

Connecting In-Service Teacher Education Programs to Classroom Teaching: A Case Study of Two Novice Teachers

(Hizmet İçi Eğitim Programlarının Sınıf İçi Öğretimine Bağlanması: Mesleğe Yeni Başlamış İki Öğretmen Vaka Çalışması)

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of an in-service teacher training (INSET) course on the professional development and classroom practices of novice teachers. After their completion of an INSET course, two novice English language teachers were invited to participate in the study. During a 15-week semester, their classes were periodically observed and audio-recorded. Additionally, each teacher was interviewed using stimulated recall. The results indicated although participants responded positively on the INSET programs' contents, and felt the course contributed to their professional development, the INSET course did not have much effect on their teaching, due to interplay of cultural and contextual constraints.

Keywords: INSET, teacher development, novice teachers, teacher cognition.

Özet

Araştırma, öğretmenliğe yeni başlayan öğretmenlerin bu hizmet içi eğitimden sınıf içi öğretme becerileri konusunda ne derecede faydalandıklarını ve bu eğitimin profesyonel gelişimlerinde nasıl bir etken oluşturduğunu aydınlatmaya çalışmaktadır. Bir yıllık hizmet içi eğitim kursunu tamamladıktan sonra, öğretmenliğe yeni başlamış iki öğretmen bu araştırmaya katılmak üzere davet edilmişlerdir. Sonuçlar, öğretmenlerin hizmet içi eğitimin içeriğine genel olarak olumlu bir tavır içerisinde olduklarını ve bu eğitimin profesyonel gelişimlerine olumlu katkıda bulunduğunu, fakat kültürel, bağlamsal ve kurumsal faktörlerin etkileşiminden dolayı, eğitiminin öğretim teknikleri üzerinde çok büyük etkisinin olmadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizmet içi eğitim, öğretmen yetiştirme, profesyonel gelişim, öğretmen kavramı.

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Introduction

...it is not enough for language teacher cognition research to identify differences, or tensions, between teachers' beliefs and practices; rather attempts need to be made to explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions. (Phipps & Borg, 2009, p. 388)

Teacher cognition, generally defined as what teachers think, believe and do (Borg, 2003; 2006), and its connection to teachers' teaching practice has emerged as an important area of inquiry in the field of L2 teacher education research. In an attempt to provide insights into the influences of teacher education programs on teachers' teaching practices, second language (L2) teacher education research has in recent years underlined the importance of connecting teacher education programs to actual classroom teaching practices. Methodologically, the systematic study of teachers' observed practices has been seen as a vital data collection tool to complement their stated beliefs. Borg (2003), for instance, underlined the importance of connecting classroom practices to teachers cognition because the goal of teacher cognition is to develop an understanding of "teachers' professional actions, not what or how they think in isolation of what they do" (p. 105).

Classroom practice is a vital component of investigating the influence of in-service teacher education (INSET) on the classroom practice of practicing novice teachers. Previous research indicated that the general amount of research into the field of teacher education and INSET was scant (Ferguson & Donno, 2003; Freeman & Johnson, 1998) and called for future research in the area of in-service teacher education. As a response to these calls, a number of studies focusing on INSET have been carried out in recent years (e.g. Alwan, 2000; Atay, 2004, 2008; Birch, 2011; Borg; 2005, 2011; Gonzalez, 2003; Guskey, 2002; Harumi, 2005; Mattheoudakis & Nicolaidis, 2005; Meng & Tajaroensuk, 2013; Phipps, 2007; Thomson, 2004; Waters, 2007; Waters & Vilches, 2009; Watkins, 2007; Wichadee, 2011; Wolters, 2000). While all of these studies have contributed to our understanding of in-service teacher education programs, very few, if any, has focused specifically on focusing on the possible influences of one specific in service teacher education course, namely, In-service Certificate for English Language Teachers (ICELT), and whether ICELT course has an influence on the teaching practices of course participants. As Borg (2011) acknowledges, "our understandings of the impact of language teacher education on practicing teachers' beliefs remain incipient and the issue merits much additional empirical attention" (p. 371). In an attempt to address this gap in the literature, this qualitative case study focused on two novice teacher participants. The main purpose of this study, therefore, is to directly focus on the outcomes of the ICELT course, tap into the cognitions of the teacher participants after they have taken the ICELT course and to find out what the participants think about how the course has affected their teaching in class.

Literature Review

As this study is on the influence of an in-service teacher training (INSET) course on the professional development and classroom practices of novice teachers, there are two lines of research that are directly related to the present study: (1) The studies investigating the effects of INSET courses on the teaching practices of teachers, (2) The studies that focus on the effects of INSET courses on novice teachers.

INSET Programs

Most of the research available on the effects of INSET programs has been conducted in the area of teacher cognition (see Borg, 2003; Borg, 2006; Johnson, 2006) focusing primarily on the beliefs of teachers (e.g. Borg, 1998a, 1998b, 2003, 2011; Borg; 2001; Farrell, 2005; Kiely & Askham, 2012; Nicolaidis & Mattheoudiakakis, 2008; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Velez-Rendon, 2006), the definitions and characteristics of teacher beliefs (Borg, 2001, 2003), the beliefs of English language teachers in various contexts (e.g. Mattheoudiakakis 2007; Peacock, 2001; Yurtsever, 2013) and the outcomes of government-initiated INSET programs (e.g. Birch, 2011; Harumi, 2005).

Moving on to the context of this study, Turkey, several researchers investigated the effects of INSET programs initiated by the Ministry of Education in the Turkish school contexts (e.g. Odabaşı, Çimer & Çakir , 2010; Uysal, 2012), INSET programs in university language school programs (e.g. Arikan, 2002, 2004; Atay, 2004, 2006, 2008; Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni & Ilyas, 2012; Duzan, 2006; Ekşi, 2010; Ekşi & Aydın, 2012; Kasapoğlu, 2002; Karaaslan, 2003; Phipps, 2007; Şahin, 2006; Şentuna, 2002) and externally-designed INSET courses such as DELTA (Phipps, 2007) and Certificate of Teaching English (CTE) (Şahin, 2006). These studies have provided us with a great understanding of the influences of INSET programs in Turkey especially. Very few, if any, however, have focused on the effectiveness of these INSET courses and their influences on novice teachers' teaching practices. In addition, as far as the research methodologies are concerned, compared to the studies in other contexts, the studies in the Turkish context included a relatively higher number of quantitative studies (e.g. Çelik, Bayraktar-Çepni & Ilyas, 2012; Ekşi, 2010; Ekşi & Aydın, 2012; Karaaslan, 2003; Şentuna, 2002). In response to this gap, the present study adopts case study approach to get an in-depth understanding about the effects of INSET programs on novice teachers' teaching practices.

Novice Teachers

Regarding the effects of INSET courses on teaching practices, a number of researchers have focused on novice teachers (Borg, 2008; Faez & Valeo, 2012; Farrell, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2012; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Mann, 2008; Schmidt, 2008; Urmston & Pennington, 2008; Warford & Reeves, 2003). For example, Farrell (2008) investigated the development of a novice teacher over a period of time and reported a conflict between what the participant viewed as necessary and beneficial for his students and what the administrator wanted him to teach. Similar conflicts have also been reported in Borg (2008). Focusing on the outcomes of a CELTA course on novice teachers, Borg (2008) used different data collection tools including interviews, observation, questionnaires and analysis of documents related to the course. The results show that although there was some success in adapting teaching techniques to the classroom, one of the participants "returned to the UK frustrated" because the teaching techniques learned from the course did not work in her teaching context (p. 115). In contrast, Kanno and Stuart (2011) focused on two MA TESOL teachers and how their identity formation was affected by the INSET program. The study employed interviews, in class observations, videotaped lessons, teaching journals, stimulated recalls, and documents. The results revealed that the participants felt more like teachers at the end of the program and that there was a difference in their own perception as professionals.

Specifically in the context of the present study, a number of researchers focused on novice teacher experience in the Turkish context. Akbulut (2007), for example, aimed to identify whether novice teachers deviate from their pre-service training once they have started teaching. Akbulut used questionnaires and interviews and reported that novice teachers had concerns regarding the establishment of classroom conduct, discipline in class, finishing activities on time and preparing students for exams rather than engaging them in meaningful activities that foster learning. Similarly, Alan (2003), adopting a mixed method study, investigated the perceptions of 17 novice teachers after attending a 10-week INSET program at a university. The results indicated that the participants expressed some concerns regarding the course's timing and contextual relevance. In a more recent mixed-method study, Ünal (2010) focused on the impact of an INSET course on 10 newly-hired and 12 experienced teachers at a university's language preparation school. The study showed that novice teachers needed more practical guidance rather than theoretical input.

Based on the literature reviewed above, it seems necessary to further investigate the influences of INSET courses on the teaching practices of teachers; specifically novice teachers. Therefore, this study hopes to contribute to the existing literature of teacher cognition and teacher development by applying a case study methodology, aiming to identify the influences of the ICELT course on the teaching practices of novice teachers and revealing the views of novice participants on the course content in general. In view of the literature background provided above, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. In what areas do novice teachers perceive the relevance of ICELT for their teaching contexts?
2. What influence of ICELT do novice teachers perceive on their knowledge and professional expertise?

Methods

In this study, case study approach is adopted. As Mackey and Gass (2005) stated "case studies generally aim to provide a holistic description of language learning or use within a specific population and setting" (p.171).

Context of the study

Participants in this study included two instructors at the school of foreign languages (SFL) at of a highly reputable Turkish university. The SFL aims to provide the students whose level of English is below proficiency level with basic language skills so that they can pursue their undergraduate studies at our university without major difficulty. It also offers compulsory English courses for undergraduate students.

Focal Participants

The first participant (P 1) was 24 years old and, as a Turkish L1 speaker, had the first basic contact with English in primary school. During his high school education, he received an intensive English instruction (24 hours a week). After graduating from high school, the participant enrolled in the English Language Teaching department at an English-medium Turkish university. He later gained some teaching experiences by giving private English lessons. The participant gathered further experience during the practicum and as an exchange teacher in Germany. After graduating in 2012, the participant started working at the SFL and completed the ICELT course in the first year as a teacher. P1 participated in the study immediately after he completed the ICELT course.

The second participant (P2) was 25 years old and is a graduate of the English Language Teaching department at an English-medium Turkish university. P2, also a Turkish L1 speaker, learning English at the age of 10 and studied foreign languages in high school. Similar to the first participant, P2 also studied Teaching English as a Foreign Language as a major and gained some teaching experience during the internship. P2 also taught at a kindergarten for a short period of three months. Shortly after graduating in June 2012, the participant was offered a job at the SFL and since then has been working there as an English language instructor. In the same year the participant has attended and fulfilled the requirements of the ICELT course. Like P1, P2 also took part in the study in the year after her completion of the ICELT course.

Data Collection

The study employs a case study approach, comprising a range of different sources including semi structured initial interviews, class observations and post observation interviews stimulated recall sessions (POI). The purpose of the initial interview was to break the ice and develop rapport with the participants (Dornyei, 2007). The questions aimed to explore their perceptions regarding the ICELT course and their beliefs regarding the influences of the ICELT course on their teaching practices (Please see Appendix A for initial interview questions).

As the study aimed to shed light the influences of the ICELT course on teachers' teaching practices, class observations were regarded as essential. Classroom observation was based on the objectives mentioned in the ICELT syllabus. During the observations, habitual occurrences, interactions, behaviors, routines, and procedures in class were noted down (Richards, 2003).

Post observation interviews with stimulated recall sessions were designed to take place after the initial observation has been completed. Stimulated recall sessions intend to retrieve the participants' relevant thoughts about an issue or subject and are used in combination with a type of recording, usually video or audio (Dornyei, 2007). In order to design the POIs, the observed lessons were listened to and instances in the class which reoccurred and which were mentioned by the ICELT syllabus. The time of the occurrence in the recording was also noted. These occurrences were used as a stimuli for the stimulated recall interviews. As two observations per week were conducted and were followed by an observation related interview after four observations, the time lapse between interviews was two weeks for each participant.

Data Analysis

After the data from semi structured interviews and POI were collected, they were transcribed. The transcribed data and observation notes were then coded using MaxQDA11, a professional qualitative analysis program. Regarding the coding and thematization of the data, a predefined codebook or scheme was not followed. In other words, rather than applying a set of pre-set codes or categories, the purpose was to identify the themes during the data analysis process (Richards, 2003). The following table aims to clarify the data collection cycle.

Table 1

Summary of Data Collection And Analysis

	Source of Data	Rationale	Form of Analysis
1	Semi structured initial interviews	To gather initial data regarding participants' beliefs and practices	Content analysis
2	In class observations and field notes	To explore teaching practices of participants	Content analysis
3	Post Observation Interviews using stimulated recall	To get participants' emic perspectives and to tap into their cognition regarding their beliefs and practices	Content analysis

As can be seen from Table 1, all sources of data were analyzed employing content analysis. After the coding process, the emerging themes were categorized and the relevant categories were listed under each theme.

To ensure investigator triangulation, once the coding was completed, a second coder was invited for an inter coder reliability check (Creswell, 2009). One experienced language teacher/researcher was invited to code data as an additional coder. The coder was first informed about the general nature of the study and research methods. The themes and categories were identified by the frequency they were coded and were also checked for their relevance to the themes by the second coder. Coding disagreements were resolved through joint review of data and discussion. In addition, the initial results that emerged after the coding process were sent to the participants for a member check, aiming to prevent any misinterpretation or false reporting of the data (Creswell, 2009). After the initial results were confirmed by the participants, the final results were reported.

Findings and Discussion

The focus of research on in INSET programs has traditionally been on teacher beliefs (e.g. Mattheoudiakos 2007; Peacock, 2001). In this paper, however, we attend to the possible influences of INSET programs on teaching practices of novice teachers. Specifically, adopting a case study approach, we interviewed and observed two novice teachers and asked them to comment on their teaching practices.

Novice teachers' perceptions of the outcomes of ICELT course

The first research question aimed to find out whether the ICELT course affected the teaching of novice teachers and if so, in what ways it affected their teaching. Novice teacher participants commented that ICELT course was most influential in two aspects: designing instructional activities and developing student autonomy.

Designing instructional activities

One of the main objectives of the ICELT course is to promote the use of communicative activities in class; specifically pair work and group work. The ICELT course's objective is to move towards more student centered communicative activities, in which the students work together and learn English from one another in a communicative process. Participants in the ICELT course are encouraged to promote the active integration of the students in the lessons and the tutors always

Connecting In-Service Teacher Education Programs to Classroom Teaching: A Case Study of Two Novice Teachers encourage participants to “let the students do the work” (T 1, Initial Interview; ICELT Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines).

During the observations, it became obvious that both participants had a favorite set of activities. For instance, both participants preferred to do pair work and pair checking/peer checking. This was also confirmed in their practices in classroom observations. When we asked P2 about the use of pair work, P2 explained it in the following way: “There are some low achievers and some better students, and I want them to help each other while learning, so I generally try to use pair work or group work, to help them” (P 2, POI 1). When we enquired how the participant had attained this technique, the participant explained it in the following way: “we learned it in the ICELT it’s very effective so, I try to use it” (P 2, POI 1).

Regarding the use of pair work and group work, similar to P2, P1 also thought that the use of pair work and group work in the classroom was effective, but underlined his considerations as follows:

It depends on the activity, if it is just a quick check or if it requires two people, then I prefer pair work. Group work is also possible; sometimes but you need to design it very well to make it very efficient so it depends on the activities (P 1, POI 3).

As it can be seen from these excerpts, although the ICELT course promoted the use of pair work and group work, it was not always the best option. Another influential factor in the use of these activities seemed to be the long preparation time for group work. If group work was going to be used efficiently, it had to be prepared in an efficient way. When we used a stimulus regarding the use of pair work in one of the observations, the participant recalled that she preferred pair work for a specific reason: “I generally prefer pair work because when they work in groups, they make too much noise and there are also some students who really disturb the group” (P 2, POI 3).

It seems that the participants thought that preparation, implementation, monitoring and including all students were the decisive factors regarding the use of pair work and group work. As pair work was easier to plan, implement and monitor, the participants seemed to prefer pair work to group work. Another important factor affecting this preference was that it was difficult to include all of the students in group work in large classes. This was very evident when the P2 explained the preferred activity in one of the classroom observations: “I just think that when they work in groups, there is always one student who is silent and who doesn’t participate in the activity they do; but when they work in pairs, they have to do it together sometimes” (P 2, POI 3). In other words, working in pairs seemed to ensure student participation whereas in group work the students had the chance to avoid participation as other students are there to do the work.

The data revealed that the participants did not seem to be convinced by the communicative aspects of the ICELT course, which first surfaced as pair work and group work and then became clear as a general category of communicative activities. When we asked my participants in the initial interviews what their perceptions regarding the course requirements related to integrating communicative activities were, both of the participants mentioned that “it was difficult to have a group work because they are used to doing everything on their own” (P 2, Initial Interview).

Time was also a concern for designing group and pair work activities. P1 explained this issue in the following way: “Whenever I use group and pair work, there is a risk that we are going to lose time...or the students are lost in the group” (P 1, Initial Interview). Furthermore, the participant mentioned that the tight schedule and curriculum did not leave any proper space to integrate pair and group work.

Another interesting aspect regarding in class activities was the use of peer checking and peer correction. The observations in class and the data analysis afterwards showed that the participants used both peer checking and peer correction in their classes. As was evident from the in-class observations, peer correction was used very frequently. The participants used techniques such as writing a sentence on the board and asking another student whether she would like to help that other student with the answer. On other occasions during observations, the teachers did not give the correct answer immediately but asked the other students whether they agreed or disagreed with the utterance, sentence etc. Upon giving the stimulus and asking what provoked P 2 to use peer checking and correction in class, the participant mentioned that “we learned it in the ICELT course, (...) I encourage other students to help their friends and maybe correct their friends’ paper, I use peer check and it is useful; for most of the students” (P 2, POI 5). When was asked for which type of activities peer checking was preferred, P 2 mentioned that peer checking was mainly used for writing activities. The participant also mentioned that almost all of the students had difficulty in checking and correcting their friends’ work but that this situation had improved and that their initial reluctance of participating might have been triggered by the teacher centered education system the students had come from. However, it was also evident during the observed lessons that the participant was happy with how the students coped with correcting their friends’ work: “when they work in pairs, maybe one of the partners understands what I say and helps his or her partner, so it is also good for me” (P 2, POI 3).

Frequent use of peer correction was also used by the first participant and the observations revealed that P 1 as well as P 2 used almost the same techniques regarding peer correction. We noticed this feature of both participants during the observed lessons, we asked P1 to comment on peer correction. P1 responded as follows: “They feel more relaxed when giving answers ... because they know that their friends also did like that. So first doing individual work and then doing a pair check might be helpful in terms of motivating them and raise their hands to answer the questions.” (P 1, POI 3).

4.1.2. Developing student autonomy

In the SFL, there is a Self-Access Center (hereafter as SAC), a silent study room and the teachers working in the SFL usually have an open door policy in order to be able to help their students and students are generally encouraged to make use of these facilities. Furthermore, the setting provides the students with a well-equipped library including study rooms and there are also a great number of foreign students with whom students have to speak English in order to communicate.

During the observed lessons, we noticed that the participants repeatedly asked their students what they did at the weekend and whether they studied, which at the beginning, seemed like regular ice breaker questions. What we noticed was that many of the students did not reply to these questions. However, the

insistence of the participants regarding these questions was evident. When we presented the participants stimuli from the lessons, the purpose of these questions became quite obvious. The purpose of the participants was not only to encourage the students to revise the material they had covered in class, but they wanted them to do work outside the class as well. For instance, both participants encouraged the students to read books outside the classroom so that the students could learn the language within a context and to make use of the library and the SAC (P 1, POI 3).

The students had also to prepare in-class presentations about other languages (which the students chose) and presented these to their friends in English. When we asked the participants to comment on these activities, P1 mentioned that it was important for students to be actively involved in such activities and that they needed to learn to associate their language with other activities. Other examples of such autonomous activities can be seen in the following excerpt of P 1: “For example, I was explaining gerund and infinitives, one student asked me whether he could come and explained it. I let him, I was the student, he was the teacher and explained” (P 1, POI 3). This shows that the students have encouragement to actively participate and share their knowledge with the rest of the class. This is an important factor as it may provoke other students to be more interested in autonomous learning when they see their friends. This shows that the participants tried to encourage student centeredness in class as encouraged by the tutors throughout the ICELT course.

In general, throughout the observations, both participants tried to encourage this type of autonomous learning inside and outside of class. For instance during pair work or when the participant initiated peer correction, the main aim was to give the students a chance to find and correct their own or their friends’ mistakes; without the teacher having to help them and enabling the students to learn from each other. Similarly outside of class, the students were encouraged to actively use their language within different contexts by the participants. However, both of the participants mentioned that they had learned the encouragement of student autonomy in their undergraduate courses and that the ICELT course was a kind of revision for them and that it did not add anything new to their theoretical knowledge regarding student autonomy. In fact, they regarded the encouragement of student autonomy as a revision of the theory they had learned in undergraduate studies.

The results revealed that there were some impediments to student autonomy, as well. During the POI’s, for example, the participants sometimes had problems with the ‘autonomy encouragement’ they tried to encourage in the class as the students seemed to be resisting the idea of autonomous learning. “Letting students do the work” as suggested by T 1 in the initial interview, was not an easy task. When resisting autonomy emerged from the class observations, the assumption that this might be a general tendency which had to do with the students, rather than the teacher, surfaced. The participants mentioned that most of their students were very teacher dependent which shows that they rely on the teacher and do not initiate learning on their own. We asked whether the INSET course’s suggestions regarding student autonomy matched with the students’ autonomy in class, both of the participants mentioned that it did not.

Commenting on the reasons why the students were not autonomous, P 2 explained this issue as follows: “From their previous education probably because they were always forced to do something but here, they find it hard to get used to being an autonomous learner” (POI 3). Furthermore, P2 also

mentioned that the students always relied on the teacher and that almost none of the students really tried to ask a friend or use sources of learning other than the teacher.

In sum, although the participants had the necessary input and motivation to comply with the requirements of the ICELT course regarding the fostering of autonomous learning, the background of the students made it very difficult to apply these techniques in class due to the educational system the students came from and their low level of English knowledge. The participant teachers were also aware of fostering student autonomy as suggested by the tutors of the ICELT course, yet it seems evident that the course requirements and objectives are only one part of successful autonomy encouragement and the students in class and their long term learning background are another.

The perceived influence of ICELT on novice teachers' knowledge and expertise

The second research question asked the novice-teacher participants' perceptions regarding the influence of the ICELT on their knowledge and expertise. The participants adapted the ICELT course requirements in certain ways to meet their classroom and teaching dynamics. This section will specifically focus on two categories that emerged from the data: the ways the participants adapted ICELT and the criticisms of ICELT.

Adapting ICELT to the Classroom

The participants both mentioned that they still used a number of activities and techniques they had learned in the course in their classes. Some examples of these strategies mentioned by the participants were jigsaw reading, simplifying instructions, changing seating arrangements, using ice breakers, minimizing teacher talk and personalization. During the observations, we noticed that these techniques were used by the participants, however some of them were modified by the participants and we also noticed that there was a random use of L1, Turkish, especially for clarification purposes. For instance, during the observations, we noticed that the participants used elicitation techniques to elicit the answers to questions in the class, and when we inquired what the motivation for the use of this technique was, the participants mentioned that it was something they had learned from the ICELT course. However, during the observations I observed in a number of instances that P 2 asked the students to translate what they had understood from the answer in order to check comprehension. When I asked whether this technique was something the INSET course supported, the reply was that the elicitation part was but the translation part was not and that it was something the participant had added to the input of the course.

Another aspect in this category which was mentioned by the participants was related to giving instructions in class. According to the participants, the ICELT course had indicated some aspects of giving instructions. The participants explained this issue as follows: “[ICELT taught us] our instructions should be simple, clear and we should make clear that the students have understood and to see whether they have understood, we should ask them to repeat what we said, I use this technique” (P 2, POI 6). Related to giving instructions, one of the participants mentioned that during the assessed observed lessons in the course, the participant had problems related to giving instructions and the observing tutor mentioned this in the feedback session after the observation. When we observed P2, we noticed that P2 repeated the instructions four times. When we played the recording of this classroom instance in a post

observation interview, the participant talked about the feedback given by the tutor and said that clarification of instructions was a major goal and that translation into Turkish was an effective way. Another aspect we observed in class and which also emerged from the observations and stimulated recall interviews, was the frequent use of choral repetitions in class. We observed that both participants used this kind of repetitions from the very first day of observations. When we included these choral repetitions in our stimulated recall interviews, P1 mentioned that this type of activity in class was useful because it prevented embarrassment of single students who had problems with pronunciation and that it was less offensive for the students (P 1, POI 1).

In general, the participants both made similar comments about the adaptability of the course in the classroom. The following excerpt seems to summarize the views of the participants regarding the INSET course: “ICELT says that if something is going to be useful for you, adapt it, use it, make use of that thing, if you think that it is going to serve in your purpose, no problem” (P 1, POI 1).

Criticisms of ICELT

The results indicated that the main criticisms of ICELT were on the aspects that are related to (1) controlled teacher talking time and (2) the assessed observations and tutor feedback that may be contradictory to the classroom reality.

During the initial interviews, both participants mentioned that during the INSET course the tutors expected them to control their teacher talking time (henceforth TTT) in class and that this was something criticized by the tutors in the feedback sessions after the observed and assessed lessons. Although the participants mentioned that the INSET course made them aware of their TTT, both of the participants explained in their initial interviews that this was one of the most challenging requirements of the course. More specifically, both participants mentioned in their initial interviews that the course requirements had an impact on their TTT in a sense that it made them aware of their TTT. In other words, the participants commented that the course was a kind of awakening for them and that it reminded them to let the students do the talking in class - the proficiency level of the students permitting.

Although the participants were aware of the fact that their TTT had to be as low as possible in their classes, we noticed that the teachers were the ones doing the large majority of the talking during the lessons. Reflecting on their teaching experiences, both of the participants mentioned that although they desired to minimize TTT, this was not always possible. Justifying the high TTT, P 2 mentioned in the last POI that it was especially difficult to maintain a low TTT and explained that in lower levels:

The teacher talking time should be a little bit higher when compared to the other levels, because I cannot expect the students, especially at the beginning of the semester to explain me, to help me because they don't know anything, so my teacher talking time has to be high. I cannot decrease it but I try to decrease it as the students learn (P 2, POI 6).

The participants seem to be aware of the factors influencing high TTT. They also underlined that at true beginner levels, which are really common in EFL settings, it is almost impossible for the students to speak and therefore not really possible for the teachers to minimize TTT. In addition, both participants

similarly drew attention to the educational background of the students and said that their students were not used to talking in class as they came from a very teacher centered background and had difficulties in participating in class which in turn left the teachers no choice but talk. Furthermore, the repeated instructions and clarifications increased TTT. Similarly, both participants mentioned that they would like to reduce their TTT but that it was simply not always possible because they had to repeat instructions, clarify things, explain and give feedback and sometimes even use translation in class because some of the students had difficulties in understanding the input in L2.

Another criticism of ICELT was related to the assessed observation days. It was confirmed by both participants that on assessed observation days, the students participated more in the lesson and tried to help their teachers than they would on ordinary teaching days. This leaves us to question how realistic these observation environments are; aiming to observe effective teaching. On the other hand, both participants also criticized the limited number of observations. Both of them said that the number of observations should have been increased, however not necessarily assessed. One of the participants mentioned that:

This was what I suggested to the moderator. I said, we shouldn't write pages and pages of things [assignments], maybe we should do more teaching. They should come and observe us maybe more than six times because we are loaded with theory;...the important thing is what I am doing in the classroom actually. Sometimes [the course] is much too theoretical; we are doing all those methodology assignments and other things (P 1, POI 5).

This clearly indicates that the participants were happy with the observed lessons and appreciated the feedback they received from their tutors, but the fact that these lessons were assessed and the participants were graded according to their performance created a non-authentic classroom atmosphere.

Another aspect of the course the participants criticized was that the tutors encouraged them to give short, meaningful and concise instructions. Both of the participants agreed that this was useful in its approach but at the same time almost impossible because any time they gave short and concise instructions, they had to repeat, clarify and explain what they meant, since the English levels of the students in class was simply not good enough to comprehend these short and concise instructions. In other words, a paradox between the requirements of the course and the applicability in class was mentioned by the participant teachers. The problem reported by the participants was that at this stage, the students did not know the meaning of many words, so they could not understand the instructions. Even when the participants encouraged other students to clarify, it mostly needed clarification which cost a lot of time.

Conclusion

The present study investigates the influences of an INSET course on the teaching practices of two novice teachers. Employing a case study approach, the study found some aspects of the ICELT course that were seen as a contributing factor on their professional development of novice teachers and some aspects that were not seen as positively contributing to their teaching practices. Results also indicated that while

novice teachers adapted ICELT for their classroom teaching practices, they also criticized ICELT for several aspects such as controlled teacher talking time and the assessed observations and tutor feedback that may contradict with the classroom reality.

INSET is an important aspect of teacher education and it may influence teachers' practices in the long run. Regarding in-class activities, the participants mentioned their views on the activities the ICELT course suggested them to conduct. For instance, regarding the use of pair work and group work, the participants mentioned that they faced some problems regarding the implementation of this type of activities in class. Similar findings were also mentioned by Farrell (2008), describing that one of the participants had major difficulties in implementing communicative activities. The present study, however, found out that the novice teachers perceived that the students' educational background imposed upon them made it difficult for them to implement communicative activities

The results also revealed that both of the participants preferred pair work rather than group work in class because pair work was easier to monitor and it ensured the inclusion of the students. The participants both criticized group work because during group activities, weaker students may not be able to contribute to the activity and also the participants mentioned that the large number of students in class hindered productive group work. This may indicate the potential of the ICELT course regarding the teaching practices of teachers but not without challenges in implementing them. This is also one of the findings in Farrell's study (2008) which confirms that it can be difficult to apply practices learned from INSET courses in certain teaching contexts.

In some cases, teachers talked about difficulty of promoting student autonomy as suggested by ICELT due to students' language levels and educational backgrounds. This knowledge of the students' background, however, gives the participants the ability to respond to the students' needs more easily. This overlaps with Tomlinson's (1988) findings stating that over time, teachers found that some aspects learned in INSET courses were not appropriate for their teaching contexts. It was also criticized by the participants in the present study that the requirements by the institution and the suggested ICELT methods did not overlap.

Results also indicated that student autonomy was also strongly supported by the ICELT and there were some challenges in adapting this approach. According to the participants, "Let the students do the work" has become a slogan that all ICELT participants have heard many times. However, other studies have shown that students in this context have difficulties with this approach (see Inceçay & Inceçay, 2009). The ICELT course seems to need to give its participants the chance to practice such theories. The input alone does not seem to be not enough, especially for novice teachers because the theoretical aspect is almost useless if, as stated by Ünal (2010), the participants do not have the possibility to practice what they have learned.

Participants also criticized the graded observations for ICELT. That the observed lessons were being assessed created a certain level of pressure on the participants. This, in turn, may inhibit an authentic teaching atmosphere in the classroom. Thus, it seems necessary for teacher participants to be a part of an observation, rather than an object of observation. (Freeman, 1982).

Finally, caution has to be sounded regarding the limitations of the study. The present study focused on two novice teachers in one institution only and it focused on these teachers over one single semester

only. Future studies may be conducted over several academic years as the teaching and the effectiveness of teaching may be influenced over a longer period of time.

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APPENDIX A: INITIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR P 1 AND P 2

Q1: What was the initial motivation to get the ICELT certificate?

Q2: How has the course added to your English language use and knowledge?

Q3: What are the most vivid memories of the course that come to your mind related to your profession?

Q4: In what ways did you benefit from the course regarding your identity formation as a teacher?

Q5: How would you describe your relationship with the tutors throughout the course? Friendly, imposing, disciplined?

Q6: How useful was the feedback given by the tutors? In general, and also related to your observed lessons.

Q7: How did you cope with the course requirements in your observed lessons?

Q8: How were your students' reactions to observed lessons?

Q9: How useful do you regard observations and how do you think they improved your teaching?

Q10: How easy was it for you to plan your lessons?

Q11: How do you plan your lessons now?

Q13: Which aspects related to teaching that you have learned in the course do you still apply in your classes?

Q14: Do you take your students to the SAC?

Q15: In class, how do you deal with disruptive students or students with learning difficulties?

Q17: In general, how do you manage your classroom?

Q18: How do you select materials you use in class?

Q19: How do you identify your learners' needs?

Q20: How do you follow and evaluate your students' progress?

Q21: How do you evaluate your teaching after your lessons?