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*International Association of Research*

*in Foreign Language Education and Applied Linguistics*

**ELT Research Journal**

**2016, 5(2), 155-176**

**ISSN: 2146-9814**

## **Can CELTA qualification be the new bridge between pre-service and in-service education?: Perceptions of in-service teachers**

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### **Abstract**

Teachers play an essential role in shaping the future generations of a society. Therefore, preparing teachers for this noble profession is of utmost importance. Helping teachers with their initial years in which they meet with the challenges of teaching in a real life situation and encouraging their ongoing development are as important as their pre-service training. While each of these training steps are designed with the necessities of the related contexts, there is a longstanding debate on the best possible intersections of these different phases of teacher training programs. This study, therefore, examines whether an internationally recognized teacher certification course (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages-CELTA), which is designed primarily for pre-service teacher training can be useful as a bridge between pre-service and in-service teacher education. In this qualitative study, the aim is to compare the perceptions of 44 CELTA -holder English language instructors towards CELTA training and its impact on their teaching and learning through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The analysis revealed that CELTA offers something new to all trainees; however, the gains from the course differ according to trainees' educational background and teaching experience.

**Keywords:** CELTA, pre-service education, in-service education

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## **Introduction**

Teaching is an art that is shaped by experience and empowered by knowledge. Just like in every field of occupation, professionalism including the prerequisites, standards, and qualifications is required in teaching as well. The distinctive features of professionals from other practitioners of any kind of field are specialized knowledge base, commitment, responsibility, and autonomy (Day, 1999; Hoyle & John, 1995). These may be gained through pre-service education, certificate programs, in-service training and experience over years. Teachers' knowledge bases related to both subject matter and how to teach it are mainly provided through pre-service education. When teachers start their profession, their pre-service training gives them a head start, yet in order to keep their knowledge up-to-date and follow the new trends in teaching and learning a continuous in-service training is still necessary.

In-service training or continuous professional development (CPD) can be defined as “any activities aiming at enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers by means of orientation, training and support” (Coetzer, 2001; p. 78). It is believed that carefully planned and effectively conducted CPD activities will affect the attitudes and approaches of teachers; and may, in turn, lead to progress and enhancement in the quality of the learning and teaching process (Early & Bubb, 2004; Day & Sachs, 2004). Continuous professional development (CPD) programs enable participants to revisit their current skills and knowledge and give them an opportunity to improve their practices keeping them up-to-date with recent developments in the field. Teachers engage in finding alternative ways of improving their teaching considering the various needs of students. They also have a chance to build on their foundational knowledge they had already gained at their initial education. Therefore, “teacher development is a process of continual, intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers” (Lange, 1990, p. 250). It is not limited to graduation or completion of a certification. It is a life-long process continuing throughout a teacher's career (Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001).

CPD can take different forms. Although for most people, CPD is regarded as some kind of formal or educational training, professional development can include a wide range of activities. Some of these activities are initiated and executed by the teachers themselves, whereas many others include some kind of collaboration. It is possible to classify different types of activities into categories of work-based learning, professional activities, formal training and self-directed learning. Sample activity types are included for each CPD categories in Table 1 below:

Table 1

*CPD categories and sample activities*

Work-based learning	Professional Activity	Formal training	Self-directed learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• case-studies / presentations</li> <li>• job rotation</li> <li>• quality assurance activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• involvement in a professional body</li> <li>• being an examiner</li> <li>• giving presentations at conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• courses</li> <li>• workshops</li> <li>• writing papers</li> <li>• undertaking research</li> <li>• pursuing graduate studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading journals / articles</li> <li>• online discussion</li> <li>• distance / online learning</li> </ul>

(Adapted from

<http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10003B70Yourguidetoourstandardsforcontinuingprofessionaldevelopment.pdf>)

### Characteristics of effective CPD programs

Regardless of what the activity is, the key point to remember about CPD for teachers is that the CPD activities should foster teacher learning (Zhang, 2014). As also emphasized by Avalos (2011, p.10), “PD is about teacher learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth”. Teacher learning has been conceptualized as various processes by which teachers develop a variety of knowledge types or increase their participation in the practice of teaching as a result of pursuing both externally-provided and job-embedded learning activities. An important aspect to consider in Avalos’s definition is whether PD activities really help the transformation of knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students’ growth. Most traditional PD activities, especially those one-shot workshops or seminars or courses, have always been criticized for being decontextualized and disjointed, treating teachers as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active learners, and failing to address the specific needs of the teachers and the students that they teach (Alan, 2003, 2015).

In the literature, there are some features of CPD that are considered important for the successful integration of CPD into in-service teacher education. First, effective CPD should be voluntary and needs-driven. In other words, teachers should not be forced to take part in all activities and when designing the activities, the specific needs of teachers should be addressed (Bredeson, 2003; Muijs, Day, Harris & Lindsay, 2004). For achieving the optimum results from CDP, Collinson (2000) advocates that the program should be planned and presented to teachers with a specific focus on enhancement of personal and professional growth by broadening knowledge, skills and positive attitudes.

Secondly, CPD should rely on prior knowledge and experience and should be built upon that knowledge and experience (Bredeson, 2003; Early & Bubb, 2004). Teachers have already acquired a remarkable amount of knowledge and experience throughout their life which needs to be credited and appreciated. Denying this when planning CPD would lead to a failure because the teachers would not be interested in taking part and develop negative

attitudes towards CPD in general. In other words, the knowledge and experience of teachers are the standing feet of the bridge between pre-service and in-service teacher education, and any attempts to ignore these is like placing some dynamites on these feet to collapse the bridge.

Finally, it is important to foster strong interactions and reflections among teachers because all teachers have already obtained some sort of knowledge and promoting the sharing of this existing knowledge and skills will both strengthen the bounds between teachers and encourage them to learn from each other (Kaagan, 2004; Anderson, 2001).

To sum up, CPD should be on voluntary basis and should be fed from the needs of the teachers. It should recognize teachers' prior knowledge, skills, and experience; and should be built upon these. It should also encourage stakeholders' sharing experience and knowledge to promote learning from each other. CPD activities that take into account above mentioned features are more likely to become a bridge between pre-service and in-service teacher education. Although the discussion and criticism towards CPD programs are endless, there is not much research regarding what constitutes an effective CPD program and what the characteristics of a CPD are. In other words, even though there are descriptions and suggestions related to professional development activities, there is no empirical or research-driven guidance related to CPD activities, except for two consecutive studies conducted by Garet and his colleagues (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). Therefore, for a successful CPD program, some basic criteria need to be implemented.

### **Basic Criteria for Evaluating PD activities**

Continuous professional or teacher development (CPD/CTD) programs may either employ a bottom-up approach where regulatory bodies enforce teachers to participate or a top-down approach based on a more voluntary and collaborative basis and participants are responsible for their own development (Alan, 2003). However, regardless of how the CPDs are executed, they all aim at creating a change in participants' teaching. CPD is a continuum equipping teachers with necessary skills and knowledge bases enabling them to teach in their subject area. Richards (1998; p.1) defines those skills and knowledge bases as "theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning, decision making, and contextual knowledge." This core knowledge of SLTE is aimed to be gained in teacher training focusing on the fundamental skills and knowledge, and teacher development whose main concern is to create a transformational growth in the SLTE continuum.

The first four knowledge bases that Richards (1998) mentioned above -theories of teaching, teaching skills, communication skills, and subject matter knowledge- are generally taught in the teacher training part of the continuum. They are generally gained through pre-service education or qualification programs like CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), focusing on the actual practical skills of teachers. In spite of the efforts to develop the last two knowledge bases -pedagogical reasoning and contextual knowledge- in teacher training programs, they are generally gained in teacher development programs stressing theoretical backgrounds of teaching and language learning theory or experience over

time. Alan (2003) illustrates these knowledge bases showing the two ends of the second language teacher education continuum.

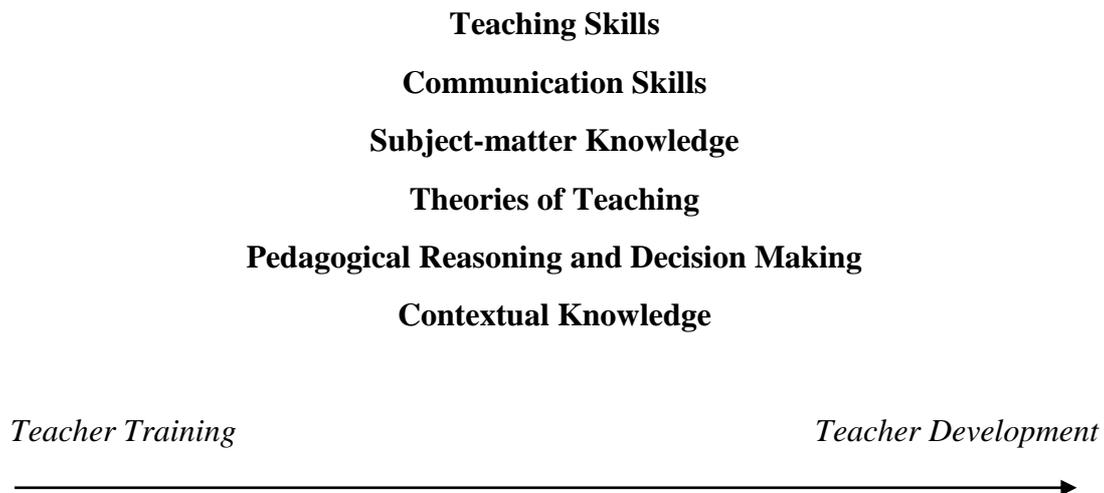


Figure 1

*Knowledge and skills acquired within the second language teacher education continuum*

However, in order to meet the demand with well qualified English teachers there has been a shift in SLTE towards training teachers with rather practical teaching skills. Considering teaching development as a continuum, today's PD programs are designed on a classroom-oriented approach addressing the practical teaching needs of teachers (Richards, 2008; Barduhn & Johnson, 2009). This shift has given path to short professional development programs where participants gain the basic principles of English language teaching and get the hands-on teaching practice. The most practical form of this kind of internationally recognized education is CELTA (Senior, 2006).

### **CELTA as a teacher training course**

CELTA was originally initiated for the native speakers of English with little or no teaching experience in order to provide them with employment in different parts of the world (<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english/teaching-qualifications/celta/>). Even though it is a one-month intensive course, the content and curriculum designed in consultation with experts and the internationally accepted certification receive appreciation from its participants. Besides, regulatory bodies of CELTA assert that they now consider the program as part of a career-long professionalism rather than the initial stage for teaching (Ferguson & Donno, 2003).

In the context of Turkey, CELTA certification has recently gained importance in TEFL. Today, many institutions require their instructors to have CELTA certification, it is even a pre-requisite to apply for positions in many private schools. As opposed to the situations in different parts of the world, most CELTA holders are ELT graduates and they already have at least BA degrees which is the minimum level to be able to teach. So why do participants bother getting a one-month CELTA certification although they have had a longer initial training? The reason may be in the definition and the design of the course. As

Thornburry and Watkins (2007) define, CELTA as “practical”, “integrated”, “experiential”, “co-operative” and “reflective” (pages 5-6) program where participants engage in activities that enable them link the theory and practice through observations, assignments and teaching practice.

In a seminal research Garet et al. (2001) have listed 6 main features of a good CPD program. They further classified these 6 features under structural features and core features. Structural features mainly deal with the characteristics of the structure or design of professional development activities, and core features address dimensions of the substance or core of the professional development experience. The first of the structural features is the form of the activity. Examples for the form are study group, traditional short course, workshop, or conference. The second structural feature is the duration of the activity, as indicated by the total number of contact hours that participants spend on the activity, and the span of time over which the activity takes place. The third structural feature is the degree to which the activity entails collective participation of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level, as opposed to participation of individual teachers from many schools. One of the three core features of PD activities is the degree to which the activity has a content focus, whether the PD activity focuses on improving teachers' knowledge of subject matter content or improving general pedagogy or teaching practices. Another core feature is the extent to which the activity offers opportunities for active learning that involves observing and being observed; planning for classroom implementation; reviewing student work; and presenting, leading, and writing. The third feature is the degree to which the activity promotes coherence in teachers' learning and PD by offering experiences that are consistent with teachers' professional goals and aligned with standards and assessments, as well as by encouraging continuing professional communication among teachers (Garet et al., 2001).

What is important about Garet and his colleagues' classification is that it reflects and emphasizes the shift in CPD in that more emphasis is put on the transmission of practical teaching skills. Recently, programs like CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults), TESOL certificate (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), IDELT (International Diploma in English Language Teaching) are becoming popular in non-native English speaking countries as a valid and required certification. Nonetheless, how the participants evaluate CELTA or similar certificate programs as a means for CPD activity is not thoroughly investigated considering different variables.

### **Descriptive Evaluation of CELTA**

CELTA is a one-month intensive course, designed to equip prospective teachers of English with very basic classroom management and teaching skills. However, CELTA as a CPD activity may be appealing to some language instructors, especially if they are interested in earning an internationally recognized English language teaching certificate. Below in Table 2, CELTA certification is evaluated taking into account the classification offered by Garet et al. (2001).

**Table 2***Features of an Effective PD Program and CELTA*

	<b>Features of an Effective PD Program</b>	<b>CELTA</b>
<i>Content focus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on instructional strategies to facilitate language learning process</li> <li>• Designs and implements programs informed by theory, research and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporates effective instructional strategies</li> <li>• The knowledge, which is generally covered in Input sessions, is research-based</li> </ul>
<i>active for opportunities learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers opportunities for applying new knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for observing expert teachers, being observed in their own classroom, and obtaining feedback</li> <li>• Promotes teacher reflection through discussions, journal entries and reader responses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input sessions combine theory with practice</li> <li>• Teachers observe experts, are observed and given feedback in their own classroom</li> <li>• Promotes teacher reflection through journal entries and discussions</li> </ul>
<i>Coherence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailors PD to the teachers' learning style and needs</li> <li>• Embeds it in the reality of school and teachers' work</li> <li>• Provides teachers with knowledge and skills that can be used in a variety of class settings</li> <li>• Provides feedback, coaching, and follow-up support to facilitate knowledge application</li> <li>• Grounds PD in collaborative learning and formation of teacher communities</li> <li>• Designs it to be informed by the teacher and student outcomes data as measures of the impact of the PD program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CELTA can be considered a coherent PD program because it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ provides teachers with knowledge and skills that can be used in a variety of class settings,</li> <li>○ provides feedback, coaching, and follow-up support to facilitate knowledge application</li> <li>○ grounds PD in collaborative learning and formation of teacher communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<i>Form</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilizes a variety of forms: graduate level courses, workshops, summer institutes, after-school training sessions, teacher collaboration, coaching and mentoring</li> <li>• Employs a school-university partnership as a mechanism for providing high-quality PD.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions, coaching and mentoring are included in the program</li> <li>• The program is run by Cambridge ESOL which has strong connections and bounds with Cambridge University.</li> </ul>
<i>Duration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates programs ranging in from six months to two years.</li> <li>• Offers sustained support including class visits, supervised implementation of new teaching practices after formal training is completed, colleague teams to share problems and concerns, and various types of remote support (e.g., e-mails, online chat groups, and threaded discussions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CELTA is generally criticized for its short duration, which lasts for only 26 days.</li> <li>• There is no follow-up sessions on the candidate. Once the candidate is certified, there is no follow up or any further mentoring or coaching</li> </ul>
<i>Collaborative participation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages collective participation of both content and EFL teachers from the same school</li> <li>• Forms collaborative inquiry groups</li> <li>• Enables co-teaching by content and ESL teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program is for anyone who wishes to pursue a certificate program.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Zhang, 2014, p.85-86).

As can be seen from the table, CELTA program as a CPD activity meets most recommendations made by researchers for professional development with reference to core features of a PD program. The content is appropriate for a professional development program and it creates lots of opportunities for active learning. There is also coherence in program design. However, in terms of structural features, CELTA is not so strong. One of the biggest flaw of CELTA certification is the duration and lack of follow-up options on the graduates. Short-term certification programs, like CELTA, receive criticism regarding their duration mainly because it is difficult to create a change in participants' beliefs and skills in a short time (Ferguson & Dunno, 2003; Waters & Vilches, 2005). Borg's (2001) study revealed that even though the CELTA trainers adopted a more learner centered approach, their initial beliefs regarding teaching and learning mostly remained unchanged. Penington (1992) raises the standards for teacher education and suggests that the minimum qualification for ELT teachers should be at least MA and preferably PhD at tertiary level. However, the longer training programs do not always guarantee significant changes in participants' beliefs and practices (Peacock, 2001; Altan, 2006; Debreli, 2012). Hobbs (2007) states that the program provides participants with a "basic tool kit" and does not prepare them as fully equipped TEFL qualified taking into account its low admission standards and high pass rate. However,

she also states that the program raises awareness for PD and only the ones with the right attitude and desire continue their career in teaching after their completion of the certificate program.

Although CELTA is considered just adequate as a basic survival kit for pre-service teachers to survive in the classroom in the initial months or years of their teaching profession, it falls short of equipping teachers with essential teaching skills, or declarative knowledge of language teaching that is necessary, even in the initial times of their profession (Fergusson & Donno, 2003; Borg, 2005; Borg, 2006; Brandt, 2006; Stanley and Murray, 2013; Hobbs, 2013; Chick, 2015). Another criticism towards the CELTA course as a pre-service teacher training course is about the teaching practice. Trainees, who have no prior teaching experience, need to complete a minimum of 6 hours of teaching practice; however, these six hours are scarce for trainees to discover who they are and what their teaching style is like. During these six hours, they are also being assessed and they need to perform key techniques according to their tutor's expectations and preferences (Brandt, 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

CELTA course was previously questioned and examined as a teacher training course for pre-service teachers and the findings of empirical studies yielded controversial findings. Studies generally focused on the effectiveness of the program and the perceptions of the teacher trainees who are native teachers with no teaching education and language-related background in most of the cases (Borg, 2001; Ferguson & Dunno, 2003; Waters & Vilches, 2005; Brandt, 2006; Hoobs, 2007; Hobbs, 2013). This study offers a new look into CELTA course. In this study, the focus is on CELTA course as an in-service professional development activity and its impact on in-service non-native teachers of English.

Since 2012, language instructors at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages are encouraged to have their CELTA qualifications. This has been carried out on a voluntary basis and a total of 56 language instructors have had their CELTA qualifications since then. They have different educational backgrounds and a range of teaching experiences. Planning CPD for such a diverse group of teachers requires careful planning because the need of a novice teacher who has a degree in Translation and Interpretation is quite different from someone who is a graduate of English Language Teaching department and has a 10-year-experience in teaching. It is obvious that these two language instructors will have different needs and expectations from CPD activities; however, it is also very likely that these two teachers take part in the same CPD activity. Whatever the CPD activity is the question is how these two language instructors from different backgrounds evaluate their experiences.

This study, therefore, aims at investigating and evaluating the experiences of language teachers when they engage in the same CPD activity. By identifying teachers' perceived impact of CELTA course on their teaching, and their self-reports of what they learned from CELTA that they did not learn in their undergraduate education, this study is believed to bring a different perspective on CELTA as a language teacher development program, generating implications for a possible link between pre-service and in service teacher training.

## Methodology

This is a qualitative study aiming to compare the perceptions of 44 CELTA-holder English language instructors towards CELTA training and its impact on their teaching and learning through an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

### Context

Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages (AUSFL) is an institution responsible for providing intensive foreign language instruction in English, German, French and Russian languages to approximately 2700 first year university students before they start their foreign language medium instruction in their departments. There are 150 English, 8 German, 8 French and 2 Russian language instructors, working at the Department of Basic Foreign Languages. There are four levels in the Global Scale of English (GSE) curriculum-based program including 20-25 students in each class. 3 teachers share a class providing a total of 24 hours of integrated instruction of which 20 hours are given face-to-face, 2 hours in laboratory and 2 hours in self-study lesson.

Professional development has always been an integral element of the department and a great deal of effort has been expended on teachers' personal and professional development through seminars, invited guest speakers, workshops and short-term courses. Anadolu University has always been generous and encouraging in supporting national / international conferences and other means of professional activity. The language instructors were also encouraged to pursue graduate degrees to foster their academic and professional development. Recently, the school has also started to fund CELTA qualification for its instructors to get an internationally recognized teaching certification and since 2012, a total of 56 language instructors have completed their CELTA.

### Participants

Out of a total of 56 language instructors with CELTA certificates, the data were obtained from 44 instructors. The distribution of the participants can be seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3

#### *Distribution of ELT and Non-ELT Graduates*

	<u>ELT</u>	<u>Non-ELT</u>	<u>Total</u>
Experienced	(EE) 22	(ENE) 8	<b>30</b>
Novice	(NE) 9	(NNE) 5	<b>14</b>
Total	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>

As can be seen from the table above, 31 of these instructors were graduates of English Language Teaching programs and 13 of them were the graduates of other language related

programs (e.g. British or American Literature and Culture, Translation and Interpretation, Linguistics). 22 out of the 31 instructors had 6-20 years of teaching experience and 9 instructors had less than 5 years of teaching experience, therefore, are considered as novice. As for the Non-ELT graduates, out of 13 instructors, 8 are experienced and 5 are novice teachers.

### **Research Question**

The research question posed for this study is whether the CELTA course can be a bridge between pre-service and in-service education. In order to answer this question, qualitative data was collected from 44 CELTA-holders and analysed for common themes.

### **Data Collection**

In order to find an answer to the research question whether the CELTA course can be a bridge between pre-service and in-service education the participants' opinions were obtained through an open-ended questionnaire and focused group interviews regarding the following areas;

1. what they gained from CELTA they did not gain in their undergraduate education,
2. what changed in their teaching after completing CELTA?

The focus group interviews were conducted with 8 participants, selecting 2 representatives from each category by convenient sampling; ELT experienced (EE), Non-ELT experienced (ENE), ELT novice (EN) and Non-ELT novice (NNE).

### **Data Analysis**

The data from the open-ended questionnaire were transcribed verbatim taking into account the two areas stated above and analyzed the common themes using Constant Comparison Method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Two independent researchers with experience in qualitative study and ELT as well as in language teacher training analyzed all the data separately for internal consistency. The themes that arose for each area were then discussed with reference to participants' educational backgrounds and years of experience. The same procedures were followed for analyzing the data gathered from interviews which aimed to gather further details of the opinions gained from the questionnaire. Cohen's Kappa was used as a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement for qualitative items and found to be as 0.88, which can be considered as substantial agreement (Viera and Garrett, 2005).

### **RESULTS**

In order to answer the research question of whether the CELTA can be a bridge between pre-service and in-service teacher training, the data was analysed under two major headings; what teachers perceive they gained from CELTA they think their pre-service education fell short of offering and what changes occurred in participants' actual teaching after completing the CELTA course. Both of these aspects were analysed from the teachers' perspectives.

## **The gains from CELTA the participants thought they could not gain from their undergraduate studies**

The undergraduate education background was the variable affecting teachers' opinions; while teachers graduating from Non-ELT departments stated that they learned everything about teaching from CELTA, it was mainly perceived as a refreshment for ELT graduates. As seen in the extracts below, Non-ELT graduate teachers regardless of their teaching experience stated that since they only had a short period of pedagogical formation certificate, everything they learned about teaching including classroom management, material adaptation, lesson planning, student involvement and the other aspects were learned during their CELTA training:

-*"Since I did not graduate from an ELT department I learnt everything about teaching from CELTA". (EE8)*

-*"Since I graduated from a literature department, I thought getting formation would be enough for teaching. During CELTA training I understood that it was not". (EE5)*

-*"Since I am not an ELT graduate I learned a lot of new things; I realized that what I had been using had a theoretical background. But I also had a chance to apply what I learned in practice. I realized my own practice, what I was doing right and wrong. I did not have a chance to teach real students and get feedback in my undergraduate education."(NNE2)*

-*"I am not an ELT graduate; CELTA thought me lots of practical ideas I did not learn during my formation as well as evaluating my own teaching". (NNE4)*

-*"As a non-ELT graduate I did not learn anything about teaching during my undergraduate education. Pedagogic formation did not have any impact on me. I actually think what I learned during that period was not useful at all. The short teaching practice I had during the formation did not teach me anything. CELTA was related to teaching my students' age group, it also helped me to get feedback to my teaching and my classroom management. That is why, it was very useful."(ENE1)*

ELT graduates, on the other hand appreciated their undergraduate education and stated that they learned about every aspect of teaching during their undergraduate education. Especially the experienced teachers perceived CELTA as a refreshment in their teaching career. Most of the ELT graduates, experienced and novice, on the other hand stated that being observed while teaching, the feedback they received from their trainers and their peers and the reflections they did during CELTA were the most beneficial aspects of CELTA. Many of them stated not having as much feedback during their 4-year undergraduate program as they did during a 1-month-training program. The extracts below can be given as examples of their opinions:

-*"I did my practicum only in one term of my undergraduate study and I remember teaching only three times one of which was observed by my supervisor. The feedback I got was "Well done! It was good." I didn't get any feedback from the real teacher of the classroom at all, I of course learned many things by doing after I started teaching -just like most of my friends. During CELTA I taught eight times in a one-month-period and got feedback for all of them". (EE5)*

-*"Not very much different indeed. Everything in literature and practice in terms of ELT and all the procedures are applied exactly, but terminology is different. For instance, instead of PPP for grammar course and Pre-, During, and Post for skill courses, they use different names. Instead of presentation, they use modelling, for introduction they say lead in etc. Also, modelling TL, concept check, freer practice, pronunciation all have their equivalents with different names in conventional teaching". (EE15)*

-“Everything we learned during undergraduate studies was theoretical. We only had one or two times of chance to put them into practice and it was not enough. However, practicing immediately after learning something in CELTA was more beneficial than our four-year-undergraduate study for me. (EE17)

-“CELTA training helped me refresh myself. The biggest benefit of CELTA was to give me another chance to revise the topics I had already learned during my undergraduate training but had difficulty in practicing.” (EE3)

-“During CELTA training I was already an experienced teacher, but I learned a lot and I was refreshed. The individual automatically applies the knowledge gained in training, being full of wish to teach”. (EE6)

-“Because of the CELTA training I remembered the knowledge I forgot, I reviewed the things I knew wrong or I did wrong.” (EE4)

-“These are the subjects covered at education faculties, but you can get actual chance of putting them into practice and observing your colleagues many times by getting constructive feedback. This cannot be done at education faculties because of crowded classrooms, time constraints and some other reasons”. (EE16)

-“I cannot say that I learned superb knowledge or my world was enlightened. However, seeing that I was well-prepared to the field helped me to appreciate my undergraduate education. It was a very good review and reinforcement. However, as a plus, it gave me an opportunity to receive education from a different perspective and discipline and gained me self-confidence...In my opinion, it can be two or three times more beneficial for Non-ELT graduates”. (EE11)

Teachers from all experience and graduation background emphasized the benefit of learning practical ideas they could directly use in their classes. They stated that since CELTA focuses on teaching English to young adult group, what they learned during the program was directly applicable to their contexts, as seen in the samples below:

-“If you ask me, CELTA is a certificate program that does not only offer many practical applications that may be influential in the classroom, but also proposes practical solutions to learning.” (ENE6)

-“we were introduced to more practical, more diverse and more different approaches in language instruction that give importance to classroom applications.” (ENE 7)

The collaborative environment created during CELTA enabled teachers learn from each other. The participants stated that observing each other while teaching and exchanging ideas, experiences and materials helped them learn from each other in an interactive learning and working context. The following responses support their ideas:

-“I think that CELTA training has transformed me into a sound, conscious, and eager to learn teacher since it provides us with opportunities for active sharing, learning from 11 other peers working for the same school and in a condition almost impossible anywhere else”. (ENE4)

-“Observing peers provided me with new language learning ideas and getting feedback on my teaching was important for me to realize some points I hadn't realized before”. (ENE5)

The most important contribution of CELTA training was the awareness in-service teachers gained. ELT graduates stated that even if their undergraduate education programs included almost everything, their perceptions of looking at teaching have changed as a teacher

with real students in a real classroom context through CELTA training. Especially the observations, reflections and feedback sessions helped them realize who they are as a teacher.

*-“I didn’t learn anything different from my undergraduate study. But, studying the subject as a teacher was different from studying as a student. What is more, being observed by professionals, getting feedback and sharing experiences with colleagues are highly important and beneficial” (NE5)*

*-“Self-awareness is the result of observations. It is difficult to understand certain things while you are a student”. (NNE1)*

*-“As a Non-ELT graduate, it helped me to see what kind of a teacher I am”. (NNE2)*

*-“I realized that I had played with a piece of chalk all the time. During the feedback sessions I also realized that I used to speak very fast.” (ENE1)*

*-“I thought I was doing almost everything right, but I realized how much I talked”. (NE1)*

To sum up the first part, it would be possible to say that teachers’ perceptions of CELTA differ according to their graduation; while ELT graduates perceive this in-service training as a refreshment of what they already knew with a more practical focus, Non-ELT graduates attribute everything they know about teaching to CELTA program.

The second part of the analysis focused on the impact of CELTA and tried to find out what teachers actually do differently after the training in their classes. The obvious conclusion, based on the teachers’ perceptions would be the transition to more student-centred teaching for all the participants, as seen in the examples below:

*-“First of all, I have started involving more students into the lesson. Also my lessons have started to be more motivating and enjoyable. I especially, have started to do more pair work activities and more error correction”. (ENE 6)*

*-“I can say I am more student-centred in the classroom. Even though I thought I used to do student-centred activities, I realized that I was the one who talked a lot and the authority in the classroom. I decreased the teacher talking time at a radically rate”. (EE20)*

*-“More learner-centred teaching creating more opportunities for the learners; more pair work and group work activities... These are the things I am doing differently now”. (EE18)*

*-“There is too much emphasis on pair- and group-discussions. This information is also transmitted in my undergraduate studies; however, in the CELTA course, I’ve learned the importance of transforming almost all learning activities into pair or group discussions. That is the only way to cut down on teacher talking time and creating real learner-centred learning environment.” (EE6)*

*-“I thought that teacher talk was a kind of language exposure for students, but I realized it can cause confusion. Less is better”. (ENE5)*

For a deeper understanding of what the candidates meant by being learner-centered, the researchers elaborated on this issue at the interviews. Below are excerpts from the interviews:

*-“I have started to focus more on the student responses. I am now more capable of adapting my lessons according to their responses. I used to rather follow my lesson plan as I had intended during my lessons”. (ENE5)*

-“When you withdraw yourself in the lesson, it automatically turns into student-centred. I didn’t use to like the silence in the lesson, but I stopped unnecessary fillings”. (NE4)

-“Doing pair or group work activities are not simply student-centred teaching. Monitoring what the students are doing when they are on-task, taking notes about their performance, facilitating the interaction in pairs and groups are all parts of conducting a learner-centred lessons”. (NE5)

-“I now use more different types of interaction. Test, Teach and Test technique involves more students in the lesson” (NNE5)

-“When you decrease teacher talking time, it inevitably becomes learner-centred”. (NNE4)

-“Maybe I still talk too much as a teacher, but after CELTA course, I, intrinsically and unconsciously, realize that I talk too much and stop talking to allocate more time for my students to speak.”(EE8)

The teachers from all groups also stated realizing how much Teacher Talking Time (TTT) dominated the classroom discourse and consciously tried to decrease their talking time providing more opportunities for their students:

-“Based on the increased self-awareness inherited from this course, I sometimes catch myself talking too much and put extra effort to cut short on TTT.”(EE12)

-“During CELTA training I realized that I was talking more than my students and I tried to change this. At the same time, I realized how much I was “echoing” and I am still trying to stop it”. (EE8)

-“I realized how important it is to keep teacher talking time at the minimum.”(ENE7)

-“I started to allocate more time for the students to speak.” (NE8)

-“At certain times, I try to exert effort to decrease TTT with an increasing self-awareness”. (NNE3)

They also stated improving the quality of their talk by giving better instructions and applying the ways of checking students’ understanding:

-“After CELTA, I give simple and clear instructions and check students understanding of the instructions through ICQs (Instruction Checking Questions).” (ENE8)

-“I have started asking ICQs and CCQs to make my students better understand the key concepts and the instructions.” (EE20)

-“I have started to give clearer instructions before activities”. (NE9)

“I started to give better instructions and ask the right questions enabling students to think on”. (NNE4)

“...being sure of whether my students have really grasped the purpose of the task. This is what I am doing now”. (ENE5)

-“I learnt how to give instructions appropriate to the level of the students and how to check whether the students have understood my instructions.”(NNE2)

-“My instructions improved”(NE8)

-“I have noticed that I repeat the instructions too many times for the students to make sure that they understand.”(NNE2)

The interviews with the participants substantiate participants’ written views about giving better instructions.

-“I used to repeat myself a lot. Now, I give clearer and shorter instructions”. (NE7)

-“Now I use more demonstrations at the beginning of each productive functional activity. This in turn saves more time since they better understand what they are supposed to do so”. (NE5)

-*"I started to give clearer instructions and ask the right questions enabling students to think on...being sure of whether my students have really grasped the purpose of the task".(EE15)*

Similar to using the classroom language more efficiently, teachers expressed the improvements on the amount and quality of target language use in the classroom. The excerpts below can be given as examples to this perception.

-*"I have almost given up using Turkish in the classroom. I can get the attention students interest at the beginning of the lesson and keep it throughout the lesson". (NE7)*

-*"I can do the most part of the lesson in English and I can make my students speak English more". (NNE5)*

Most of the teachers referred to planning their teaching more carefully emphasizing the importance of lesson plans. While writing lesson plans is a component of pre-service teacher preparation programs, assessing their learner's prior knowledge, thinking about the potential problems, evaluating the appropriateness of the material to the needs and interest of their students and making necessary adaptations and changes as a real teacher are perceived more meaningful during the CELTA training. The excerpts below can be given as the examples showing the participants perceptions on the benefits of such a detailed lesson planning;

-*"CELTA course has entirely changed my points of view to teaching. In this change, preparing lesson plans had a great impact. I acquired the ability to adapt the activities in the textbooks and make immediate changes in lesson conduct." (EE9)*

-*"I have realized that making a lesson plan is like preparing a scenario or writing a script. I cannot deny my undergraduate studies in ELT and say that I had a terrible education. I also learned a lot there and then. However, I think that the training I received during CELTA is more professional and closely related to classroom practices." (NE6)*

-*"I learned that lesson plans before teaching that course can be done and executed in a more practical way."(EE10)*

-*"I have started to realize my mistakes more quickly and I have started to go to the lesson being more prepared". (EE11)*

As the result of going through a reflective teaching and self-evaluation process, teachers could become more self-confident which in turn increased their motivation, as expressed below:

-*"With the reflective teaching perception I gained through CELTA training, I have started ask myself questions such as "how was my lesson? Did everything go well as I planned? Did my material serve its purpose? How could I do this lesson better? How was my classroom management?" So, I have started to become more self-aware of my lessons and my techniques I apply". (NE1)*

-*"In CELTA, you always check yourself mentally. (NE2)*

-*"Self-evaluation affected me deeply. I was crueller to myself. My peers were not that harsh in their feedback". (NNE3)*

-*"Thanks to CELTA, I got a thought that I can always do things better. I have started to get much more satisfaction from the job I do". (NNE5)*

-*"My motivation increased. I started to prepare my lessons more effectively. I can think more practical in comparison to past". (NNE6)*

*-“Believe it or not, it is really interesting to say this but as a teacher my enthusiasm to explain and teach has increased exponentially. I have become a more passionate and better teacher”. (NE3)*

To sum up, regardless of experience and graduation, the CELTA course increased participants’ self-awareness by encouraging them to reflect on who they are as a teacher and how they teach.

## **Discussion**

It would be possible to state that in-service teachers getting CELTA training benefited from the process in different ways. While teaching experience did not differ the participants’ perceptions profoundly, their undergraduate education background created differences in the teachers’ opinions. The Non-ELT graduates expressed that CELTA training was highly beneficial for them especially equipping them both with theoretical and practical knowledge they didn’t have in their undergraduate studies. Besides, because they had almost no teaching experience in university and had no or a minimum chance of getting feedback on their teaching, CELTA was perceived as an invaluable experience for them. ELT graduates, on the other hand, mostly revealed not learning new knowledge bases during CELTA training. They, however, acknowledged their undergraduate education being mainly theory-based and made the biggest criticism of their previous education on this. They stated that CELTA’s emphasis on practical teaching implications provided more meaningful and permanent learning in general. In fact, not only did the Non-ELT graduates found getting feedback valuable, but the ELT graduates also deemed the feedback sessions helpful for their professional development. Getting feedback was one of the mostly stated benefits of CELTA training by all participants across all categories. The reason why ELT graduates also found the feedback sessions very useful was that this was unfortunately a neglected part of teacher training in education faculties because of the crowded classrooms and time constraints which hinder teacher trainers to provide their students with proper, timely and enough feedback. The participants even stated getting more feedback in a 4-week-training than their 4-year-undergraduate studies.

Similar to the getting feedback, peer-observation was also another highly influential factor in participants’ professional development. Although it is strongly suggested in the literature that peer observations are great opportunities for colleagues (Hayes, 1995; Cosh, 1999; Kasapoğlu, 2002; Crookes, 2003; Gün, 2011, O’Dwyer & Atlı, 2015), teachers generally refrain from being observed. However, since all teachers are in the learning process during their CELTA program, and they accept the role of a kind of student, they generally become open to learning through their peers’ constructive feedback. The training in a real-like environment increases the awareness for the teachers and therefore becomes more meaningful and motivating for them.

Another most frequently stated response by the participants was on teacher talking time. Almost all of the participants revealed that they realized they had been talking too much before taking CELTA training. As a result, they have started to decrease their talking in the classroom by giving more chance to students. They also stated that they have tried to pay

more attention to turn many activities into pair or small group activities for students interact with each other more. They say this result in more student-centred and motivating teaching.

## **Conclusion**

The investigation of CELTA course as a potential bridge between pre-service and in-service training was the primary drive to conduct this study. CELTA course was previously questioned and examined as a teacher training course for pre-service teachers and the findings of these studies revealed contrasting results. Although CELTA is generally considered just adequate as a basic survival kit for pre-service teachers to survive in the classroom in the initial months or years of their teaching profession, it is generally criticized for not being sufficient in equipping teachers with essential teaching skills (Fergusson & Donno, 2003; Borg, 2005; Borg, 2006; Brandt, 2006; Stanley and Murray, 2013; Hobbs, 2013; Chick, 2015). Another criticism towards the CELTA course as a pre-service teacher training course is about the teaching practice. Trainees with minimum or no teaching experience, are required to complete at least 6 hours of teaching practice; however, teaching just 6 hours is not enough to have a better understanding of their actual teaching practices. During these limited teaching hours, they are expected to teach with certain techniques in a way that must meet their tutor's expectations and preferences (Brandt, 2006). However, as an in-service teacher training course, with its practical orientations and direct classroom implications, CELTA seems to fulfil its aim effectively. Even the most criticized aspect of the course, namely the teaching practice, is beloved by teachers who are in the service because they get feedback on their performance and realize their strengths and weaknesses. Actually, the teaching practice (TP) is considered as one of the major strengths of the CELTA course. Most of the participants referred to TPs as a means of discovering who they are as teachers and value it as a powerful tool of professional development. Both graduates of English language teaching departments and graduates of other language related programs favour the CELTA program, not only because it offers an internationally recognized certificate for teaching English, but also because it offers something practical that the instructors can implement in their teaching (e.g. concept checking questions; emphasis on clarifying form-meaning-use; individualized learning environments for students through material adaptation and manipulation; learner-centred classroom practices; practical ways to increase student participation and interaction).

As expressed in the literature, during pre-service teacher training, candidate teachers are generally busy with understanding the basics of teaching and seeking ways to put these into practice (Fergusson & Donno, 2003; Borg, 2005; Borg, 2006; Brandt, 2006). Therefore, they do not really appreciate or observe how they develop themselves as teachers, but CELTA as a professional development activity for in-service language teachers help them to:

- enhance their self-awareness,
- stimulate reflection and learn from peers,
- promote collaboration and cooperation,
- lead to refreshment,
- bolster self-confidence and increase motivation.

The ultimate aim of any professional development activity is encouraging teacher learning. As the participants stated, CELTA took them back to the years when they were students and they started to relate more to their students and understood better what they were going through at times of challenge and struggle. This questioning and awakening process helped them refresh and rediscover the things that are taken for granted in time.

### **Implications**

The results of this study suggest some implications for pre-service and for in-service teacher training programs. The first implication for the pre-service teacher training programs would be focusing more on practice giving feedback to their candidates. Although it is difficult to organize pre-service programs in Turkey in such a reflective and constructive way due to the mismatch between the number of trainers and the students in universities, it seems an indispensable component of becoming a teacher. Unless the education and, as a result, the practice for teacher trainees is real-life and contextualized, it will be difficult for them to find the education meaningful and to internalize the knowledge they learn no matter how much effort is put in teaching.

Many institutions conduct in-service teacher training programs or similar professional development programs for their own staff. However, most of these programs cannot meet the needs of trainees since they do not focus on the contextual needs of trainees. They are mainly carried out in a top-down approach and are not designed on a needs basis, and thus are doomed to fail. Therefore, these types of programs where the immediate needs of trainees are met on a collaborative and reflective manner enabling trainees to learn from each other by providing constructive feedback might eventually increase the potential benefits of the programs.

CELTA seems to be a good solution in functioning as a bridge between pre-service and in-service teacher training. Including more context-specific components addressing the specific needs of the teachers would increase the impact of CELTA on teachers' practices. As long as teacher learning is ensured, any kind of professional development is appreciated, but it should be kept in mind that magic is the TEACHER, as summarized perfectly by one of the teachers in the study;

*-“regardless of any other variables, everybody can benefit from CELTA at varying degrees. It provides many practical teaching tips. However, it should also be remembered that the CELTA is not a magical stick that transforms a beast to a beauty”.* (ENE5)

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