

Reversing the Question: Do Language Teachers Preach What They don't Do?

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Abstract

The present qualitative study investigates the relationship between the stated ideas and actual practices of 11 English language teachers (ELTs) in a Turkish higher education institution as a part of their professional development. The researchers focused on the stated beliefs and observed practices of those language teachers on skill teaching, providing feedback, classroom management, student-teacher interaction, the medium of instruction and material development. The data for the study were collected through reflection journals, observations and semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that there were some mismatches between the stated beliefs of teachers and their actual practices in the classroom deriving from the interaction and intervention of multiple reasons. Despite having some negative connotations, such divergences were not perceived as a hindrance. Rather, they were regarded as contributive factors to their professional development. Moreover, it was revealed that there are three different types of beliefs held by the participants based on the data obtained from the participants which are preserved belief (the ones applicable in a context), enhanced belief (the improved ones and still applicable in a context) and gained belief (the ones adopted by abandoning an inapplicable one in a context).

Keywords: English language teachers, teacher beliefs, professional development

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Introduction

Although the concept of belief is a fuzzy, messy and complex one to describe, “most definitions of belief propose that beliefs dispose or guide people’s thinking and action” (Borg, 2001, p. 186). Therefore, it is hard to think professional development of language teachers, their beliefs and their practices as isolated concepts. As acknowledged by Borg (2001), it is hard to find a single and simple definition for the term *belief*; as a result, many researchers in the field defined it in various and particular ways. For instance, Richards (1996) views beliefs as “personal principles ...which guide many teachers’ instructional decisions” (p. 281). Moving from a broad definition of belief towards a teacher’s belief, Clark (as cited in Pajares, 1992) calls teachers’ beliefs as “preconceptions and implicit theories” whereas Clark & Peterson (as cited in Pajares, 1992) regard a teacher’s belief as “a reflective, socially defined interpretation of

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experience that serves as a basis for subsequent action ... a combination of beliefs, intentions, interpretations, and behavior that interact continually" (p. 314).

Although there is no consensus on the definition and scope of belief or teacher beliefs, Phipps and Borg (2009) argue that beliefs about teaching and learning might (i) interact bi-directionally with experience (ii) exert a long-term effect on teachers' practices (iii) act as filters by which teachers interpret new information and experience (iv) be influenced by the learner experiences of the teachers and (v) have strong effect on teachers' pedagogical decisions (p. 381). Other definitions to focus and related to beliefs are core and peripheral beliefs. According to the researchers, core beliefs are dominant and stable (Gabillon, 2012, p. 1) and central to other beliefs (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis & Purdie, 2002, p. 197-198) whereas peripheral beliefs are flexible and changeable (Gabillon, 2012, p. 1) and mostly derive from core beliefs (Brownlee, Boulton-Lewis & Purdie, 2002, p. 197-198). In addition to previous claims, Phipps and Borg (2009) argue that teachers' core beliefs impose more influence on teachers' behaviors (p. 380).

Research on the Relationship between Teacher Beliefs and Practice

Borg (2010) puts forward that teacher cognition has become an established research area in the recent years (p. 85) which focuses on what teachers think, know and believe (Borg, 2003, 2006). As a part of teacher cognition, understanding and interpreting the relationship between teacher beliefs and practices has attracted many researchers in the field focusing on different aspects of what teachers believe and what they actually do in the classrooms (e.g. Farrel & Bennis 2013; Hermans, Tondeur, Braak & van Valcke 2008; Isikoglu, Basturk & Karaca, 2009; Levit, 2001; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Trent 2013).

For instance, in the research conducted with 39 elementary teachers to determine the relationship between their beliefs and teaching reading comprehension, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell and Lloyd (1991) found mismatches or contradictions in terms of their beliefs about reading and their practices in the classroom. The researchers state that "a lack of relationship [mismatches] between beliefs and practices may indicate that the teacher is going through a change process" (p. 579); however, they further claim "genuine changes will come about when teachers think differently about what is going on in their classrooms, and are provided with the practices to match the different ways of thinking" (p. 579), which signals the need for teachers to think back and reflect on their teaching in the classroom to be able to benefit from the tensions they experience out and the mismatches between their beliefs and practices.

In a similar study carried out by Phipps and Borg (2009), the focus was on exploring the tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices of 15 EFL teachers at the preparatory school of a private university. The findings of the study revealed that the beliefs and practices of the teachers did not always go hand in hand, which creates tensions on teachers' side. However, it was those tensions and being aware of them that crucially "enabled the teacher to change her own classroom practices" (p. 386). One important function of the tensions is that they created divergences in teachers' practices. Phipps and Borg (2009) represent the causes of divergences as follows:

- “(i) I believe in X but my students expect to do Y.
- (ii) I believe in X but my students learn better through Y.
- (iii) I believe in X but the curriculum requires me to do Y.
- (iv) I believe in X but my learners are motivated by Y (p. 387).”

Moving from this point onwards, it is evident that “tensions are multidimensional and they are characterized by several competing forces. Understanding them allows us to make sense of what teacher do” (p. 387). One major finding of the study was that student’s expectations rather than teachers beliefs exerted more power on the practices of the teachers while teaching grammar. The explanations given by the teachers for their divergences which were mainly student-oriented such as ‘student expectations, assessment, student responsiveness, student motivation, and classroom management’ supported the representations proposed by the researchers. Another important issue raised by the researchers is the fact that “core beliefs, not the peripheral ones, were reflected in the practices of the teachers” (p. 388).

Levitt (2001) conducted a study with over 100 elementary teachers to see what teachers believe and do while teaching science in the alignment with the renewed curriculum and found out that “teachers’ beliefs about the teaching of science aligned with the general elements of the philosophy underlying current recommendations in science education reform” (p. 19); however, there were still gaps between teachers’ beliefs and the principles of the reform. Although there were some gaps, the inclination was towards teaching science with the principles of the new curriculum, which also indicated that in terms of professional development “changing beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning can result from practicing new behavior” (p. 20), which suggests that practicing something which creates tension might turn into a habit after a while. Another dimension of the relationship between beliefs and practices mentioned by Levitt (2001) is that there is a bidirectional relationship between beliefs and practices; that is both are capable of affecting and changing one another.

Based on the assumptions proposed by Levitt (2001), Orafi and Borg (2009) conducted a study in Libyan context to see the intentions and real implementations of teachers in the classroom regarding the communicative curriculum reform. The results “showed that key curricular principles relating to pair work and the use of English were not reflected in the teachers’ practices” (p. 250). Moreover, teachers’ practices were not aligned with the requirements of the new communicative curriculum as “the teachers in this study were filtering the content and pedagogy of the new curriculum according to what they felt was feasible and desirable in their context” (p. 250). Similar results were also obtained from the study conducted by Erkmen (2014) in which there were inconsistencies between their beliefs and actual practices in the classroom due to the syllabus, students’ expectations and the course book.

Sato and Kleinsasser (2004) conducted a study on beliefs, practices and interactions of Japanese teachers in a high school which revealed that teachers were content when their existing beliefs were compatible with the school’s demands; however, there were also cases when they did not. Despite having a different perspective, belief and intention, teachers preferred putting their individual beliefs and perspectives at the backseat to serve the common school culture. The researchers explain this as “the school’s culture influences to a greater extent an individual’s beliefs,

practices, and interactions than an individual's beliefs, practices, and interactions influence a school's culture" (p. 814).

The studies mentioned above present different factors for the differences/gaps/ mismatches between teachers' beliefs and their practices. In addition to those factors, Baştürkmen (2012) claims that contextual factors such as the institution, curriculum and the social surrounding of the teachers as well as teaching experience, namely being a novice or an experienced teacher plays important roles in creating mismatches and divergences leading to tensions. For example, she states that "in the case of the more experienced teachers the beliefs were more consistently reflected in their classroom practices compared to less experienced teachers [because] language teachers' principles become more embedded with experience" (p. 287).

Other than contextual factors and teaching experience, Borg (2003) puts forward that teachers' decision-making processes are also among the factors that might cause them to diverge from their lesson plans. In the study conducted by Osam and Balbay (2004) in which they investigated the role of experience in decision making through comparing experienced and less experienced teachers in Turkey, it was found out that less experienced teachers, namely the student teachers, made changes owing to the time limit and classroom management while experienced teachers, that is the cooperating teachers, were more concerned with discipline problems while taking instant decisions. Physical conditions and motivating pupils were common factors for both groups. One important point mentioned in the conclusion of the study that discipline problems were not the main concern of the student teachers since they felt "that within the practice teaching experience the system did not allow them to have equal authority with the cooperating teachers, and what is more, the pupils that they taught were also aware of this fact" (p.756). Such finding and notion might indicate the importance of authority and autonomy for teachers to be able to reflect what they believe in the classroom.

To sum up, it can be inferred from the aforesaid studies that there are frequent occurrences in which the beliefs and the practices of (language) teachers mismatch, which creates tensions for the teachers. In spite of creating uneasy situations for teachers, tensions might provide teachers with the opportunities of professional development through reflecting on their beliefs and teaching practices. As a consequence, conducting studies on the tensions that language teachers experience might bring about a better understanding of what teachers experience and how they develop professionally. Moreover, most of the previous studies were conducted with teachers in primary and secondary educational institutions; therefore, conducting studies with teachers working in tertiary level institutions can contribute to the field.

Throughout their teaching journey, teachers face many challenges that create *tensions* which are described as "the difference between what teachers say and do" (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p.381). Though the term *tension* sounds negative, Golombek and Johnson (2004) argue that "if a person is consciously aware of such contradictions, this awareness, which involves feelings of conflict, may turn into an important force for personality and professional development" (p. 314-324). In addition to that, Phipps and Borg (2009), claim that "tensions can enable both researchers and teacher educators to better understand the process of teaching" (p. 381) Phipps and Borg argue that contextual factors such as prescribed curriculum, time constraints and high-stakes

examinations might lead to the tensions that teachers experience. From such a point of view, focusing on the relationship between teachers' stated ideas (beliefs) and their practices in the classroom might provide invaluable insights into the professional development of English language teachers. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the related literature by addressing the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between the stated ideas of ELTs working in a Turkish higher education context and their actual practices in the classroom?
2. What are the reasons behind divergences, if any, from beliefs during the practice?

Methodology

The Context of the Study

The present study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) of a highly reputable Turkish state university in Northern Cyprus. The medium of instruction in the university is English. SFL has two different programs. English Preparatory program offers courses to students with lower level language proficiency who need to score at least 60 points in the English Proficiency Exam to be able to study in their departments. Modern Languages program, on the other hand, offers compulsory English and elective German, French and Spanish courses to undergraduate students. Currently, there are around 60 English language teachers in both programs hired by SFL. The main campus of the university is in Turkey; therefore, Northern Cyprus campus is closely tied to the main campus in educational and administrative affairs. As a result, the curriculum and syllabus at SFL are sent by the main campus.

SFL supports professional development activities and initiatives of its instructors through Professional Development Unit (PDU). The activities offered by PDU mainly involve monthly workshops, annual workshop festival and internationally-recognized In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) by Cambridge. ICELT is a one-year course which aims at deepening the knowledge of teachers, helping them to improve their teaching and to develop an ability to reflect upon their teaching. It also promotes principles and different aspects of communicative language teaching.

Participants

The study obtained data from 11 English language teachers working at SFL between the ages 24 and 44. They had different teaching experiences ranging from one year to 20 years. Some of the participants had worked in different institutions before working at SFL while for some it was the first place to start their career. Some teachers were offering courses in the preparatory program while the others were teaching in the modern languages program. At the time when the study was conducted, nine of the participants had completed In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) offered by Cambridge University. ICELT is a one-year course which aims at deepening the knowledge of teachers, helping them to improve their teaching and to

develop an ability to reflect upon their teaching. It is offered to newly recruited teachers, especially to the ones with no or little experience, in their first years. The course requires teachers to attend weekly workshops, to write assignment supported with references which requires reading articles or books related to ELT, to observe peers and colleagues, to reflect on their teaching and to be observed by the tutors in their classrooms.

In order to select the participants, three types of non-probability sampling which are purposive and convenience (availability). (see Check & Schutt, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007; Punch, 2005) were adopted. It was purposive because the study aimed at revealing the beliefs and practices of teachers working in the same institution. Moreover, it was convenient to work with participants working in the same institutions with the researchers. All of the participants were informed about the aim, process and requirements of the study, and then, they agreed to take part in the study voluntarily and signed a consent form.

In order to protect their rights, privacy and identity and make them feel secure, each participant was given a unisex Turkish name to create anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore, each participant will be referred as “s/he” throughout the study. Table 1 on the next page gives details regarding the profiles of the participants.

Table 1. Participant profiles

Participant	Ada	Bircan	Burçin	Deniz	Derin	Derya	Devrim	Güneş	Kayra	Olca	Toprak
Age	24	24	31	30	26	44	35	29	28	31	41
Teaching Experience (year/s)	2	1	8	8	5	20	12	7	5	9	11

Data Collection

The aim of the present study is to investigate and to understand the relationship between the stated ideas and actual practices of the focal participants, which can be achieved through an in-depth analysis of data. Therefore, a qualitative research method was employed since such in-depth analyses require “organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of the data in terms of the participants’ definition of situations, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 461). The study avoided quantitative data collection methods such as questionnaires and open-ended questions as the aim of the study is not to display numbers by “applying measurement procedures to social life [or to a social phenomenon, rather it is concerned with] understanding the behavior values, beliefs and so on in terms of the context in which the research is conducted” (Bryman, 2012, p.408).

In order to collect data, journals (RJ), in-class observations and semi-structured interviews were used. Using such variety of data collection instruments ensured having

data triangulation which means “using multiple data sources to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p.201).

The first instrument used in the study was reflection journals as reflection plays an important role “in the process of making sense of personal experiences” (Urzua & Vasquez, 2008, p. 1935). Reflections were exploited as one of the data sources since understanding the beliefs and practices of the participants require to think back on their past and current experiences to make sense of their beliefs and practices. The reflection journals had guiding questions aiming at revealing the teaching journey of the participants along with their teaching philosophies and teaching experiences and beliefs on language teaching concerning different aspects such as the medium of instruction, materials, classroom management and so on. Each participant was sent an online reflection journal with questions to reflect back and sent them before the observations took place. Moreover, the participants were guided in their reflections with guidelines and questions so as to have consistency across participants and to be able to determine regularities in the data with ease.

Observations have the potential to reveal and exemplify the practices mentioned by the participants in their journals because “observation[s] provide an opportunity to get beyond people’s opinions and self-interpretation of their attitudes, behaviors, towards an evaluation of their actions in practice” (Gray, 2009, p.397). Therefore, two in-class observations (ICO 1 and ICO 2) were arranged for each participant in which different aspects of their teaching were observed. While the first observation focused on classroom management, monitoring, timing, giving feedback and student-teacher interaction, the focus of the second observation was stages of the lesson, materials, skill teaching, monitoring and giving feedback. Each observation took two class hours (100 minutes). During the observations, one of the researchers observed and recorded each class and used field note sheets in order to hinder any data loss. Participants were informed about the procedures of the observations beforehand. However, the content of the observations was not mentioned not to create an unnatural observation environment in which participants would act in a socially desired way.

After each observation was completed, participants were invited to a semi-structured interview. Each participant was interviewed twice (SSI 1 and SSI 2). The reason why interviews were exploited as data collection tools was to provide participants with the opportunity to express themselves verbally, to elaborate more on their reflections and to comment on their actions in the classroom. All the interviews were face to face and voice-recorded. The voice records ranged between 26 minutes to 41 mins, making around 467 minutes in total. The records of each interview were immediately transcribed after each interview by the researcher by using “Express Dictate” which is a free digital dictation software program, and each transcription was filed under the name of each participant. They were conducted in English in order to avoid problems and meaning loss which may result from translation. The main bulk of the interview questions were prepared based on the data obtained from reflections and observations. There were also questions emerged from the flow of the interviews as “semi-structured format is flexible and adaptable to the needs of the participant” (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 226). Moreover, the interview questions were not available to the interviewees beforehand to be able to obtain data naturally.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data for the present study included observations, interviews and reflective journals. For data analysis, content analysis was adopted. Researchers analyzed and coded the data manually and two other intercoders coded the data in order to ensure interrater reliability. The data obtained from each participant were read several times in order to get familiar with them. Through constant reading, codes were determined and they were placed under overarching themes and categories. In short, the whole data were broken down into smaller units (codes), then, the smaller units were described and connected. Finally, after conceptualizing the connections between the codes, similar entities were classified under categories and themes.

In addition to having data triangulation, that is having multiple data collection instruments, and intercoders during the analysis stage, to ensure more validity, the study also employed member checking which requires “checking the data with the people who are being studied” (Punch, 2005, p. 255) after collecting and analyzing the data.

Findings

After completing the data collection and analysis process, it was revealed that there were some discrepancies between what teachers stated in their reflections and what they were actually doing in the classrooms. It is important to note that these discrepancies do not mean the participants always deviate from their beliefs. These findings are based on the observed practices in the classrooms and the testimonies of the participants during the interviews. Overall, it was revealed that the participants diverged from their beliefs in terms of skill teaching, the medium of instruction, giving feedback, classroom management and material development and use. Table 2 below summarizes the results of data obtained from the participants.

Table 2. The categorization of the themes and findings

Aspect	Stated Belief	Observed Practice	Explanation Given
Skill Teaching	Contextualized	Deductive	Student level
	Inductive Student-centered Communicative	Teacher-centered	Syllabus Assessment (lack of speaking test)
Feedback	Elicitation	Echoing	Time constraint
	Recasting	Direct correction	False input
	Peer correction	Repetition	Student level
	L2 use	Teacher-directed	Unawareness
	Individual	Judicious L1 use Whole class	
Classroom management	Building rapport	Distancing	Student level
	Guide	Controller	Control concerns
	Flexibility		
Medium of instruction	L2	L2-L1 combination or L1-weighted	Student level Time constraint Creating rapport Raising awareness
Material development and use	Communicative	Mechanic-weighted	Student needs
	Authentic	Institutional materials	Exam
	Variety	Limited resources	Classroom size

Divergences on Skill Teaching

In the journals and interviews, the participants stated that they try to teach skills through creating contexts in an inductive and student-centered manner. The reason behind creating context was explained as “serving the communicative purpose of language teaching and learning” (Derin, RJ) which is also highly recommended by the in-service training program of the institution, namely ICELT. The participants emphasized the importance of preparing communicative activities to teach skills instead of writing the rules on the board in a traditional way of teaching because “the aim of language learning is communication. Therefore, we, as language teachers need to show it through the activities we do in the classroom” (Ada, RJ).

The participants expressed their teaching philosophies regarding the teaching skills by following the recent trends in language teaching such as conducting inductive lessons, making the lessons and activities student-centered and placing importance on communicative activities. However, it was revealed during the in-classroom observations that not all of the lessons were inductive or students centered. In one of the lessons, where the teacher was explaining relative clauses, s/he neither created a context for the topic nor provided any communicative activity. Rather, it was writing the rules on the board and doing mechanic exercises. During most of the observed lessons, there were few cases where students were involved in communicative activities. Moreover, it was realized that speaking was ignored for many cases as a skill.

Some participants seemed to have some reactions about such divergences. “What we believe and what we want to do in the classroom are often overshadowed by

what we are expected to do.” (Toprak, SSI 2) was one of the reactions when the participants were asked about these divergences from their teaching philosophies that occurred during their lessons. It was asserted by the participants that although they want to do communicative activities, which is promoted during ICELT sessions, the loaded syllabus is the first barrier before them along with the low level of students, and assessment concerns. Teachers are highly concerned with keeping up with the syllabus; consequently, they put aside preparing time-consuming communicative activities and focus on mechanic exercises. The data also revealed that since speaking is not tested in METU English Proficiency Exam, students do not view it as an important skill; therefore, they ask for more mechanic exercises than communicative activities, which forces them to diverge from their beliefs and teaching philosophies; therefore, “we often find ourselves in a position where we think of different ways to satisfy ourselves, the institution and our students” (Derin, SSI 2).

In sum, despite the desire for preparing and conducting student-centered, contextual, communicative and inductive lessons, the teachers feel the need to diverge from their beliefs and end up with deductive and teacher-centered lessons due to the loaded syllabus, low student level and assessment concerns as to the content. Another reason of divergences might be the time and effort needed to prepare and implement such communicative and student-centered lessons.

Divergences on Providing Feedback

Feedback is an interesting area to study with the participants since the reflection journals and interviews disclosed that they are aware of the importance of it for students’ learning and how to provide different kinds of corrective feedback. The statements in the reflection journals and interviews clearly indicated that the teachers favor and try to make use of elicitation, peer feedback and recasting to help their students improve themselves. The major motive behind adopting such corrective feedback types is “to enable students to correct their own mistakes and learn from them” (Ada, SSI 1). The participants, further, emphasized the importance of peer feedback because they think that it creates the opportunity for students to interact with and learn from each other. In addition, they believe that feedback can be effective when it is provided individually and in the target language (L2). That is, the participants underlined the significance of one-to-one interaction with students during the feedback phase. One of the participants, Derya, acknowledged this by expressing that “the students in our classes portray a wide variety of profiles. This means that their needs also vary, so it is important to provide individual feedback” (SSI 2).

The teachers teaching in the modern languages program and the ones in the preparatory program teaching higher levels were observed to be more consistent with their beliefs, that is while giving feedback, they were trying to make use of elicitation and they were providing space for peer help or feedback. On the other hand, teachers who were teaching low-level students depended highly on L1, instead of L2, while giving feedback, and whole class feedback was frequently preferred over the individual one. Moreover, even though there was an emphasis on employing corrective feedback types such as peer correction and recasting in the journals and interviews, it was observed that the most frequently used feedback types were echoing, direct correction

and repetition. In one of the lessons observed, Deniz corrected one of the students directly as follows “She made a mistake” when the student uttered “She did mistake”. Among many ways of providing corrective feedback, s/he used direct correction and when asked during the interview s/he stated that s/he feels the need to give teacher-directed feedback rather than peer correction because “low-level students can provide false input to each other” (SSI 1). Another reason put forward by participants as to preferring whole class feedback is time constraint as “giving feedback individually in a classroom of 25 students is really time-consuming.” (Güneş, SSI 1).

In conclusion, there are divergences on the beliefs and actual practices of participants about giving feedback. It was revealed that the frequency of divergences in terms of providing feedback increases as the level of the students gets lower and vice versa. Among the major reasons given for the divergences are low student level, time constraint and the false input.

Divergences on Classroom Management

Mismatches between the beliefs of the focal teachers and their actual classroom practices were also observed in terms classroom management. They think that building rapport with their students is essential to have smooth running lessons and motivate their students as “teachers do not want to go to a class in which there are clashes between them and students, which is demotivating for both sides.” (Bircan, SSI 1). The participants stated that establishing a friendlier atmosphere in the classroom is important, and it can be done through being flexible and assuming a guiding role as the teacher. However, in some of the classes teachers were lecturing, doing drills, mechanic exercises in a quite traditional way. There were a few cases where teachers seemed to integrate interactive or student-oriented activities. Moreover, some teachers were not allowing late comers into classes, and in some classes, they were warning students to stop chatting, talking and joking. It seemed quite different than the idealized belief of flexible and guiding teacher role in the classroom. During the interviews, it surfaced that they diverge from their beliefs about classroom management due to especially control concerns. Instead of being a guide, teachers become controllers who want their students to obey some rules in the classroom “because it is hard to manage a crowded classroom without setting some rules” (Derya, SSI 1).

Participants stated that the main of classroom management should be creating a well-established teaching and learning environment for which building rapport is important. Nonetheless, some teachers end up with distancing rather than rapport due to the rules they set and their concerns about the fact that students may not have the edge with their teachers. This concern is shared especially by young teachers who fear that the desire to create a good relationship with students culminates in behavioral and disciplinary problems since “sometimes, some of the students want to be too close to your or they start like acting like your friends. As a teacher, you should prevent it from happening” (Olçay, SSI 1).

To sum up, the teachers in both programs diverge from their beliefs about classroom management due to control concerns and some behavioral problems that may arise from the students' behalf. Even though they want to assume a guiding role, they end up with being controllers owing to their concerns.

Divergences on Medium of Instruction

Participants in the study believe that the medium of instruction should be in L2 “since we are teaching at an English-medium university, the students must be exposed to target language as much as possible” (Burçin, RJ). Besides exposing students to target language during their preparatory classes, the teachers teaching in the modern languages program also stated that they need to teach in English because it is what is expected from them. However, during the in-class observations, it was recognized that teachers in both programs make use of L1 despite the frequency is quite low in the modern languages program and in the higher levels of the preparatory program. It was observed that in addition to providing feedback in L1, some topics (such as relative clauses) were also explained through using both L2 and L1, or sometimes the lessons were L1-weighted, especially in the lower levels. The participants stated that using L1 becomes inevitable because “L1 becomes a life and time savior at times. When you have little time to explain an important subject or vocabulary item, L1 works perfectly. You save time and energy and the students grasp it quickly.” (Olçay, SSI 2).

The main reason for using L1 seems to be time-constraint and the level of the students. However, some participants argue that they use L1 to show that using or thinking in L1 is not useful for their language learning, to wit, they try to give students a dose of their own medicine. Bircan explains the issue in the following way:

Students don't write in English; instead, they translate sentences from Turkish. It is obvious when you read from a writing handout. At that point, I feel the need to raise awareness of how translation does not work in writing or in language learning. There I use Turkish to give examples and to explain the problem (SSI 2).

Another motive behind using L1 was to create rapport between the teachers and students and a good welcoming teaching/learning atmosphere in the classroom. The teachers were observed to use Turkish to make jokes or have fun with the students. In one of the lessons, Ada used Turkish to make a joke as follows “O zaman neymiş, her sakallı dede değilmiş (so, not everyone with a beard is a grandpa). This was followed by students' laughter. When asked why she preferred Turkish to make a joke, Ada drew attention to the fact that “the sense of humor is best captured in your mother tongue; therefore, using Turkish to make jokes at times becomes inevitable” (SSI 2).

The last divergence observed regarding the medium of instruction was the fact that the participants were using their L1 as a signal or signpost to indicate transition or to draw attention. The most frequently observed signposts were “peki arkadaşlar (okay friends), işte (see), yani (that is) bu demek oluyor ki (it means) and şimdi (now)”.

In short, it was realized from the observations and interviews that in spite of believing in and emphasizing the use of target language at maximum level in the classroom, the teachers make use of L1 to teach a difficult topic or vocabulary and to raise awareness about the differences between the languages. The explanation given for the divergences were student level, time constraints, signposting and creating rapport through joking.

Divergences on Material Development and Use

The last divergence was observed between the stated beliefs or ideas of the participants and their practices in terms of the materials used in the classroom. Teachers at SFL are required to use materials such as textbooks, handouts and audio files. In addition to using these materials they can also adapt or adopt new materials as well. The participants in the study stated in their reflection journals and during the interviews that the materials used for teaching language should be authentic, offer variety and serve the communicative aspect of language learning. Though there was an emphasis by the participants on using authentic materials, they were observed to use materials provided by the institution most of the time even without adapting them. There were extra materials prepared for the lessons which were offering a kind of variety, but far away from being communicative. Those extra materials were generally including mechanic exercises which might also appear in the exams.

It can be concluded from the observations and interviews that they were using mostly institutional materials, which were considered by the participants as inauthentic, and the content of the extra materials was loaded with mechanic-weighted exercises leaving very little space for communicative activities. When they were questioned about it, participants stated that they needed to consider the most important reality of the preparatory program, the Proficiency Exam, which necessitated to provide students with mechanic exercises very often. Kayra explained it in the following way:

We need to give our students mechanic exercises because that is what they need and what they want. As their level progresses, and as they get closer to the exam, they demand more of them. Moreover, it is hard to use communicative activities all the time. They require extra time and energy (SSI 2).

Another point raised by the participants was not being able to offer as much variety as desired or expected. They think that in terms of materials and their contents, variety is important to have an enjoyable and not boring lesson, however, "it is not easy to offer everyone what they want to see and have in the materials in a crowded classroom" (Toprak, SI 2). Therefore, crowded classrooms seem to be imposing restrictions on the material choice and use of the participants.

To summarize, the teachers at SFL place great importance on the effectiveness of the materials they would like to use in their classrooms. They think that the materials used to teach and learn English should be authentic and communicative. On the other hand, due to constraints imposed by the exam-orientedness of the students and the program, crowded classrooms and the needs of the students, the materials they actually use in their classrooms tend to be mechanic-weighted institutional materials lacking communicative elements usually.

Discussion

The results of the present study has shown that the focal participants, namely, 11 English language teachers working at the School of Foreign Languages of a Turkish university, deviated from their own beliefs about teaching in terms of skill teaching, classroom management, providing feedback and medium of instruction, some of which coincide with the results of the studies carried out by Farrel and Bennis (2013), Orafi

and Borg (2009), Osam and Balbay (2004), Phipps and Borg (2009) and Sato and Kleinsasser (2004). It was revealed that teachers diverge from their beliefs about skill teaching due to student level, syllabus and the mismatch between the syllabus and assessment which aligns with the results obtained by Erkmen (2014) and Phipps and Borg (2009). It was obvious that one of the main reasons of the divergences was the mismatch between the communicative principles of ICELT serving as the basis of the teaching philosophy in the institution which was also mentioned by Levitt (2001) and Phipps and Borg (2009). It was also revealed that the teachers diverged from their beliefs about classroom management due to student level and control concerns since they were worried about the disciplinary problems which are similar to the results obtained by Osam and Balbay (2004) in which experienced teachers were more concerned with discipline problems.

As to material development and use, teachers did not comply with their communicative beliefs about the nature of the materials and employed mostly mechanic exercises due to exam-orientedness, students' needs and classroom sizes. Time constraint (also claimed by Osam & Balbay, 2004), student level, creating rapport and raising awareness were among the reasons why the teachers made use of L1 instead of L2. This shows they diverged from their beliefs because they aimed to serve the needs of their students in a better way. Moreover, these findings indicate that L1 is not a barrier all the time during learning or teaching a foreign language, and it might contribute to the process as well.

Another important finding of the divergences was providing feedback. The results showed that the participants were aware of the benefits of peer feedback, elicitation, recasting as corrective feedback types; however, they mostly employed teacher-directed techniques such as direct correction and echoing owing to student level, time constraint and the fear that peers might provide each other with false input, which signals the importance of context as one of the factors triggering tensions and deviations that teachers experience (Orafi & Borg, 2009).

It can be concluded that the focal participants have their own belief systems, interpretations and preconceptions about teaching (in line with Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996). On the other hand, it was revealed that they do deviate from their own beliefs due to multiple reasons, especially to serve the needs of their students (parallel to Phipps & Borg, 2009) and requirement of the institution (supporting claims of Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004) and the curriculum, which was also claimed by Baştürkmen (2012). Moreover, the implicit exam-oriented system also seems to exert power in terms putting their beliefs into practices.

In sum, the stated beliefs/ideas of the participants and their actual practices are not always in tune with each other, which created divergences and tensions. However, these divergences and tensions also seem to contribute to their professional development as they find new ways to practice their beliefs or practice different things as they teach in different classes with different profiles. The findings indicate that these teachers are capable of adapting themselves to new beliefs, practices and contexts because such divergences make them more flexible and embracing (also suggested by Levitt, 2001).

Summary and Conclusions

It is obvious that the participant teachers make a lot of effort to create the best language teaching and learning environment based on their teaching philosophies and perspectives. However, the data obtained from the reflections, observations and interviews revealed that their stated beliefs/ideas and their actual practices are not always in tune with each other. In other words, there are cases where the teachers diverge from their beliefs and act differently due to some constraints such as students' needs, time, exam, student level and limited resources. Such divergences seem to create tensions for teachers since they are required to renounce some of their beliefs and change their plans.

Although there are mismatches between participants' stated beliefs and their observed practices, this does not mean that they have tension all the time. The tensions they have or they experience do not prevent them doing their profession and fulfilling the requirements of being a teacher. On the contrary, those tensions indicate that these teachers are capable of adapting themselves to different contexts and student profiles, which signals that they are aware of the fact that one single method or technique may not fit all. Güneş (SSI 2) stated that "Teaching is a trial and error process, you learn something new every day as you teach. Especially teaching different classrooms enables us to see what works and what not. The feedback you get from each class shapes you and the way you teach". The figure below is explanatory and illustrative with respect to how the belief system of those teachers (might) work.

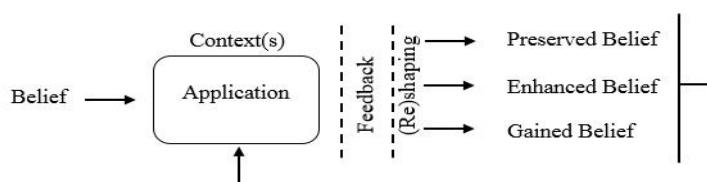


Figure 1: The belief cycle of participants

As summarized in the figure above that the teachers hold some beliefs about teaching which they apply in different contexts. Upon applying a belief in a certain context, they get feedback on it, and this results in three possible outcomes.

(i). Preserved belief: This notion refers to the case where the teachers do not change their beliefs and reapply them later in the same or different context(s).

(ii). Enhanced belief: This second notion represents the case where the teacher keeps his/her belief but add more on the same belief to apply it in a better way upon receiving feedback on a practiced belief.

(iii). Gained belief: This notion refers to the cases where teachers apply their beliefs and realize that they don't work in that context. Therefore, they abandon or change this belief, and adopt a new one.

Upon looking at the data and the results, it can be concluded that there are mismatches between the beliefs and practices of the participants in the aspects such as

skill teaching, classroom management, the medium of instruction, providing feedback and material development and use. However, it was revealed that these divergences were not obtrusive to the professional development of the participants rather they were contributive in (re)shaping the beliefs and identities because “a lack of relationship [mismatches] between beliefs and practices may indicate that the teacher is going through a change process and genuine changes will come about when teachers think differently about what is going on in their classrooms and are provided with the practices to match the different ways of thinking” (Richardson *et al.*, 1991, p. 579).

Carl Jung once said, “You are what you do not what you say you’ll do.” Considering all the results of the current study and the quote by Jung, it can be said that these language teachers are what they are able to do within the given context, not what they actually believe and intend to do.

Limitations

Despite its significance in terms of identifying and understanding the tensions and the reasons behind those tensions that 11 English language teachers experience, the results obtained from the current study cannot be generalized to other teachers and institutions. Therefore, further research is needed to elaborate more on the issue of beliefs and practices. Another limitation that can be considered is the time limit. The data were collected within a teaching semester, which might impose limitations to the results of the study because different or more enhanced results might have been obtained had it been conducted in a longer period of time. Finally, future studies can focus on the beliefs and experiences of English language teachers in diverse contexts. We do believe that beliefs can also be changed by context and institutions. It can also be enriching to investigate English language teacher beliefs in various contexts.

Authors’ Note

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Soruyu bir de Şöyle Soralım: Dil Öğretmenlerinin Söylemleri ile Sınıf içi Eylemleri Tutarlı mıdır?

Öz

Bu nitel araştırma, Türk bir yükseköğretim kurumunda eğitim veren 11 İngilizce öğretmenin İngilizce eğitimi ile ilgili belirttikleri fikirler ve sınıfta uyguladıkları eylemler arasındaki ilişkiyi bu öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimleri açısından incelemektedir. Araştırmacılar; beceri edindirme, geri bildirim sağlama, sınıf yönetimi, öğrenci-öğretmen etkileşimi, eğitim dili ve materyal geliştirme konularını ele alarak çalışmada yer alan öğretmenlerinin belirttikleri inançlarıyla gözlemlenen uygulamalarına odaklanmışlardır. Bu araştırma için veriler öğretmenlerin içe bakış yöntemiyle tuttıkları günceler, sınıf içi gözlemler ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, çeşitli nedenlerin etkileşimi ve müdahalesi dolayısıyla, öğretmenlerin belirttikleri düşünceleriyle sınıfta uygulanan asıl eylemleri arasında bazı uyumsuzluklar olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu açıklama bazı olumsuz çağrışımları akla getirirse de, esasında bu sapmalar birer engel olarak görülmemekte; bilakis, onların mesleki gelişimlerine katkı sağlayan etkenler olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Ayrıca, araştırmaya katılan kişilerden edinilen veriler katılımcıların üç tür inanca sahip olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır: korunmuş inançlar (bir bağlamda uygulanması mümkün olanlar), gelişmiş inançlar (iyileştirilen ve yine bir bağlamda uygulanması mümkün olanlar) ve kazanılmış inançlar (bir bağlamda uygulanması mümkün olmayan inançları terk ederek benimsenen yeni inançlar).

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce öğretmenleri, öğretmen inançları, mesleki gelişim