficiency of secondary school English teachers would entail a longitudinal qualitative research study. The scope of this research study, however, is restricted and has been designed to probe the issues and factors which shape the inputs and outputs of the English teaching method course. This research study explores the content and objectives of the course and probes how the targets (in-service students) utilize the components of the course in their classes in secondary school. Overall the study is presented in seven sections.

Section one explains the format of the paper which includes a brief description of each of the sections; moreover, the section states the purpose and rationale for the research. Section two discusses the methodology of the research study, and explains the steps and framework of the

research project. Additionally, this section, briefly, introduces the research informants and their background of teaching. The data collection observation, interview, research site, and consultation and communication are explained in this section.

Section three, through literature review, gives details about the historical background of teaching English in Afghanistan and also talks about the traditional (teacher-centered method, and rote memorization) ways of teaching English in Afghanistan. Moreover, the section touches upon the common concept and understanding of teaching and the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning process in Afghanistan.

Section four presents the context of the study which is the core component of this research study. Through this section the basic parts of the course such as syllabus, activities, methods, class feature, social interactions between instructors and students and between students and students are investigated. Furthermore, the section explains the approaches such as task-based methods, whole language theory, and practicum (in-class practice and out of class practices) which the instructors use in the teaching and learning process.

Section five presents about the teaching method course and analyzes the methods, skills, and tools which the course introduces to the students. Then it compares the teaching conditions and situation of the university-classroom where the students study and experience the new methods and teaching techniques, with the teaching conditions and situation of secondary schools. The research then looks at the degree of utilize of each of those skills and tools in secondary school classrooms. Over all, the section balances the effect or output of the course and presents findings from the course content and class activities.

Section six presents the findings which contains the strengths and weaknesses points of the course. Section seven includes the conclusion and the possibility for the future research.

Section Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Teaching English in Secondary school in Afghanistan

Teaching English, as a foreign language, has a long history in Afghanistan. Upon the introduction of modern education, English was also taught in secondary schools in Afghanistan. The establishment of Habibia Lysee (high school) by King Habubullah in 1903, and the adoption of the 'British Indian high school curriculum' served as the prologue of English being taught as a foreign language in secondary schools in Afghanistan (modern education in Afghanistan, p. 4).

With the proclamation of independency of Afghanistan by Shah Amanullah in 1919, the modernization of the Afghanistan education system accelerated. In 1922, the Ministry of Education was established and several high schools were opened in Kabul. At that time dozens of primary schools were founded in villages and remote areas. King Amanullah attempted to bring Afghanistan in line with the educational systems of other countries such as Turkey, Egypt and European countries and "in 1927 Ghazi high school was founded in Kabul and taught in English" (p. 5). Consequently English became a standardized school subject which was taught beginning in seventh grade at all secondary schools throughout Afghanistan.

Eventually, after many fluctuations of consistent English teaching in the past three decades (with brief disruptions during the Soviet Union and Taliban occupation), in 2004 the Ministry of Education revised the entire curriculum of primary and secondary school and English language studies implemented into primary school education beginning at the fourth grade (the MoE). While the new curriculum does address the needs of English language attainment by students, there is not much regarding how to address English proficiency of teachers who teach in primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

Conventional English teaching

Traditional methods of teaching have a strong connection with home-based teaching or indigenous teaching methods in Afghanistan. In this situation, ‘chalk and talk’ is the dominant method of teaching (Pia & Manosry, n.d). The traditional understanding of teaching in Afghanistan is that the teacher is the focal point of class activities and handles the responsibility of all teaching activities. Teachers utilize the same teaching methodologies of teaching regardless of the age, understanding level, or grades of pupils. Learning actions are restricted to reading and memorizing textbooks and there are no supplementary activities to help students understand and visualize the content of a lesson. During class time teachers read text aloud and involve students in a process of repeating the text.

The traditional learning environment consists of ‘discipline, listening, obeying, repeating, and reproducing’ (Menon, Care International, 2008). This conventional way of teaching is common in secondary school and discipline is considered as a basic component of education. If we think of the concept of education in Afghanistan, always in Afghanistan it is common for education and discipline to be considered one and the same. The phrase *talim wa tarbia* always come together which *talim* stands for education and *tarbia* is equivalent to discipline. There is an assumption that education and discipline should promote in parallel; the more a student advances in his or her education, the more he or she should be punctual, dutiful, and acquiescent.

Traditional English teaching style, helping students finish their text book is their ultimate goal. Finishing text book is commonly considered a success among Afghan teachers. In 2006 Abdul Jalil Kahdistani, an English instructor of English department of Kabul education

University conducted a research by the name of *comparative study on method of teaching*. He explored the English teaching situation in Afghanistan. In his study, he interviewed several English teachers from different high schools of Kabul city and asked for their ideas and understanding of traditional teaching methods. Its research suggests that the following are key features of traditional methods of teaching in secondary schools in Afghanistan.

- Teachers are at the center of all activities
- Teachers work a lot
- Teacher accomplishes all activities
- Teachers work a lot and transfer the knowledge to the students
- Teachers just teach textbooks
- The lessons are just prepared in accordance to the syllabus of the textbooks
- Students are afraid of entering the class since the class environment is dreadful and teachers act like dictators
- Students learn but forget soon

Kahdistani's research shows that, for teachers, the notion that "discipline and learning are inseparable is strong and stubborn". The teachers, who participated in Kahdistani's research study, repeatedly had emphasized class-control, punctuality, and teacher at the center of learning process as the primary understanding of traditional teaching methodologies.

Teacher-centered teaching style

Teacher-centered teaching is a method commonly used by Afghan teachers. This is a method of teaching that most teachers received when they were students and they continue to utilize and perpetuate this teaching method. In this style of teaching the teacher performs,

accomplishes, and conveys all teaching and learning activities to the students. The students sit passively listen and receive information as communicated by the teacher. Given that, teaching English as a foreign language is more monotonous process; teaching is reduced to recital and word by word translation of English to the two native languages Dari and Pashto. Instead of coaching and leading students to cognitively understand the overarching message of the lesson, teachers make the students read, and repeat, and memorize.

In order to be able to communicate effectively in English students need the opportunity to practice the language, but in a teacher-centered environment student learn very little. It is not uncommon for teachers to lecture or read from a book while word by word translating entire sentences and paragraphs. As a result of this type of English language teaching, many high school graduates have difficulty even introducing themselves in English. With all emphasis on reading and rote memorization, Afghan students have no opportunity to actually hone their language abilities in the classroom.

In teacher-centered method of teaching in Afghanistan, the classroom is arranged in a manner that has all students seated in rows and faced toward the board. Usually teacher stands or sits in front of the class; being in front of the class helps them to see all students and control what they are doing. During the class students are quiet, calm, and concentrated on the teacher. Asking questions or discussing a lesson with a classmate is considered a breach of classroom etiquette and gravelly in discipline. Instead of asking questions or discussing class materials with classmates, students must be obedient to the teacher to avoid punishment. Carrasquillo (1994) noted that in English as a second language courses, it is important that learners have the opportunity to talk and practice what they are learning in the classroom.

The sooner the students realize that language habits drive from custom and usage rather than from logic, the sooner they will get down to the serious business of mastering a new set of language skills. As a general rule, we may say that the teacher should do no more than 25 percent of the talking in the class, and that students should be permitted to do 75 percent of the talking (p. 135).

In teacher-centered setting a teacher acts as if he or she is the experts with all of the answers.

This hierarchy discourages student's collaboration and leaves complete authority in the handoff the teacher.

In a teacher-centered way of teaching, which is one of the mainstays of traditional education in Afghanistan, a teacher judges the understanding of students based on his or her own understanding of the content. There are no standards and norms for tests and exams to assess students' level of understanding and their achievements. Teachers individually make the questions and expect students to answer by the exact words that he/she explained or conveyed in the lesson in the lesson during class. To elaborate the facts about teacher-centered way of teaching the followings will explain the much highlighted points which are common in teaching English in secondary school in Afghanistan.

Rote Memorization Style

Rote memorization is one of the most common features of teacher-centered ways of teaching and is used extensively in secondary schools throughout Afghanistan. In this style of teaching, a teacher basically teaches a text and then asks students to read and repeat. And the only materials which teachers use in rote memorization are chalk and board. Menon (CARE International, 2008) summarized the report of Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit's (AREU) about teaching condition in Afghanistan; she noted in her report

...most observed classes had only a black board and chalk as their learning material, and the use of any kind of supplementary material was extremely rare. The teacher often did not understand the textbooks themselves. Not surprisingly the most commonly used teaching methods were repetition, rote learning, copying and memorizing the text. Very little or no student participation took place. No student-to-student interaction for learning was evident. Task-based learning or problem-solving activities such as discussions or classroom activities were hardly evident. In general, there was no promotion of analytical or critical thinking on the part of the students. Learning was conceived as entirely a matter of memorizing the content of the textbooks (P. 6).

In the field of English language instruction, the challenges can be ever more acute. Teachers are not professional or even they are not graduated from English department, but they teach English in secondary schools. According to (CARE International report, 2008) ‘often the teachers do not understand the textbook themselves’ so this is true with majority of English teachers of secondary school that deteriorated more the condition of rote memorization in English classes. The only thing that students can work on is to read, repeat and copy some new vocabulary which is written on the board. In the other words, lack of English language proficiency, coupled with a reliance on poor instruction (rote memorization) only to compound the problems that students face with studying English.

Grammar Translation Method

Taking into consideration the style of teaching English in secondary schools in Afghanistan, we can see, in some parts, it is similar to ‘grammar translation method’. This method, once called classic method of teaching, is an old style of teaching which helps student to learn a foreign language. As well as this method helps the learners to study the grammar of the target language and by knowing grammar of the target language become more familiar with the structure of their native language (freeman, 2000, p. 11).

In grammar translation method, memorization is the primary strategy for the teaching and learning process. The method emphasizes reading, writing, translating, and grammar practice,

(Thirumalai April 2002). In this method teacher plays the central role; most of the activities are accomplished by the teacher and typically students are the receiver of the actions of the teacher. According to Freeman (2003) believed that the role of grammar translation method is so traditional; the teacher is the authority in the classroom and the students have to follow what she says, so they can learn what she knows.

In the grammar translation method, most of the teaching and learning activities come from the teacher and there is not much chance for a student to initiate or take part in class activities. Grammar and vocabulary are the most primary emphasize of the learning activities; while reading and writing are considered basic elements that students must learn. In this regard, the grammar translation method does not pay much attention to some other parts, pronunciation, listening, and speaking, all of which has profound affect on learning the target language (Freeman, pp. 17, 18). According to the author, the very common components which teachers consistently use in grammar translation method are as follows

- A- Translation of a literary passage. The aim of this activity is to make sure that the students understand the meaning of the text that they study in the class. In this regard, the students are given a passage from a textbook and were asked to read and translate the text to their native language. The translation is either written or spoken but the students have to pay attention to the grammatical structure and the vocabulary they use.
- B- Reading comprehension questions. After reading a passage, a student must answer a question in the target language. Students infer the answer based on their understanding from the passage and relate there answers to the passage.

- C- Antonyms/synonyms. In this activity, the teacher gives the students a set of words and asks them to find the antonym or synonym of the words. Another variation on this activity is to give students words which occur in the passage and ask students define them through with antonyms and synonyms (this activity is similar to elicitation which in-service students study at KEU's English department).
- D- Fill-in-the-blanks. In this exercise students read the sentences with missing words and fill in the blank with the appropriate words. While students are filling out the blanks, they might fill the blanks with relevant prepositions, verbs, and different tenses; so that they practice learning new vocabulary and forming sentence structures.
- E- Memorization. This is an activity where students memorize a given a list of vocabulary in the target language and its equivalent meaning in their native language grammatical rules are also learned in this manner.
- F- Use words in sentences. In order to make sure that students understand a passage, the teacher asks them to make sentences by using the new words that they learned in the passage. Sometimes a teacher will give the students a topic to write about in the target language and ask them to use the words that they learned in the passage.

From this basic comparison it is apparent that both traditional teacher-centered styles of teaching and Grammar translation method have interchangeable procedures. In this regard, in both ways of teaching, teachers are the authority in the classroom, they ask the students for more repeat and memorization and fewer students participate in teaching activities.

Above is the depiction of English teaching methods which are commonly using in secondary schools in Afghanistan. With that in view, it helps to see what methods and skills the

English teaching methods course of English department of Kabul Education University

introduces and how the in-service students utilize them in their own classes in secondary schools.

Section Three

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate whether the English teaching methods course at the English department of KEU meets the needs of English proficiency of secondary school English teachers. In addition, to explore the applicability of the course components to secondary schools English program, I launched a series of class observations, interviews, formal and informal discussions with the head of the English department, English method instructors and school teachers (in-service students). In this regard, I found ‘ethnography’ the relevant approach to my research study. As teaching and learning is a procedure in which both social-interactions and mental processes have an interchangeable relationship; ethnography sounds the most appropriate and relevant approach for this research topic.

Research itself is a rather new phenomenon in Afghanistan. It is rare that one can find documents about teaching and learning English in Afghanistan. Efforts to gather information from the English department of Kabul University and its library and also Kabul Education University’s library proved to be an unrewarding task. The only things which I found were a few research papers that were recently written by professors in the English department of KEU and some old documents in the Kabul University library.

The documents which I found in Kabul University’s library were the research papers about English teaching in Afghanistan from the 1950s and 1960s and were written by foreign professors. The era in which they did their researches were completely different from the present situation in Afghanistan. In 1950s and 1960s, English was not a prioritized language in Afghanistan. Currently, because of technologies, the job-market, economics, and better access to

modern knowledge and information, the ministry of Higher Education is preparing a strategy to shift the teaching medium to English. The Ministry of Education has also switched teaching English from seventh grade to fourth grade. As the result of these changes, most of those researches were not useful or relevant to this research.

To shape my research and support my observations and interviews' process, I reviewed the work of KEU's English instructors and some other research documents that scholars and NGOs have written in the field of teaching English as foreign language.

Research questions

In order to shape the research and focus on the input and output of the English methods course, the research is structured around three major questions and some minor or peripheral questions. The major: questions touch upon the over all goals and objectives of the course. These questions are

- a) To what extent does the "English Teaching Methods course" meet the needs of English proficiency of secondary schools' English teachers?
- b) To what extent is the content of the English teaching methods course compatible and applicable in secondary schools' English classrooms?
- c) What changes does the course bring in the teaching methods of English teachers in secondary school?

The minor questions are more specific than the major questions and focus on specific aspect of the teaching and learning process of the English teaching methods course; and the questions are:

- What procedures does the English teaching methods course follow?
- How is the syllabus of the course organized?

- What is the structure of the content of the course?
- Which components of the course are more applicable in secondary school English?
- What are the reactions of the teachers (in-service students) to the course components?

Research participants

The participants of this research project include the head of English department, English teaching method instructors and the fourth year (senior) in-service students of the English department at Kabul Education University. In addition to the head of the English department; two teaching methods' instructors and twelve in-service students participated in this small-scale research. The selection of the participants was not random. I asked the whole class who was willing to participate in this research study and twelve students volunteered. All of the students in the class were secondary school teachers, so it was the reasonable choice to ask them for voluntary participation in the research study. Prior to the selection all potential participants were informed that they would be observed and interviewed and that the interviews would be tape-recorded and then transcribed. Moreover, I tried to involve the participants that were more experienced teachers in the class .In this regard, I found that the fourth year in-service students more experience of teaching in schools than the other students at the university. The following matrix depicts the participants:

Participants position	No	Gender	Age (approximately)	Degree	Years of teaching at University/secondary school

Head of the English department	1	Male	45	MA of Language and Art from University of Indiana		5 year head of the English department 12 years teaching English	
English teaching methods instructor	2	Female	30-40	BA Master candidate		10-17 years teaching at university	
In-service students	12	5 male 7 female	23-35	1	4 College degree(2 years study at teacher training center)	1	12 Years teaching in secondary school
						3	7 Years “ “ “
						6	4-5 Years “ “ “
				2	8 High school background	2	3 Years teaching in secondary school

Data collection

Initial steps for collecting data included contacting the English department of Kabul Education University, particularly the English methods instructors. With the view that gatekeepers are the ones who can lead you to valuable information or they can hinder a study (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, pp. 164, 165), so before designing the scope of my project, I wrote to the English method instructors and confirmed that they will help me in the field. Second, through the English teaching methods' instructors I was introduced to the fourth year in-service class. During data collection in the field, I followed qualitative methods, particularly ethnography approach. Rossman and Rallis (2003) believe that essentially qualitative research is interactive;

thus this entails that the researcher should be directly involved in participants' activities in the field (p.35). Class observations and interaction with participants was carried out over duration of three weeks. This allowed me get to know them and to get information about where they taught, what classes they taught, how they taught, and besides teaching what other activities they are engaged in. Furthermore, in order to get involved in the participants' activities I initiated informal discussions and dialogue about education and teaching and the learning process. The following tools were used during the data collection: observation, taking notes, interviews, and audio recording.

Observations

I observed the fourth year in-service English teaching methods class for three weeks. Prior to the observation, I met with the instructors and established schedule for the observation sessions. I observed the senior (fourth year) in-service class. The class normally met two times per week, each class session lasted for 90 minutes and in total I observed nine hours of inside class activities not including the out of class observation.

In-class observation

Observation Length	Place	Observation per Week	Time per each Observation	Total Time
Three Weeks	Fourth year in-service class	Twice	90 minutes	9 Hours

During the observation sessions I focused on the activities that were used during the teaching process; and, also the interactions of the students and instructors in the class. Moreover,

I was interested in the procedures and materials which the instructors used during the teaching and how they involved their students in the teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, as part of class observation, I observed the teaching practice of students at three different secondary schools at the end of the semester. This practical part consisted of in-class practice (presentations, performances, and group activities), and out of class activities in which the in-service teachers were observing the teaching of fourth year pre-service students and giving them feedback. In total I observed three 90 minute sessions of out of class activity.

Out of class Observation

place	Number of school	Time per each observation	Total Time
Secondary school	3	90 minutes	270 minutes

Conducting out of class observation also allowed me for observation of study participants' classes in their schools and to see how they teach and run their own classes. During class observation the following was taken into consideration:

- Class feature/physical arrangement
- Social interactions (between instructors and students and students with students)
- Teaching styles (what specific methods and skills utilized by instructors use in the class)
- The teaching materials they used

Observation protocol is in appendix I.

Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of two separate categories of questions, one for the course instructors and another for the students. The questions ranged from general to specific and each of the categories focused on specific aspect of the teaching method course. Each interview included two parts, the formal part which was tape-recorded and the discussion part which was not tape-recorded but the important points of the discussion were noted. The informal discussion also allowed for clarification allowed for follow up discussion on issues that could not be covered during the formal interview, so I discussed them during the informal discussion. The discussion sessions also allowed for clarification of ambiguous answers from the tape-recorded interviews. The lengths of formal and informal interviews were different. In the case of instructors, each interview continued between 30 to 45 minutes, and for the students, each of the interviews lasted for 25 to 30 minutes. In informal (discussion) interview lasted longer than formal interviews. The lengths of discussion with instructors were about 60 to 90 minutes and with students it continued about one hour each.

Interviewee	N/Interviewee	Types of Interview		Length of each of interview	N/Interview	total
University instructor	2	A	Formal	35-45 minutes	1+1	2
		B	Informal	60-90 minutes	1+2	3
Fourth year in-service students	12	A	Formal	25-30 minutes	7×2	14
					5×1	5
			Informal	Almost 1 hour	Almost 12 hour	12

The formats of the interviews with the in-service students were completely changed. After a pilot interview with some of the student participants I noticed that for some of the informants, due to poor speaking skills, it was difficult to explain in English. Given the reality, I used the three languages, English Dari (Farsi), and Pashto to conduct the interviews depending of

the preference of the interviewees. All I interviews were transcribed and later translated in to English.

Each of the interviews took place in different locations. The interviews with the instructors went smoothly; because I could meet them in their offices and the interview sessions went smoothly. With respect to students, I met them in different places and different times. I interviewed some of them at the university, some in their schools, and some of them in their dormitories. As all of them were mature school teachers, they had no anxiety about answering the questions. I found more comfortable those whom I interviewed at their schools. They were more relaxed, settled, and willing to talk more, and oftentimes they digressed from what I was asking. The followings are samples of the questions that I asked during the interviews are

Instructors:

- How long have you been teaching ‘English Teaching Methods’?
- How do you organize your course syllabus to meet students’ (In-service teachers) needs?
- What specific indicators do you use to see the compatibility of the English Method course with school English subject?

Sample of interview question for students

- How long have you been teaching English in school?
- What specific segments of this course are really helping you in your teaching in school?
- Did you notice any change (interests, willingness, courage...) in your students after applying the tools which you gained from the Method Course? If yes what are those changes?

For more details, the entire interview protocols for both instructors and in-service students can be found in appendix II and III.

Research site

Kabul Education University is the largest teacher training university in Afghanistan and it enrolls students from throughout the country. In addition, the English departments of other provincial teacher training universities and institutions follow the syllabus and curriculum of KEU's English department; so I found it the relevant site for my research project. However, this is a small research study which is not able to fully account the challenges of teaching English in secondary schools in Afghanistan. Because of the academic relationship of KEU's English department with English departments of other teacher training institutions, the findings of this study project will be relevant for all English instructors and secondary school teachers.

Consultations and Communications

During research in the field I continually met and communicated with different stakeholders which directly or indirectly had influence on my research and data collection. In this respect, the head of the English department, English methods' instructors and some other professors and experts from the master's program of the Higher Education Program (HEP) were the people whom I referred to when I needed logistic or technical support. In this regard, consulting with some professors of the master's program was technically helpful and informative. In fact, guidance of the HEP master's program shaped my data collection process and I got the idea how to start collecting the data and how I should start. For instance, one of the professors suggested that I review the course content and syllabus before I started the observation and interview sessions.

Familiarity with the site

It is said that in order to conduct effective field research, a researcher must be familiar with the research site. In this respect, I have extensive acquaintance with the site in which I launched my research. In 2002, I matriculated in English department of Kabul Education University and in 2005 received my bachelor degree in English language and literature. After graduating from the English department of KEU, I was accepted as an English instructor at Bamyan University and continued teaching English for almost two years. During these two years as an English teacher in Bamyan University, I continually kept in touch with the professors and instructors of KEU, particularly my professors in the English department.

In fall 2007 I was accepted to study for my master's degree at the Center for International Education (CIE) in the department of Education Policy Research and Administration (EPRA) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Studying at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I kept in touch with my professors in English department at KEU via Cyber-corresponding. As a result of this relationship and correspondence with KEU's advisors I received support in conducting my research study.

Limitation

This is a small-scale research study exploring the affects of the English teaching method course on secondary school English teachers; however there were some constraints and limitations. In this respect, time limitation was the main constraint which was a problem. In order for effective qualitative research to take place, ample time is needed in the field directly interacting with participants. Accordingly in the time interval for this research was too short and

insufficient. This time inadequacy hampered my efforts to go deeper into details of the research process.

Another constraint associated with the time limitation was synchronizing of my research with mid term and final exams of both the university and secondary schools. As all the research participants were university instructors and in-service school teachers, all of them were busy with their exams and grading the papers of their students. With respect to the students-informants it was not an appropriate time because they were much busier than at other times. They had to prepare for their exams at the university's courses and administer the exams of their students in secondary school where they were teaching.

In addition, time constraints influenced the scope of my data collection, as well as on interaction with the research participants in the field. Therefore, in order to consider the 'do-ability' of the research study, I had to limit the scope of the project to the course syllabus and the activities in the university-classroom.

After finishing data collection in the field, I noticed some deficiencies in the scope and elements of the research plan. First, heads of English departments of secondary schools are directly involved with the teachers' lesson plans and class syllabuses, so that they are the ones who at the first place recognize if there is any change in teaching style of their teachers. Second, parents observe the learning development of their children's study progress on a daily basis. Third, the syllabus of English of secondary school and the policy of the Ministry of Education are the interrelated factors of English teaching method course that might be taken into consideration. Lastly, the students of secondary schools when teachers are the in-service

students should be observed and the students should be asked about what and how their teachers taught them.

Overall the simultaneity of the university and secondary schools' exams with my research period meant that I could not have more interaction with the research participants. In order to reflect the effects of the English teaching method course on secondary school English teachers, it should be repeat that, one should go beyond the university-classrooms and explore the environment of secondary school classrooms where new skills and methods meet the ground. But due to the constraints the study, the assumptions and interpretations of this research study are more anecdotal which has derived from what I observed in university-classrooms and from the details which the participants have recounted.

ENGLISH TEACHING METHODS COURSE

This section discusses the observations and data from the interviews to explore the course contents and approaches that the course pursues. The themes which are used in this section come from syllabus-review of the course and also from observations and interviews.

Background

English teaching methods course is a series of 12 credit course which are offered by the English department of Kabul Education University. Kabul Education University is the largest teacher training university in the country and trains teachers for both secondary school and teacher training colleges. The university consists of six faculties: faculty of natural science, faculty of physical training, faculty of social science and faculty of language and literature, faculty of special education, and faculty of vocational training. A total of 28 departments are functioning within the frame of the six faculties and 170 professors, lecturers and teacher assistants offer teacher training to 5200 pre and in-service students from across the country. In addition, Kabul Education University is the first university in the country which applied credit system in its departments. (MoHE)

The faculty of Language and Literature consists of five departments and is one of the faculties with largest number of enrolled students. In addition to the two national languages departments (Dari and Pashtu), there are three other foreign language departments including English, Arabic and Russian. These departments train professional teachers for secondary school throughout the country.

Within the faculty of language and literature, the English department has the number of students. In order to meet the needs of the students (English teachers of secondary school), the

English department tries to provide a dynamic curriculum and syllabus and offers new courses. According to Ahmad-Zai, the head of English department of KEU, the department persistently tries to keep the dynamism of the curriculum and syllabus to address the needs of secondary school English teachers. He added that, based on academic necessities, the department recognized the needs for secondary school teachers to know how to conduct research using computer and be able to access to the internet to gather up to date knowledge and information. During the 2009 academic year, in an effort to increase the knowledge and proficiency of school English teachers, the department offered two new courses, Research Methods, and Study Skills.

Purpose of the English Teaching Methods Course

Since the goal of the English department of Kabul Education University is to train large number of secondary schools' English teachers in large numbers, the department prioritizes the courses and curriculum which provide students with basis of proficiencies in teaching skills. To meet this purpose, the English Teaching Methods course is aimed at providing both prospective (pre-service) and current (in-service) teachers with up to date and contemporary knowledge, skills, and information on teaching and learning.

The Content of the English Teaching Methods Course

English Teaching Methods course is a twelve credit course which is offered in third and fourth years in English department. The 12 credits are not offered in one course in a semester. Students must take this course in third and fourth years of study at the university for a total of four semesters (three credits per semester).

This is one of the basic and required courses that basically prepare students with teaching skills and proficiency. Since the English department has the largest number of both pre

and in-service students there are several third and fourth grades that simultaneously take this course; due to this, several teachers are teaching the same course. Considering the importance of the course, the department with contribution from the British Council provided the methods' course with a special room as 'English teaching lab and the collection of teaching books'. Principally the course is consisting of two parts, theories and practicum; in fact these theory and practicum is amalgamating of methods, skills, and the tools of teaching.

A-Approaches of Teaching English

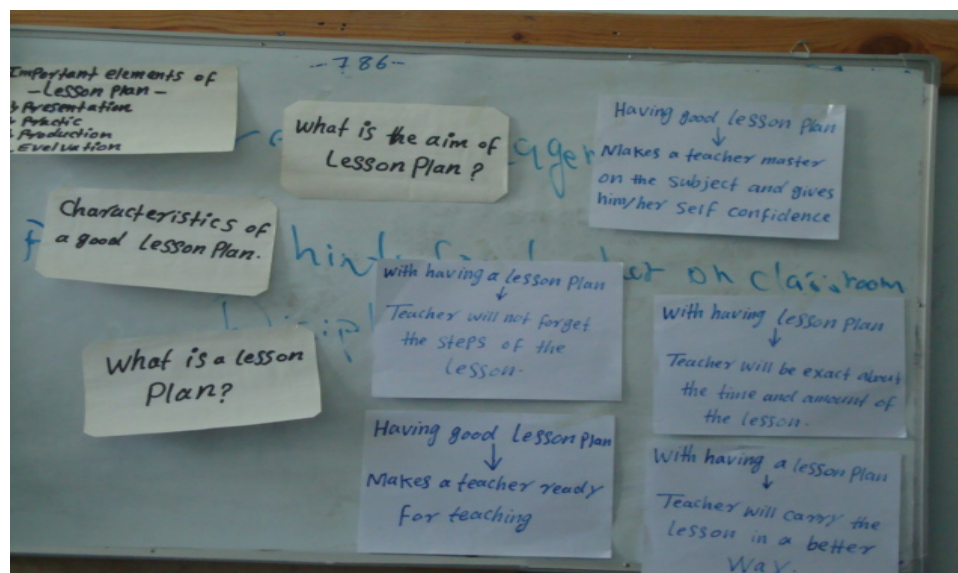
Based on interviews, meetings, discussions with instructors, students (in-service students), and three weeks of class observations I found that the theoretical part of the English Teaching course is consisting of methods (set of tools, skills, experiences) of teaching English which are excerpted from different resources and books. Based upon my several interviews with the two English methods course instructors and 12 secondary school teachers (in-service students) and the two week class observation, I figured out that the components of the Teaching English Method course is synthesized from different approaches and skills of teaching English as foreign language. Taking this into consideration, the core components are a combination of Task-based method and Whole Language theory. To elaborate the connectivity and similarities of the contents of the course with Task-based method and Whole Language theory, each of these theories respectively will be illustrated through this section.

Task-based Method

Task-based method is a style of teaching that establishes situation where students accomplish or solve problems using their language (Lochana and Gitoshree, 2006). In task-based method students have opportunity to use their language and repeat what they gained during the class time. Harmer (2007) also believes that a task-based method approach helps students focus on accomplishing task, and while doing a task they can ask questions from colleagues, so these activities are opportunities for them to learn forms of the language (p. 71).

With this in view, the approach which the English teaching methods' instructors are pursuing is closely related to definition of task-based method of teaching. In one interview, one of the English methods instructors commented that mostly they want to facilitate and give students opportunities to practice what they are learning here in the class. The instructors added that these opportunities come through working in small groups in order to work on specific tasks, such as group presentations, class discussions, peer coaching, and giving feedback to each other.

With respect to the relevancy of task-based methods with teaching in English in secondary school, the instructors emphasized the two points: First, English is not the first language in Afghanistan, and due to numerous problems such as insecurity and economy, the majority of our teachers (in-service students) have only high school background of education and they are teaching English in secondary schools. Due to these problems, they have limited access to English resources to upgrade their English knowledge and skills, so their language is poor. Consequently, accomplishing the class tasks demands more reading, writing and talking in English, thus it help them to improve their language skills. For example, when they finish their tasks, they present in the class; it is a good opportunity for them to speak in English, practice and repeat what they learned from the class.



Students' Group Presentation

Second, this should be taken into consideration that English teaching methods class is obviously the place for teaching practice. The in-service students are secondary school teachers, so accomplishing class tasks and assignments and presenting them in the class help them to be practically involved in teaching and learning process. Furthermore, this is a good opportunity for them to take advantage from usefulness of group work, sharing ideas, giving feedback, and peer coaching. The instructors elaborated that, through these ways of teaching we want to expose them (in-service students) to the new methods of teaching which is shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered style of teaching. When the students accomplish group work and give each other feedback and ask question from each other, they realize the significance of these ways of teaching and definitely they will adopt and use these methods in their own classes (interview).

When another lecturer, who taught the same course, was asked what style of teaching she is pursuing in her classes, she stated that, based on the new method and theories of teaching, she

tried to involve her students in class activities; because by doing class activities and accomplishing the tasks, they will find the opportunity to practice and improve their language skills. She said that she always tries to assign them the tasks to best meet their needs of teaching in secondary schools. So “I always ask them what should they do and what shouldn’t they do. And the class-tasks make the students able to manage their own classes and teaching affairs” (interview).

In one of the interviews, I asked one of the study teachers that, what are the major problems that he himself notices in his English classes and how the methods course addresses those problems? He said that he has many problems; particularly fluency in speaking. Regarding the English methods course he said that the tasks and presentations are very helpful and persuaded him to read books, talk to friends and ask questions. Particularly during the presentations and class dialogue he could see the difference between his and others’ pronunciation and accent.

Motivation is another advantage of task-based method of teaching. Presenting their work in the class stimulate the students to work hard and make their works better. In addition, task-based style of teaching encourages the students to present and share the result of their task with the class and hear from others. Thus, besides learning the skills of how to prepare and present a presentation, the speaking and listening activity draw their attentions to fluency of the language of the other speakers, so they can recognize gaps of their own language (Lochanna and Deb, 2006).

Taking in to account the justifications of English teaching methods lecturers, and students, one can infer that to a large extent the teaching approach which the instructors pursue

is, to similar or close to task-based method of teaching. Given to the conventional teaching approaches which teacher is the authority in the class, task-based method reminds teachers that motivation encourages and persuades students to take part in the lesson and class activities.

Whole language approach

Whole language theory is an approach in which all parts of a language (reading, writing, listening and speaking) equally are taken into consideration. Bajorn (1999) noted that Whole Language approach is not a new theory of learning English; the theory has its root in seventeen century. He believed that Whole Language essentially considers the integration of the four major components in each class activity. He believes that, speaking, listening, reading and writing integrally should be practiced and students might be provided with opportunity to practice and communicate what they learn. (pp. 9-13)

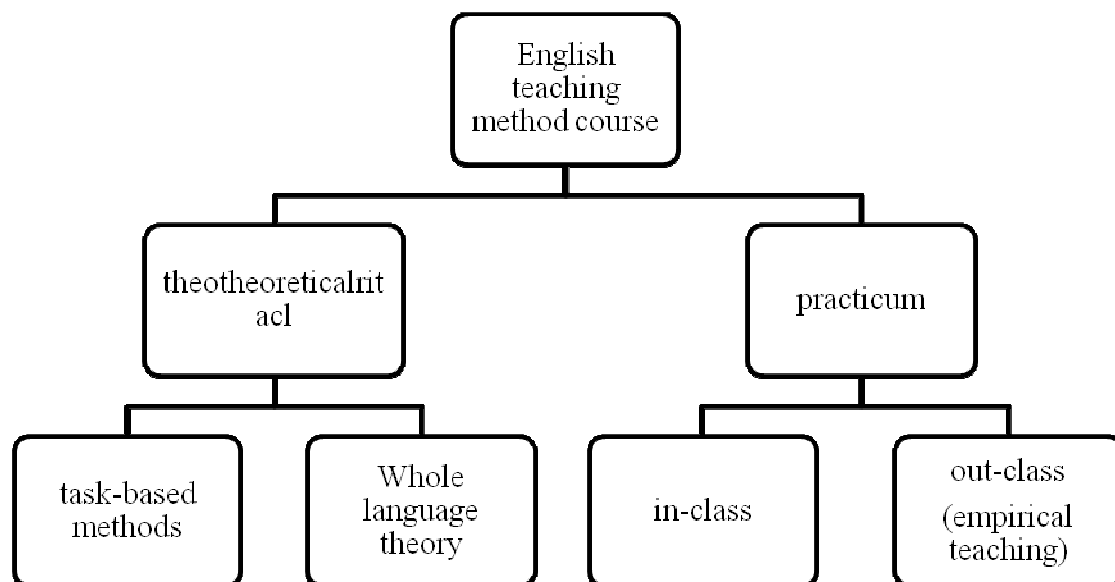


Diagram of English teaching method course

Lems (1995) noted that in 1980s Whole Language approach organized by Kenneth and Yetta Goodman and the basic principle of Whole language approach is: “the language arts (reading,

writing, listening, speaking, and thinking) are integrated and should not be taught or experienced in isolation. Language is experienced and learned in its whole form (p. 2)’’.

With that in mind, analyzing the interviews, which I conducted with the English methods instructors, secondary school teachers (in-service students), and also class observations, provided ample evidences of pursuing of whole language approach by English methods instructors. In this regard, one of the English teaching instructors was asked, if the syllabus of the methods course focuses on a specific part of language or discuss generally all parts of language. She explained that the course is focusing on whole language components and the English department and the English teaching methods’ instructors are trying to create a dynamic syllabus to meet the needs of school English teachers (primary, secondary and high school English teachers). She added that the English text books of secondary school generally discuss all the four modalities of the language, so this entails that the instructors should make their teaching syllabus compatible to school’s curriculum.

One of the English teaching methods’ instructor believed that whole language approach is one of the appropriate ways of teaching English. She added that through whole language method we do not teach grammar, writing, or reading, because the teachers (the in-service students) learn those components of the language in separated courses; but we teach them how they should teach grammar, writing, or reading. She believed that “learning happens when students make questions out of the lesson and practically apply in their daily activities”. Then she continued,” within the framework of whole language approach we guide our students to not only act as messengers, explainers, and controllers in their classes; but to be as collaborator and coworker with their students” (quoted from interview).

With regard to Whole Language approach, one of the female instructor of English teaching methods stated that they, in order to increase the teaching knowledge of students, introduce them various skills and techniques of teaching English. She recounted several skills such as Total Physical Response (TPR), Teacher Talking Time (TTT), Student Talking Time (STT), mingling, horse shoe, group work, elicitation, demonstration, and role play that the instructors teach the in-service students through English teaching method course¹. Table blow depicts the techniques, skills and facilitations which the in-service students practice through the method course.

Methods/techniques/skills	Activities	Remarks
Elicitation	Using visuals, demonstrations in the class to stimulate students to think in English and explain their understanding from the lesson in English	Instructor act as observer, the student-presenter lead the class

¹ TTT—Teacher Talking Time, this is a skill that teacher use in speaking class and let the students to practice their language. A teacher who applies this skill must take into consideration the level of English of students and based on their English skills, the teacher should reduce the amount of TTT and let students to talk and practice their language (student interview).

STT—Student Talking Time

TPR—Total Physical Response is a method of language learning which proposed by James Asher, a psychology professor of San Joes State University California. The essence of TPR method is to create a learning environment in which students enjoy from communicating in foreign language. A teacher who uses this method aims to reduce the stress which students feel during learning a foreign language; by means to encourage students to continue their learning. Asher believed that “the way to do this is to bases foreign language learning upon the way children learn their native language” (Campbell &Rutherford, p. 113).

Group work	Divide class in small groups, assign them separated tasks and ask them to discuss in their groups and then share the result of their discussion with the whole class; give feedback to each other and make conversation	Instructor lead the class
Demonstration/role play	Perform an activity such as showing an artifact or an object and make connection to the lesson to get involved the students in the teaching process and actively take part through the lesson. Ask the students to make some role play and connect to their lesson	Students led the class, instructor observed
Grouping and setting	The students practice: how should change the group members, how should ask each of the group member to take part in his/her group activities, how should make the group dynamic, how should protect the groups of individual talkative dominant	Instructor led the class and provided hand-outs
Peer work	Students work in pairs; discuss their lessons, share their teaching experiences, talk about their own teaching experiences and challenges	Instructor led the class
TTT (Teacher Talking Time)	How should reduce teachers talk in the class; how should a teacher consider the students' English literacy level when she talk, how should keep talking related to the lesson	instructor and students take part in the discussion
STT (Student Talking Time)	How should motivate students to express their ideas and opinion about the lesson, what skills and techniques should the teachers use to stimulate students to talking in English.	instructor and students take part in the discussion
Presentation	Students assigned to work on a specific component of the class and explain the result of their work in the form of class presentation and answer the questions of their classmates. The audience give feedback and express their ideas about the presentation and the presenter answer the questions and; instructor conclude the dialogue	Students led the conversation, instructor observed
Teaching management	How to make lesson plan, how to arrange the class for different kinds of methods and skills, to design and prepare portfolio of students' activities. (all the activities were in discussion form and the handouts provided by instructor)	Instructor led the class
TPR (Total Physical Response)	How should make the class activities enjoyable for students. How should create a class environment that in which students freely and without fear and stress of making mistakes communicate in English and ask the questions that they have in mind and	Instructor led the class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Carrasquillo, A. L. (1994). <i>Teaching English as a Second Language</i>. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc. 		

- Handouts retrieved from URLs

Supplementary reading

- Ur, Penny. (2007). *A Course in Language Teaching*: Cambridge University Press
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English Language Teaching* (fourth ed.). Person: Longman

Source: class observation and the course contents review

Taking into account the English methods course instructor's and students' points of views of Whole language approach, questions arise that to what extent these skills and ways of teaching meet the needs of English teachers of secondary schools, and to what extent these skills are applicable in secondary school? In this regard, section five expands the discussion to explore answers to these questions.

B- Practicum

As noted that, according to the instructors, the English teaching method course, principally, is consisting of two main parts: content and practicum, thus practicum is an opportunity for the students to practice what they learned from the course. The practicum part of the course is also consisting of two parts: in-class practice and out- class practice.

In-class practice

In-class practice is a series of activities that the lecturers and students, cooperatively, through the semester, are carrying out. Basically the in-class practice is the practical form of the theories and skills that the students learn through the semester. As one of the English method lecturers, in her explanation about the English teaching methods course, mentioned that the students should be fully engaged in in-class practice and drill what they learn through the course. She added that the students (school teachers) are free to design their in-class practice, this means that either they can carry this out as group work or do it individually. When she was asked that

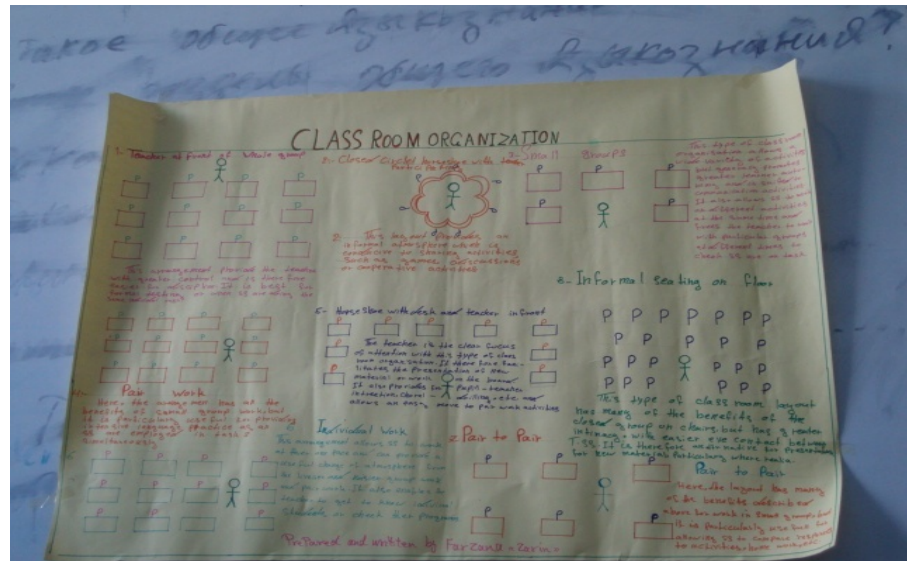
what procedure the students are taking into consideration for accomplishing their practicum and what is the role of the instructors? She stated

As we are studying many different skills, methods, and tools of teaching English as a foreign language, so the students have different choices for in-class practice. They are school teachers and they should know how to conduct in-class practice, and I believe that the in-class practice help them to have a deep understanding of what they are studying in English teaching method course and we facilitate and guide them to conduct their work (interview with English method teacher).

Coincidentally, my class observations were synchronized with practical sessions of the English methods class. I observed and also took part in several sessions of their in class-practices. The in-class practices were various from performance to lecture, and sometime it was as a group work and sometime individual activities. One of the in-class practical sessions which I observed was leading by a female student and the title of her activity was 'Elicitation'. First she divided all the students including the instructor and me in alphabetical groups, and then she asked all the A numbers should get together and the same for B, C, and D. Second, she distributed different photos to each group and asked us to discuss about what we were seeing in the picture and then describe each of the images by turn. She gave us five minutes to think and talk with each other about the picture and then express our feelings; the pictures were printed in black and with color and there were no captions under the images. So we had to guess about the pictures.

After five minutes each group explained their imagination of the picture and it took about twenty minutes. During this time she was facilitating and discussing with each group and listened to each individual's idea and feeling about the picture. Also during the discussion we were told that each of us should have a notepad or a piece of paper with a pen or pencil and jot

down all the words that were new to us. As the activity finished all the groups come together, she explained the goal of her activity (elicitation). She said that by conducting elicitation we



encourage our students to think in English when they are learning English; and the same time when they describe their ideas by simple words, they enjoy from the class activity too. (Class observation).

In another in-class practice which conducted by a female teacher who taught English in eight and nine grades, she presented a presentation about “Classroom Organization”. Through her presentation she explained that every skill or method of teaching English as foreign language required a specific classroom organization. During her presentation she used different visuals such as charts, photos, and diagrams. All of her visuals showed different classroom setting and organizations. In addition, the captions under each of the charts were explaining the role of the teachers in each class organization.

Given to the teachers’ utterances about their teaching methods before taking the method course and comparing to their way of teaching after taking the method course and taking into consideration the class-presentations, I attributed it to a fundamental change in their believes of teaching and learning process.

In terms of impact of out-class practice and the feedback from teachers, one of the English teaching methods' lecturer said that out-class practices have significant effect on the student-teachers. This is an opportunity for them to be noticed of their weakness and see what incompetence they have in their teaching. In this respect she stated

At the beginning of the course I observed some of my students' classes and sat among their students and they were teaching; they were so confident and sure of their teaching; they were explaining and lecturing very well and they were too confident that I would give them good scores. When they saw my long suggestions and feedbacks, they asked me that they did explain the lesson and controlled the class very well why their score is so low. I told them, yes it was good lectures, but you did nothing to us (we students). You just explained, lectured, it means that just you read some paragraphs and wrote and erased some words and sentences on the board, but you did not involve us in your teaching. We students just listened to your lecture even we had not enough time to pose out our questions. At first they were not satisfied with my suggestions and comments, but gradually they accepted and changed their behaviors, way of teaching, and interacting with their students. In fact, a teacher should be facilitator, helper, and help students to understand the lesson not just explain the lesson also they should take care whether the students understood his or her lesson or not.

Out of class practice

Out-class practice is a set of practices and empirical teaching which students have to carry out during the last year of their study at the university. Normally students, under supervision of their lecturers and with cooperation of the secondary school's principal and class teachers perform their practical teaching. With regard to the in-service students, they already are teachers and they practice everyday what they are learning in their university classes. Recently, as part of out of class teaching practice, the English department of Kabul Education University made an agreement with secondary schools where their teachers are in-service students in the English department. In terms of this consensus, one of the English teaching method lecturer said

“this is a sharing experience and feedback session and is also a joint work between pre and in-service students” (interview).

Based on the agreement, each of the pre-service students goes to the secondary schools in which the in-service students are teaching and the teaching time. This is a prearranged activity that both principal and the class teacher know when the university students come and perform their practical teachings. Through this empirical session, the pre-service student acts as the class teacher and the class teacher (in-service student) observes his/her teaching style and at the end give feedback and express his or her idea about the way and the skills that the pre-service student used during the teaching.

The English department of KEU already has specific forms and rubrics that the observer teacher should fill out during her observation of the pre-service students’ pilot teaching. After filling out the forms, the class teacher and school principal seal and sign and formally send the forms to the English department of KEU. And after finishing the teaching sessions, the pre-service students are encouraged to give their teaching materials (charts, sections, visuals etc.) to the class teachers in the hope if they can use them in their own classes (observation).

With respect to the in-service students (school teachers) it was not only the matter of filling out the forms and preparing the class for the pre-service students. This interaction with the pre-service students was an opportunity for them to practice and use their gained knowledge in the ground.

Section Five

DISCUSSION

In the interviews, both the lecturers of the English methods course and the students (in-service) repeatedly stated that the course is a collection of skills, ways and principles of teaching English in non native English speaking setting. Given that, this section restates the research questions and discusses to what extent and how the course meets needs of English proficiency of English teachers of secondary schools and what are the affects of the course on English teachers.

To answer this questions, in this section, we will discuss and analyze the compatibility and applicability of the English teaching methods course in the English program of secondary

school and explore that the extent to which and what component or skills of the course meets the needs of secondary schools' teachers. And also we will see what are the basic needs of students (in-service) and we will take into consideration that how much the English teaching method course has had responded these needs.

According to the methods instructors, the English method course doesn't specifically focus on one of the aspects (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) of English, but the course provides students with variety of skills, tools, tips, and style of teaching which they can apply in teaching of all components of the language. In other word, these are the methods, tool, and skills that students gain through studying English teaching methods course in the course of the semester.

During the class observation I saw that the students were practicing and performing some of the mentioned tools and skills of teaching. For example, several of the students-participants, who taught English in eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh grades, collectively said that they are learning many new skills and techniques of teaching English. They stated that they practice and apply some of these new skills such as elicitation, group work, TPR and other skills in their classes in secondary school.

Given that, it does not necessarily guarantee and approve that these methods and skills are smoothly applicable in the secondary classes. In this respect one should take into consideration that how long each of these mentioned skills/tools will take to be applied in the class and how much of the class time should be allocated for? On the other hand, there is a big difference between class-time of the university and secondary school. At the university, the English teaching method course is a three credit course which means that the class-time is ninety

minutes, so the students and instructor have ample time to manage and apply the mentioned teaching skills.

In addition, the class and the setting in which the in-service students practice and perform their gained teaching skills is incomparable with their classes at secondary or elementary schools. At the university, the students are on-task teachers and they already know about the skills and methods which the presenter wants to present; so that it is easy for them to perform and practice the mentioned skills (group work, demonstration, elicitation, role play...). Furthermore, while performing a teaching method, the instructor acts as a back up and oftentimes navigate how to do and what to, so that, one can claim that practicing teaching skills in university-class is a virtual teaching which completely different form the real teaching in secondary classroom.

Moreover, to apply the mentioned skills in secondary schools' classroom, one should think of several factors such as class-time, students' age, and English literacy of the students. Based on the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan, the class-time for all primary and secondary school is 40 minutes. It seems really hard that without adopting the mentioned methods a teacher immediately starts teaching and applies those skills.

Furthermore, in order to follow the rule and regulation of secondary school, a teacher has to sign in teachers' attendance book and also check attendance book of the students. Observing these formalities, at least, takes five minutes of a teaching time. Thus, in the remaining time a teacher has to warm up his students, connect the previous lesson to the present, introduce the new lesson, and answer the question of the students. If we divide the class-time by each of these activities, approximately there will be six to eight minutes for each of the activities. Given that,

this scarcity of time is the basic challenge on the way of applying the mentioned methods and skills. Accordingly it entails well-organized teaching plan to use the right time for the right class activity and it is yet determined that how much the teachers (in-service students) take it into consideration in teaching their own classes.

To some extent I found it challenging for the teachers to apply the theories of teaching in a real situation or apply virtual practices of the university-classroom in the ground (secondary school classrooms). This entailed profound understanding of the essence of the skills and methods which they learned from the English teaching methods course. In the other word, teaching practice in the university-classroom is far different from teaching in traditional classroom sitting of secondary school of Afghanistan with 50 to 60 students. In this respect, this question arise that how the English teaching course tackles the problems of implementing the new methods and theories in such situation. With regard to these challenges and demands of applying the new skills and methods of teaching, one thing is worth mentioning that, practicing in university-classroom reminds the teachers think of applicability and adoptability of the new method in their own classroom in secondary schools.

During the interviews, both instructors and students repeatedly revealed how they practiced some specific skills, methods and tools of teaching, which I observed some of those practices during the class observation. Of several mentioned tools and skills, *group work*, *elicitation*, *pair work* and *demonstration* were the tools that most of the in-service students (research participants) were unanimously talking of using them in their own classes at secondary school. From the twelve in-service students who participated in my research, eight of them were recounting of using all these skills in their classes. One of the female students who taught English in ninth and tenth grades said that, not only applying these methods helped her to see

change in her teaching and she said that also she has seen change in her students' progress too. She added that the instructions and tips which she has learned in English teaching method course helped her to create enthusiasm in her students; she stated

...for example, before, during the class my students did not dare to ask me questions; since I took the method course, I understood that in addition to being master in the content I need to know enough about teaching behavior and teaching culture (quoted from interview).

From her statement about using new methods of teaching we can assume that practical skills and pedagogical knowledge are amalgamated; along with learning new skills of teaching, students learned how to teach and apply their new-gained skills in their classroom.

When the students (research participants) were asked that, since they are studying various methods or skills of teaching, so why they preferred to use some specific (*group work, elicitation, pair work and demonstration*) skills and methods? The answers, almost, were the same and they pointed out to the same commonalities which three issues were the most common among the others. The first issue which they raised was the size of the classes; they said that in a class with forty or fifty students it is difficult to reach and interact with all of them, so *group work*, engages all of the students in learning process and divides them in small units, so it is easy to reach them and interact with them. One of the female students raised an interesting point and said "in group work when I use elicitation, I see that all of my students are thinking to express their own ideas and imaginations so they use and memorize new words easily".

Second, all of them collectively mentioned about the shortage of class-time. They said that however, they studied many methods and skills of teaching in English teaching methods course, but because of shortage of class-time some of them are really hard to be applied in the class. One of the male students who taught English in twelfth grade said that he liked to use STT

(Student Talking Time) in his class, but because of shortage of class-time it has been hard for him to manage the time and prepare students for. Thus, in order to provide conversation he used group work and elicitation and provided students with some visuals and asked them to explain the images.

Third, from the recounts of the research participants I found out that they use the mentioned methods and skills as an approach to shift from teacher-centered method to student-centered method teaching style. So that, the mentioned methods, more than the others, helped them in engaging students in learning process. In one of the interviews, a female participant said that

Before taking the English teaching method course, only few students from the first row of the class participated in the class activity and the rest were quite or doodling and always were weak and silent students and mostly tried to sit at the end of the class. I knew that my lessons were boring for my students and they were waiting for me to say the time is up! So I was confused and didn't know what to do in order to make them to pay attention to lesson. Talking this course, I learned many new ways to engage all students in learning process. Now I am using group-work, pair work, elicitation and move students from one seat to another place, so now I see willingness and enthusiasm in my students and all of them participate in class activities. Now when I am telling that the time is over! My students say no teacher; still we have five minutes more!

Taking into account her clarification about her teaching experience, one can see that she had evidently portrayed the two situations, old tradition of teaching and new style or student-centered model of teaching and learning. Furthermore, we can assume from her explanation that not only the new methods and new skills of teaching could bring change in her class and students, but along with these new skills of teaching, behavior and pedagogical knowledge also have had remarkable role.

On the other hand, there were some other skills such as, *Total Physical Response (TPR)*, *role play*, *STT*, and *TTT* which the students (in-service teachers) were learning through the

English teaching method course. From literacy perspective, in non native English classes these skills are much beneficial and productive, but applying them in the class entails the appropriate equipments and adequate time. For instance, in STT model of teaching, the teacher needs to have tape recorder, text book with CD-ram, sufficient time and appropriate number of students in the class. In Afghanistan, in secondary school, the class time is 40 minutes and chalk and blackboard are the only teaching tools for teachers. With this shortage of equipment the teacher has to teach a class with forty to fifty students. With this in view, there is more research needed to investigate some better ways of using these methods and skills in the classes with a big number of students.

Section Six

FINDINGS

Through several interviews, formal and informal discussion with English teaching method's instructors and fourth year in-service students (the study participants), and three weeks of class observations, I noticed some promising and some weakness points which will be elaborated respectively.

First, *social Environment*, as all of the students were school teachers and were fully mature, the interaction of the lecturer in the class was friendly and to somewhat informal. Given that, in terms of expressing their ideas and opinions about the content of the course and their own

experience of teaching, the students were completely free. Since the most of the students had long experience of teaching in school, they oftentimes were willing to talk about their class and share their experience of teaching.

The class discussions were not completely going on smoothly and evenly. Sometimes during the discussion they directly expressed their objections when one of their classmates was talking about his/her ideas. For example, in one of the class sessions there was a discussion about how a teacher could remember names of all the students in a large class? One of the male students said “through years of teaching experience I found out that I can remember names of my pretty/handsome and ugly students sooner than the rest of the students” (class observation). Finishing his words, several voices blamed him of being prejudiced and judged that that is a wrong habit and behavior... and eventually by intercession of the lecturer the discussion got over.

As I was exploring the impact of the English teaching methods course on secondary school teachers, it was significant for me to pay attention to the nature of the class discussions and the themes that the teachers were talking about. Observing the reaction of the teachers toward each other during the class conversations showed that they need to take more pedagogical trainings in order to bring change in their teaching behaviors.

With respect to learning cooperation and class activities, both male and female students were working together and there was no noticeable segregation between them. Most of the groups of class activities and class presentations consisted of both female and male students and each of the group members had equal chance of presenting and taking part in class discussion and activities.

The scoring system of Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan is points in which 100 point is the highest score for a class, so every one wants to get the highest score and take the first position in the class. Thus, competition for getting the first position in the class is inevitable. The fourth year in-service class which I was observing was not an exception to this competition; both male and female students were struggling to obtain the first position of the class. However, one could notice the rivalry for getting the senior position of the class among the students, so apparently it was not a competition between the two genders, but that seemed a competition between individuals.

Second, *classroom Organization* was one of the class features that I had in my observation protocol and attracted me to pay attention to. The reason which made me curious about class arrangement was that because this was an English method class, further the students were school teachers. One could expect of better and unique class organization and decoration. Indeed, English teaching methods class was consisting of two separated rooms which one of the rooms was for teaching and the other was 'teaching lab'. The teaching room was a small rectangle room chairs were setting in two rows; the whiteboard, marker and duster were the only teaching tools in the classroom.

Given that the male and female students were working in mixed groups during the class activities and teaching performances, but the way in which they were sitting in the class was quite different. However the number of the class was small, but apparently the male and female students were not sitting next to each other, they were sitting completely in separated rows. This way of sitting in the class does not necessarily attribute as negative behavior, it shows the values, believes and cultures that they grown up in.

One difference which was noticeable between male and female students was punctuality and being well-organized. Most of the female students were on time and the portfolios of their class activities and sections were well-organized, while most of the male students had less well-prepared collection of class papers than the female students had.

Third, *change in teaching behavior*, this should be repeated that the English teaching method course is a set of teaching tools, skill, tips, methods; this means that these tools and skills are a combination of practical and pedagogical knowledge. Beside practical teaching skills, the course provides information about how a teacher should interact, behave, encourage, stimulate with students, and create an environment in which students feel joy form studying and learning process. With respect to this, a male in-service student who taught English in ten and eleven grade said

Before taking this course I had lots of problem with my students, especially when my students asked me questions I became angry. After taking this course I understood the gaps of my teaching and also in this course I learned that how I should prepare myself for teaching. Now I am friendly with my students, when they ask me question, I answer then friendly. If at that moment I could not answer the question, I tell them that I try to find the answer and tomorrow we will talk about. (Translated from Dari)

A female teacher (in-service student) who taught grade eleven expressed the same idea as her male classmate. When she was asked that what change she has seen in her teaching and interacting with her students after taking the methods course, she said before talking the method course, when a student could not answer my question I punished or insult him/her, since taking this course I understood that a teacher should not interact with students intensely. If a student could not answer our question we should give him/her one, two or three times chance to answer

and kindly encourage and stimulate him or her to based on her own interests and willingness take part in the class and learning process (quoted from interview).

Taking into considerations the elucidation of these teachers, one can interpret that the course does not only focus on practical aspect of teaching English, but parallel to practical dimension, it focuses on instructive part of teaching as well. Driscoll (2005) noted “learning has been described as a relatively permanent change in behavior, and scheduled of reinforcement have been presented that are useful for maintaining such change” (p. 52). With that in mind, it can be assumed that the English teaching method course, in addition to introducing new skills of teaching, has provided the teachers (in-service students) with the ability to give feedback and judge on his/her own teaching-behavior. Understanding of the strength and weakness points of teaching helps them to think of change in their way of teaching which it will lead them toward more updates of teaching behavior.

Fourth, *problem solving attitude*, as one of the instructors stated that the essence of the English teaching method course is to train the students (potential teachers) how to teach and how to shape their teaching skills and techniques to see promotion in students. Gebhard (2006) believed that problem-solving is one of the common technique of teaching in which teachers decide what to do and what proportionate change should be brought to their teaching. On the other hand, this is also feasible for teachers to explore and examine their teaching and sees the out come; probably this may include opposite of what we are doing usually or may be we will follow an absolute new approach (p. 23).

Pinning down in the elaborations of in-service students, I found a change or/ and a shift in the way of their teaching in their own classes. Through discussions and interviews they were

talking about their experience of teaching before and after taking the English teaching method course. The way they were talking of their teaching experiences were revealing of a drift or transition from teacher-centered way of teaching toward student-centered art of teaching. As one of the male students said that he has been teaching English for seven years, but during the class rarely students asked him questions; he thought that maybe they understood the lessons and they have no problem or questions to ask. Taking the tests he noticed that the result is not satisfactory for him and is not as he wanted. After taking the Teaching methods course he got the new ideas of teaching and the ways in which he could involved his students in learning process. After that he saw that the students have endless questions and problems. Now his idea about teaching is completely different from the past, he believed that teachers should be helpers, navigators, and coworker with students and let the students to study the lessons and make their own suppositions from the lessons (interview).

In this regard, it can be said that, however, due to deficiency of equipments, over-populated of class, and shortage of class-time some of the tools and techniques which the teaching method course introduced to the students are hard to be evenly implemented, but the promising point is that it lead them to think of possible changes which they could bring in their teaching methods.

Fifth, *classroom management* is the essence of teaching; this is one of the necessities of teaching arts which teachers should know. Classroom management is not the ability how to begin a lesson or how to make students to arise their hands instead of loudly answering the questions. But the classroom management is the way in which teachers use appropriate methodology and instruction which make sure that the students are learning in the way which is useful for them and they are enthusiastic to cooperate in learning process (Penny, 2007, p. 269).

Prioritizing and emphasizing on classroom management was one of the aspects of the course which was recognizable in both theoretical and practical part of the course. One of the course instructors said that one of the course objectives is to train the student to be able to manage their teaching and create enjoyable learning environment for their students. In this regard, I found it one of the aspects of the course which addresses the needs of teachers in terms of their everyday problem of teaching.

Furthermore, classroom management is a skill or knowledge which does not need much concrete material for implementation, so that teachers, grounded in their own ability and situation can design and organize their teaching activities. As one of the students stated that, one of the best methods which he has learned is how to organize his class activities and also he has learned that which technique is relevant to what lesson and how the students should get involved in the lesson (interview).

Sixth, *obscurity of teaching assessment and evaluation*, as teaching and learning is a procedure which is consisting of mental process and set of instruction and teacher is the coordinator of the process, thus to measure and indicate the level of learning achievement, there might be a clear milestone and indicators to appraise teaching and learning process. In education literature sometimes there is a distinction between assessment and evaluation, assessment is attributed to learner performance and evaluation is used to gauge school activities, course syllabus and teacher performance (Penny, 2007, p. 244).

Generally assessment is divided into parts, summative and formative. Summative assessment is the overall judgment or evaluation which at the end of educational term accomplish by teachers, while formative assessment is including feedback, correction,

suggestion, direction and step by step helps for the learners. Penny (2007) believed that the essence of formative assessment is to help learners in the hope of improvement so it does not judge and conclude the learning process; but summative assessment summarize an entire process of learning at the end of the period so it can not contribute to ongoing process of teaching and learning, but it is part of teacher duty (pp. 244, 254).

With that in view, assessment and evaluation is a significant part of teaching and learning which I rarely noticed during interacting with English teaching methods instructors and students. However, the instructors mentioned about teaching assessment and evaluation in their syllabus, but there was not clear-cut framework of assessment and evaluation to make basis for practical usage for the students. During the three weeks of class observation I hardly ever observed any discussion regarding assessment and evaluation. In the course of interviews, I put the question in different phrases and asked the all twelve students (study participants) which what procedures and indicators they use to gauge the teaching and learning enhancement of their students. The answers of the teachers showed that they have no specific idea about assessment and evaluation. As principally the course discusses various methods and skills of teaching, I assumed that the teacher, briefly, might know the basics of assessment and evaluation. The only understanding which they had from assessment was the test and exam at the end of the course.

Seventh, *academic honesty procedure and understanding*, it is universal that in academic work and paper the academic's code of conduct must be taken into consideration. Heeding academic rules and regulations are not only an ethical matter, but it too ensures the credibility and reliability of the paper. Given that, during the three weeks of class observations, particularly observing the presentations and assignments, I noticed that almost all of the students directly, without paraphrasing and citation, quoted from others' work. For example in several

presentations in the class I noticed that even the titles of the presentations were directly borrowed from books. And also during the presentation the presenters mostly read their papers, rarely I saw that they orally talked about the theme of their presentations.

On the other hand, I can not blame students of plagiarism, may be it does not counts as a serious academic problem in Afghanistan, but I think academically it will be better to inform the students that plagiarism is an academic misfeasance and undermines the credibility of their paper. Moreover, the in-service students are the on-task teachers and they live in academic culture, so that is essential for them to be aware of the rules and regulations of writing of academic papers.

Overall analysis of the observations and interviews shows that to a large extent the English teaching methods course has impacted the teachers and introduced them the new methods and skills of teaching English which are applicable in the secondary classrooms.

Section Seven

CONCLUSION

In Afghanistan this is obvious that we need to upgrade the education system and apply educational technologies in teaching and learning process. In addition, to bring changes in our education, our students should study abroad and learn from other nations' knowledge and experience. Taking all these issues into consideration, one can realize that to come off with these goals, we have to know English, because English is the language of science and technology. In this regard I found the English teaching method course as a venue for promoting the English proficiency of the students (potential educational operators). Thus I launched a research study to

explore the efficacy of English teaching methods course in promoting English knowledge in secondary school.

During the two months work (data collection) at KEU, I observed, interviewed the head of English department, two English teaching methods' instructor and twelve fourth-years (senior) in-service students. In this period I explored to found out that to what extent the course has had affect on on-task (in-service students) English teachers, and to what extend and how they use their university-gained knowledge in their own classrooms.

Overall this is obvious that in Afghanistan, traditional teaching has historical background and has been practicing for centuries, so it is hard to, immediately, replace with new methods of teaching. After transcribing and analyzing the interviews, notes, and observations, I found out that, however the course instructors suffered form shortage of teaching resources and facilities, they could handle the teaching and learning issues and increased pedagogical and content knowledge of the teachers and instilled the new notion of teaching and learning process.

Possibility for Further Research

Earlier it mentioned that there are some related parts which might be included in the research scope, but due to time constraints they were missed. In the other word, the format of the English teaching method course is similar to cascade model of teaching, so it entails a research project with such a scope to cover and include all its stakeholders. This means that the head of English departments of secondary schools, parents and the students (the end users or the indirect recipients of the course) should be involved in the research project. Moreover, reviewing the syllabus of English program of secondary school and the strategic plane of the Ministries of

Education and Higher education provide a better understanding of the context of teaching English in secondary schools. Adding these sectors in the future research scale will help with the data collection and also will help to come up with richer and brighter finding and suggestions.

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Appendixes
Appendix I

Observation protocol

<p><u>In-class Observation</u></p> <p>The fourth year in-service class observed full time for three weeks. Each week the class met twice and the class duration was 90 minutes.</p>	<p><u>Observed components</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between instructor and students <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greetings 2. Icebreakers 3. They way instructor present the lesson 4. Discussions 5. Equity (chance of participation for each of the students in class activities) 6. Q&A style • Class-activities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presentations 2. Group works 3. Assignments and portfolios 4. Time allocation (the time for each activity) • Teaching materials <p><u>Peripheral components</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class feature <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom design (circle chairs or row) 2. Visuals (charts, photos, slogans) 3. Social interaction between the students
<p><u>Out of class observation</u></p> <p>Visited the schools which the senior pre-service students preformed their empirical teaching practice and the in-service students observed and gave them feedback.</p>	<p><u>Observed components</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reaction (cooperation) of pre and in-service students • The class management: preparing the class for the pre-service students in which they performed their pilot teaching

Interview protocol (faculty teacher)

<p><u>Interview</u></p> <p><u>University Lecturers</u></p> <p>The interviews include semi- structured and informal discussion.</p> <p>The semi-structured interviews are tape-recorded and the important points of the discussion were noted.</p>	<p>Re-explaining the theme and icebreaking for Q & A</p> <p><u>Questions</u> (from general to specific)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have you been teaching the ‘English Teaching Methods’ course? • What specific materials you use in your teaching? Please name them • What specific class activities you use in your method classes? Please name and explain how you apply them • How you organize your course syllabus to meet in-service students’ needs? • What criteria you use to trace and record the leaning enhancement of the students • What specific indicators you use to see the compatibility of the English Method course with school English subject? • What specific assignments you assign the students? • What specific methods, skills, and tools the students study through the course that they can apply in their own classes in secondary school?
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Appendix III

Interview protocol (In-service teachers)

<p><u>In-service students</u> <u>(school teachers)</u></p> <p>The interviews are semi- structured and during the interviews more sub questions arose</p> <p>The interviews all tape-recorded and the important points of informal discussion noted</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>Greetings and small talk as an ice-break</p> <p><u>Questions</u> (from general to specific)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you were graduated from college or high school?• For how long have you been teaching in school?• What grades are you teaching?• What materials, in addition to the textbook, you use in your classes?• Are the ‘Method Course’ supports you in your teaching in school? If yes, How? Give examples• Did you noticed of any changes in the way of your teaching after you took this course? If yes, what are that changes?• What specific segments of this course are really helping you in your teaching in school? Can you name them?• Did you observe any change (interests, willingness, courage) in your class after applying the skills which you learned from Method Course? If yes what are those changes? <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Wrapping up the conversation with gratitude and making the appointment for the next interviews.</p>
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