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"The Nail That Sticks out Gets Hammered down": The Influence of EFL Context on the Teacher Beliefs of a Native English-Speaking Teacher

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Abstract

The 1970s witnessed a paradigm shift in research into language learning and teaching with focus moving away from the process-product approach to the study of teachers and their cognitions. This shift in research led teaching to be viewed as a cognitive process not merely in terms of behavior, and teachers as decision makers in the classroom not as merely implementers of external theories. In the same decade, teacher cognition emerged as a separate domain of research that investigates what teachers know, think and believe. Teaching context is one of the factors that influence the formation of teacher beliefs and the enactment of these beliefs. The present study is an attempt at understanding the influence of EFL setting on teacher beliefs of a native English-speaking teacher. To this end, a single native speaker English teacher was selected and data were collected through a number of tools. The data were analyzed using grounded theory data analysis steps. The current study found that context has a certain influence on teachers' beliefs and teachers' pedagogical practices. It also found that the changes that occurred in the participant teacher's beliefs were behavioral rather than cognitive and that the context's influence on which beliefs teachers enact in practice is relatively more marked.

Keywords: Cognition, EFL context, native speaker, teacher beliefs

"Sivrilen Çivi Dövülür": Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Bağlamının Ana Dili İngilizce Olan Bir Öğretmenin Öğretmen İnanışları Üzerindeki Etkisi

Öz

1970'ler dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi alanındaki araştırmada odağın süreç-sonuç yaklaşımından uzaklaşıp öğretmenlerin ve onların bilişlerinin çalışmasına kaydığı bir paradigma değişimine tanık oldu. Bu değişim öğretimin yalnızca davranışsal olarak değil aynı zamanda bir bilişsel süreç ve öğretmenlerin de dış reçetelerin mekanik uygulayıcıları değil de sınıftaki karar vericiler olarak görülmesine sebep oldu. Öğretmen bilişi öğretmenlerin ne bildiği, ne düşündüğü ve neye inandığını araştıran ayrı bir araştırma alanı olarak ortaya çıktı. Öğretim ortamı öğretmen inançları ve bu inançların uygulanmasını etkileyen faktörlerden biridir. Bu çalışma yabancı dil olarak İngilizce bağlamının anadili İngilizce olan bir öğretmenin öğretmen inançları üzerindeki etkisini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu amaçla, Türkiye'de çalışan anadili İngilizce olan bir öğretmen seçildi ve veriler birkaç farklı araçla toplandı. Veriler gömülü teori analiz basamakları kullanılarak incelendi. Mevcut çalışmada bağlamın öğretmenlerin inançları ve onların pedagojik uygulamaları üzerinde belli bir etkiye sahip olduğu bulundu. Çalışmada aynı zamanda katılımcı öğretmenin inançlarında meydana gelen değişimin bilişsel olmaktan çok davranışsal olduğu ve bağlamın etkisinin öğretmenlerin hangi inançları uygulamaya koyduğu konusunda daha belirgin olduğu sonucuna varıldı.

Anahtar kelimeler: Biliş, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce bağlamı, anadil konuşuru, öğretmen inançları

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INTRODUCTION

The past four decades or so have seen the emergence of the study of teacher beliefs as a major area of research in the field of both teaching and teacher education. With a paradigm shift in the early 1970s, the focus in research on teaching moved from the process-product approach to the study of teachers' cognitive processes. The study of thought processes by which teachers make sense of their teaching started to be seen as key to understanding teachers (Calderhead, 1987; Richardson, 1996). This shift in research led teaching to be viewed not only in terms of behavior but also as a cognitive process, and teachers as decision makers in the classroom rather than as "mechanical implementers of external prescriptions" (Borg, 2006, p. 7). Investigation into teacher cognition, or "the unobservable or hidden side of language teaching," (K. Johnson, 2018, p. 259) has helped us to gain invaluable insight into individual lives of language teachers, their knowledge and beliefs, as well as the way they learn to teach and adapt their teaching to different contexts. The result is the domain of research that has come to be known as teacher cognition which is the study of what teachers know, think and believe.

Research on teachers' thought processes over the last three decades confirmed that the development of teachers' beliefs is heavily shaped by teachers' past learning and teaching experiences (Holt-Reynolds, 1992), and that teachers' instructional practices are influenced by the interplay between teachers' beliefs and the educational context (Borg, 2003, 2006, 2011; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Pajares, 1992). According to van Oers (1998), context constructs meaning and it is embodied in sociocultural activities. Studies conducted on beliefs within sociocultural tradition define beliefs as subjective interpretations of culturally-embedded social relationships, and highlight connections between teachers' beliefs and context. The interaction of context and teachers' beliefs leads to the formation of meaning. Considering the substantial influence of the educational context on teachers' beliefs and practice, it is important to investigate the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice in a specific setting.

A quick review of the literature will reveal that almost all the participants of teacher beliefs studies conducted in EFL contexts are non-native English speaker teachers (NNES) (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Cobanoglu, 2015; Fang, 1996; Farrell & Kun, 2007; Kalaja et al., 2015; Karaca & Uysal, 2021; Lorenz et al., 2021; Nishino, 2012; Song, 2015; Yuan, 2017; Zheng, 2009). Assuming native English speaker teachers (NES) have similar experiences to NNES teachers and generalizing the findings of studies with one group to both groups may be misleading. Borg (2019, p. 47) argues that there is a need for "more fine-grained, highly contextualized and interpretive understandings of language teachers' beliefs" and that this is possible through qualitative studies. He recommends utilizing classroom observations, reflective writing by teachers, visual artefacts, interviews and analysis of documents to gain a deeper understanding of teacher beliefs. Considering the growing number of native speaker teachers being employed to teach in countries where English has the status of a foreign language, there is a need for more studies documenting these teachers' experiences, problems, beliefs, and contributions. This study gains its significance from documenting teaching beliefs of a minority population, native speaker teachers in EFL settings. The current study has used qualitative inquiry in order to explore a language teacher's beliefs and the influence of context on his beliefs. The purpose of this ethnographic case study is to investigate the impact contextual factors have on the teacher's beliefs and his instructional practices. Since there seems to be a reciprocal influence between teacher beliefs and context, examining the impact of contextual factors on native speaker teachers' beliefs may reveal findings that could inform employment policies for native speaker teachers, the nature of in-service teacher education programs directed at these teachers, and better use of these teachers in EFL settings.

Definition and Nature of Beliefs

About five decades ago, Rokeach (1968) defined the concept of belief as "any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase 'I believe that…'" (p. 113). Abelson (1979) defines beliefs as the person's representation of reality that guides his thoughts and actions, while Pajares (1992) defines belief as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (p. 316). Borg (2003) uses the term teacher cognition to refer to "what teachers think, know, and believe and the relationships of these mental constructs to what teachers do in the language teaching classroom" (p. 81). Teacher beliefs can be defined as a form of personal knowledge representing teachers' assumptions related to teaching, learning, students, classrooms, and subject matter (Kagan, 1992). Clandinin (1985) prefers the term personal practical knowledge to refer to teachers' practical and theoretical knowledge that is colored by their background, both professional and personal. The fact that teachers are "emotionally invested" in their beliefs makes defining and measuring beliefs challenging (Whyte et al., 2022, p. 2).

Some beliefs are more structured than others; in other words, some are primary while others are derivatives (Borg, 2015). Another distinction that is made between beliefs is between central and peripheral beliefs. Central

beliefs are held more strongly than peripheral beliefs and they are more connected with other beliefs (Borg, 2015). The degree of connectedness makes a belief more central and less vulnerable to change (Pajares, 1992; Rokeach, 1968). Central beliefs, also called core beliefs, have been found to have a greater impact on teachers' practices than peripheral ones (Gao & Cui, 2022).

Teachers' Beliefs and Practice

A considerable amount of research spanning the past three decades has confirmed that teachers' classroom practices are substantially affected by what they think, do, believe, and teacher beliefs are shaped by their past learning and teaching experiences (Borg, 2003; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Golombek, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Whyte et al., 2022). Everything teachers do in a classroom is influenced by their beliefs and teachers practice in line with their beliefs (Williams & Burden, 1997). Borg (2003) built on research in mainstream and language education on teacher beliefs and found that teachers are active decision-makers, and they make educational choices by using "complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs" (p. 81). The details of Borg's framework are provided in Figure 1 (Borg, 2006, p. 283).

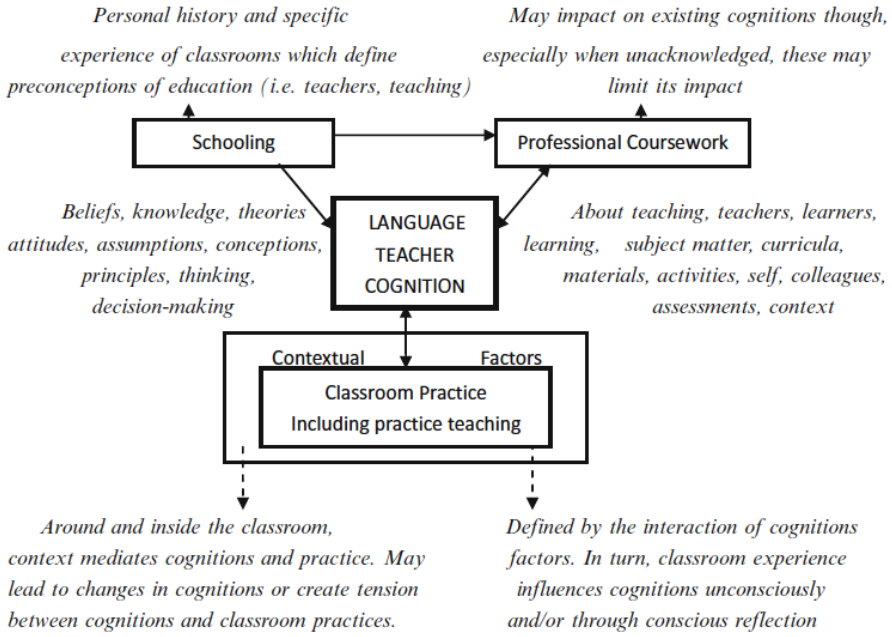

Figure 1. *Elements and processes in language teacher cognition*

Teachers construct images of past events such as images of good teachers and these images filter new information they are subjected to like in teacher education and guide them as they embark on actual teaching (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Cole & Knowles, 1993; Johnston, 1992). Teachers' experiences as teachers, students, and persons outside the classroom, personal and interpersonal factors, and professional knowledge mediate how teachers understand and respond to their classrooms (Almarza, 1996; Golombek, 1998). However, some studies have found an incongruence between what teachers think and believe and what they actually do in the classroom. In other words, practice does not always match stated beliefs (Mercer, 2018; Whyte et al., 2022). The methods used to elicit teachers' beliefs might be responsible for the inconsistency between stated beliefs and enacted beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Phipps and Borg (2009) found that student preferences and expectations, and concerns about classroom management were the main factors that caused teachers to teach in ways incongruent with stated beliefs. Moodie and Feryok (2015) counted organizational obstacles among the reasons for the gap between teachers' beliefs and practices, Farrell and Guz (2019) pointed to program expectations and student abilities as probable reasons, while Bai and Yuan (2019) listed a number of personal and contextual hurdles to explain the gap.

Change in Teachers' Beliefs

Studies guided by cognitive and sociocultural approaches emphasize the relevance and significance of experience and background. These studies argue that students of teaching start their teacher preparation programs with experience-based powerful personal theories regarding good practice (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Personal theories or lay theories are constructed in years by students through observation of and participation in classrooms for thousands of hours (Lortie, 1975), and learning taking place at homes and in the larger community in addition to in schools. Preservice teachers come to teacher education with a substantial amount of knowledge, prior beliefs

(Farrell & Guz, 2019; Joram & Gabriele, 1998), narrative and images (Kagan, 1992) and these "act as a gatekeeper to belief change throughout the teacher education program" (Joram & Gabriele, 1998, p. 177).

A number of studies have investigated the influence of teacher preparation programs and practicum or field experience on teachers' thoughts and beliefs and have found change that can be attributed to such programs (Almarza, 1996; Cabaroglu & Robert, 2000; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Nettle, 1998; Sendan & Roberts, 1998). Barnard and Burns (2012) argue both preservice and in-service teacher education lead to changes in teachers' beliefs. Reynolds et al. (2022) found teacher education courses led teacher beliefs to become more specific and concrete, and led teachers to consider learner- and context-related factors in their classroom practices while Ha and Murray (2021) reported that specifically-designed teacher training courses, workshops etc. could make teachers to reconsider their beliefs. Borg (2003) maintains that each trainee is influenced by teacher education programs in different ways. Other studies investigating the impact of teacher training on teachers' beliefs have found weak or no relationships between the two (Richardson, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Peacock, 2001; Calderhead & Robson, 1991). Experience, in interaction with context, has also been shown to bring about change in teachers' beliefs (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Levin, 2015). Buehl and Beck (2015) argue teacher's beliefs have some degree of plasticity and they change with time and experience.

Context and Teachers' Beliefs

Context constructs meaning and it is embodied in sociocultural activities, van Oers (1998) suggests, pointing to the significant role context plays in meaningful concept formation. "Context [italics in original] can be defined as the interconnected collection of factors that codetermine the structure and meaning of human actions" (p. 137). Studies conducted on beliefs within Vygotskian tradition define beliefs as subjective interpretations of culturally-embedded social relationships, and highlight connections between teachers' beliefs and context. Context both mediates and shapes teachers' beliefs (Borg, 2003; Gao & Cui, 2022; Sakui & Gaies, 2003). "The teachers' belief system is thus an ecological one which shapes and is shaped by contextual factors" (Zheng, 2015, p. 5).

The situated theoretical perspective (Skott, 2009) posits that the immediate physical and social setting contribute meaningfully to knowing and beliefs. This view approaches beliefs as situated, meaning they exist in the immediate context, and theorizes that the classroom community provides a basis for the development and enactment of beliefs. Therefore, the interpretation of teachers' beliefs needs to be done in locally relevant ways in order to understand these beliefs (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

This study investigated an experienced native English-speaking teacher's teacher beliefs about teaching and learning English in an English as a foreign language context. The main focus was whether contextual factors had any influence on the participant teacher's beliefs, the nature of the influence, and if any change occurred in the teacher's beliefs. The following question informed this research study:

Research Question

1. How does context influence a native English-speaking teacher's teaching beliefs in an EFL setting?

METHOD

Research Context and Participants

The present study uses an ethnographic case study approach to investigate teacher beliefs of a native English-speaking teacher and to this end it starts with no predetermined hypotheses. The ethnographic case study has been chosen as it allows for exploration of experiences and interactions of participants in their natural setting over a prolonged period. It enables researchers to look at phenomena from the viewpoint of members of the group (Richards, 2003). It also provides profound and thick data as well as allowing for formulating hypothesis after interpreting the data instead of at the start of the study. Duff (2012) suggests case study approach allows for flexibility in design and enables looking at behaviors, performance, knowledge, or perspectives of a single or several research participants holistically and in close detail. Among the reasons for choosing ethnographic case research were the purpose to explore the participant's experience in depth and in more than one setting, to observe him while teaching as well as while interacting with the people at school and in the wider community, to gather rich data through various data collection instruments and corroborate data collected through one instrument with data gathered through the others, and to spend an extended period of time on the same site with the participant in order to familiarize myself with the context.

This study was conducted at the school of foreign languages (henceforth the SFL) of a public university in southern Turkey. The school is located in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith, and multilingual small city with a centralized population. These features of the city were among the main reasons that brought the participant to the SFL in the

first place. The majority of city residents use, in their daily lives, at least two languages, Kurdish and Arabic as native languages plus Turkish as the official language. The curriculum of the SFL covers teaching for skills up to intermediate or B1 level with a focus on comprehension skills. The majority of the instructors are NNES with only one or two NES teachers. Due to the ethnographic nature and focus of the study, it only includes a single participant selected through purposeful sampling. The participant, a middle-aged male, (with the pseudonym Paul) has been chosen because he holds a degree in a language-related major and has teaching experience in more than one English as a foreign language context, namely Japan and Turkey. Paul is American and has been teaching speaking and writing classes in the SFL for four years.

Although English is by far the most widely studied foreign language in Turkey, its use is limited to educational and business contexts. It is taught as a foreign language in primary, secondary and tertiary level educational institutions but it is not used in daily life. For the majority of learners language classes are the only venue where they can use English.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a period of six months through direct observations, in-depth interviews, narrative accounts, and journal keeping. The interviews, which were audiotaped, consisted of semi-structured broad questions about the participant's current teaching experience in Turkey and his previous experiences in Japan to guide him during interviews. Classroom observations, also audiotaped, were conducted once every two weeks on average and were limited to two class sessions each, which was about 90 minutes. Observations outside the classroom were less formal and took place in the participant's office, at various facilities on campus, at his home, as well as at various social occasions. Observations were followed by short discussions with the participant to clarify any confusion on my part and to avoid misunderstandings. I kept a personal research journal to note down my thoughts and reflections after observations and interviews as well as during discussion sessions in order to avoid projecting my own experiences onto those of the participant or interpreting data based on my own personal experiences.

Since I aimed to discover changes in my participant's teacher beliefs, I needed to look at his experiences diachronically but my only access to his previous experiences was through narrative accounts. It was in this aspect that narrative accounts served particularly well to my research purpose as they offer insight into people's private worlds, a window into people's beliefs and experiences (Bell, 2002), which is quite difficult to do via experimental methodologies. A significant advantage of narratives is that "They are transformative as they shift the power relationship between researchers and participants, and between teachers and learners, making the object of the inquiry into the subject and granting the subject both agency and voice" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 180). The participant provided two long, detailed narrative accounts. I asked the participant to write journal entries at the end of every week to reflect and comment on the week and hand these to the researcher (me) afterwards.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in a recursive and reflexive manner and incorporated insights and feedback from both the participant and the researcher. Observations, interviews and discussions were audiotaped, transcribed and coded for recurrent, relevant themes that were related to the participant's teacher beliefs and experiences. Data were analyzed in an ongoing way during the data collection period and afterwards. Three steps were followed in data analysis: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the open coding stage, I read the interview and classroom observation transcripts, narratives, and journal entries several times to become familiar with the data. As I was coding each paragraph, I specifically looked for instances in the data that pointed to the influence of context on the formation or modification of the participant's teacher beliefs and his classroom practices.

In axial coding, the data was combined in new ways using the coding paradigm to find out similarities, cause-effect relationships and the like. The subcategories created in the open coding stage were analyzed for their properties and dimensions and thereby creating main categories in the axial coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the final stage, selective coding involved defining the base category and establishing its relationship with the other categories in a systematic manner by considering shared characteristics, consequences, relationships and so forth of main categories reached in axial coding phase. This inductive and bottom-up data analysis process (Creswell, 2007) produced four main themes: adaptability, critical teaching, contextually-shaped teaching, and strategy building.

Research Ethics

At the time of data collection, I had almost five years of experience teaching at the site where the participant worked, and so I was already familiar with the institutional culture and how the system works. I had many informal discussions with the participant regarding language teaching and learning as well as our classroom practices over the years prior to the start of this study. I can say that I had already earned the participant's trust and this led him to disclose information to me comfortably in interviews and act naturally during observations. I used different methods of data collection in order to compensate weaknesses in one instrument with strengths of another. The use of different data collection methods also enabled me to obtain a variety of data and have a more holistic view of the findings. The trustworthiness of data was enhanced by cross-checking data collected from various instruments. The participant was asked to review and comment on analyses in order to clarify any misinterpretation, a process called member checking (Creswell, 2007). By providing rich descriptions of the context, the participants, and the data collection and analysis procedures, I tried to add to the credibility of the study. Thick descriptions enable readers to check whether findings of the study could be transferred to other settings. The steps followed in data analysis were also explained in detail.

As the researcher in this qualitative study, I have been working in the same institution where the participant works for the past six years, five years with the participant. As a non-native English-speaking language teacher, I have considered the presence of a native speaker English teacher in the institution as an asset. I quickly became friends with the participant right after he started working. I frequently had discussions and chats with him regarding all aspects of English language teaching and learning. I consulted with him about grammatical structures, lexical items, pronunciation matters, and many other issues. As we became good friends as well as colleagues, our discussion topics diversified to include sociocultural and socio-political issues. My familiarity with American culture and politics, mostly through media, and his interest in middle eastern cultures and languages brought us closer. This is noteworthy as I believe it was this close friendship and collegial cooperation that made the participant act naturally during the observations and disclose his real beliefs and thoughts in the interviews and narratives. Working in the same institution and teaching similar and sometimes the same classes mean the participant and I have similar though not the same experiences. This is something that I as the investigator need to be conscious of while interpreting the findings of the study.

FINDINGS

The analysis of the interviews, written narratives, journal entries and observation transcriptions revealed "survival in EFL context" as the main category. It was found to be a consequence of the four categories "adaptability," "critical teaching," "contextually-shaped teaching" and "strategy building." Each category also subsumed several subcategories. The subcategories that constituted the category *adaptability* (See Figure 2) were found to be *non-imposing native speaker attitude*, *adjustment* and *cooperation with colleagues*.

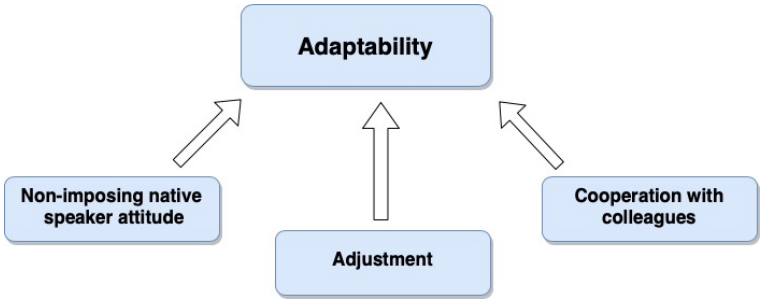

Figure 2. *Adaptability category and its subcategories*

Being an NES among a predominantly non-native English-speaking faculty put pressure on Paul as a slight assertion of his native speaker identity could jeopardize his relationship with non-native colleagues. In the interviews and narratives, he explained how he threaded carefully not to impose his native identity in talks and discussions with the other teachers:

I think but maybe you [researcher] don't have this impression that I impose myself as a native speaker unless asked. Unless you ask me what I think of a sentence, if it is definitely wrong I'd say it, you know, that doesn't work, but I am not going to comment on anything unless I am asked. (Interview II)

When Paul started teaching in Japan and then in Turkey, he had his ideas of role models of good teachers from preschool to university, what constituted effective teaching and how teacher-student relationship should be like. When he faced the contextual realities, he first tried to implement what he believed in. However, this did not

always work, and so he was forced to make adjustments to his practices and when adjustment was not possible, he avoided the practice altogether.

They [Japanese students] were in small groups because that's how they always functioned in Japan and they form these naturally. They are functional groups unlike the groups I encounter here in Turkey, which are dysfunctional groups. Here in Turkey pair work is impossible. I don't know what to do. I have given up. (Interview II)

The statement "I have tried to call on every student so they feel I want to talk to all of them unless they completely turn me off" (Interview II) shows Paul exerted effort to be inclusive in his class just like his kindergarten teacher. However, contextual factors, whether they were about social hierarchies or classroom dynamics, did not always enable Paul to practice by what he believed in and had to modify his teaching in some ways.

Eventually when the students are detaching I just gather the students who are listening closer to me, not physically but within the classroom, which doesn't help the situation and sometimes I just let the students detach and I think I really shouldn't put any more effort there because it is not going to be rewarded. (Interview II)

In addition to sharing problems, Paul also talked to his colleagues about the teaching practices that worked well. Carol is a language teacher by training, while Paul is a linguist and thanks to one-on-one discussions they frequently had, Paul greatly benefitted from Carol's experiences as exemplified by the statements below:

Carol was a very experienced teacher who had been working in Turkey for some years and I quickly realized that I could learn a lot from her about how to teach students in Turkey and about how to survive in general. (Narrative II)

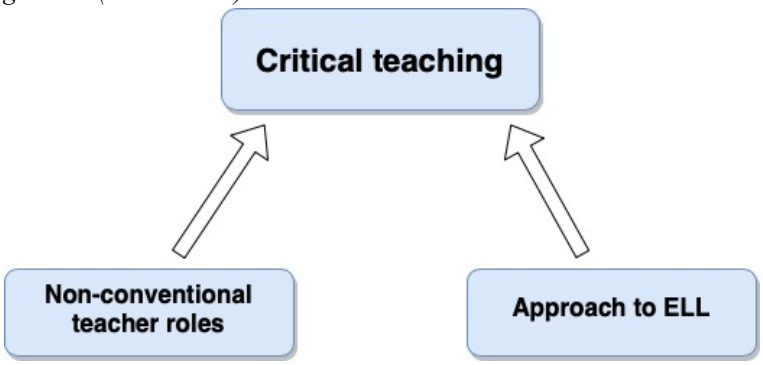

Figure 3. *Critical teaching category and its subcategories*

The category *critical teaching* has two subcategories, *non-conventional teacher roles* and *approach to ELL* (See Figure 3).

Paul recounted in the interviews and written narratives the teachers that had a significant impact on him and how they influenced his beliefs and teaching practices. One of those first teachers who influenced Paul was his German teacher, who is the reason why Paul believes in the value of grammar in language learning and teaching as the German teacher taught grammar as grammar. "My middle school German teacher, who loved grammar and loved paradigms and was always making us paradigms completely and I discovered I really enjoyed that" (Interview III). One of the teachers who contributed to Paul's beliefs about the value of speaking in language learning and teaching is his Spanish teacher in high-school. He said, "My Spanish teacher in high school was very much about speaking" (Interview III).

Still, the most influential teacher in Paul's life in terms of the formation of his teaching identity was Francois. He was a lecturer at the French department of Macalester College and a native speaker of French who lived at the French house where Paul stayed during his undergraduate years. Paul summarizes his influence as "basically his pedagogy is my pedagogy" (Interview III). What made Francois's teaching effective, in Paul words, was his performance skills. He supported his teaching with clownish performance, laughter, jokes, pantomime, etc. The last teacher that Paul mentioned as an influence on him and his teaching beliefs was his professor of historical linguistics, Calvert Watkins. Paul describes the first time he met Watkins: "I went and I met Calvert and it was like intellectual love at first sight. I was thunderstruck. Calvert was like a second father to me" (Interview I).

Paul observed that both in Japan and in Turkey, the curriculums were geared toward drilling and were generally exam-oriented. For Japan, he said, "The Japanese education system involves a lot of fill-in-the-blanks type of studying. It was very exam-oriented" (Interview II) and for Turkey, "The most deeply frustrating thing

about the classroom culture as I have seen it in the EPP [English preparatory program] is the mentality of 'fill in the blank'" (Narrative II).

To motivate his students in Turkey, Paul decided to first explain to them the reason why they need to learn English and make English study seem meaningful to them. Paul summarized his strategy as:

So much they encountered in the Turkish education system did not seem relevant to them. Every year they get the same thing in English and they never see the motivation for learning that. The problem is greater than English. It's pointing out motivation to them. Why are they learning this? (Interview II)

The region where Paul works is economically underdeveloped and politically problematic with violent events occurring now and then. Paul is aware of the problems local people experience and their impact on students' personal and academic lives. It is challenging for any teacher to motivate students who are mentally preoccupied with the economic conditions of their families or the political conflict raging in their region. Paul seems to have struck a chord with the students by pointing out the role English can play in their lives:

When they seem unmotivated especially two years ago, when there were a lot of violent developments, one student told me he cannot study because he has other things to think about. I said to the whole class… 'I know you are experiencing terrible things… But if you want to tell the world and you tell them in Turkish nobody will listen because nobody in the world knows Turkish. If you tell the world your story in English people will listen because all around the world the media and the general readership speaks English. So, your voice will be heard if you speak in English. They were all flabbergasted. Oh! He is right.' (Interview II)

Erasmus exchange program is one of the few opportunities available to Turkish students and Paul is well aware of this, so he urges the students to apply for the program and offers his assistance to them throughout the application process.

I always try to give them tools to talk about themselves understandably in English just to make things easier. So, if they do Erasmus, they can talk about these things. (Interview III)

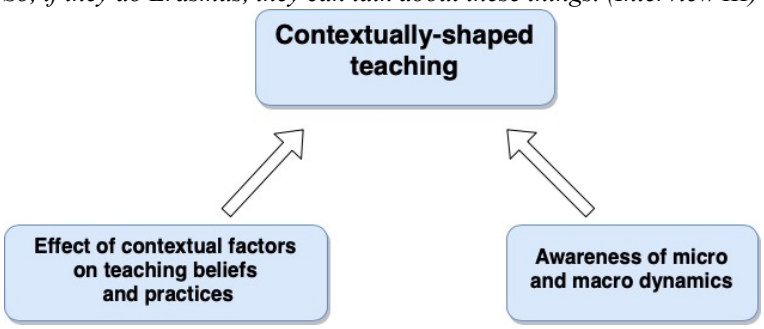

Figure 4. *Contextually-shaped teaching category and its subcategories*

The subcategories of *contextually-shaped teaching* are *effect of contextual factors on teaching beliefs and practices*, and *awareness of micro and macro dynamics* (See Figure 4).

Paul took a holistic approach to teaching and viewed students as social agents with strong ties to the community they are situated in. Paul is a stark contrast to the cliché foreign teacher who is only interested in conducting his classes and is detached from sociocultural, political and religious identities of students. In his discussion of one of the classrooms he was teaching, he said, "There are two separate groups of girls. They don't like each other. There are many cliques. That's one thing that's difficult" (Interview II).

Another reflection of the context on Paul's teaching was discussion of certain issues. In the Turkish context, for instance, he was careful about speaking about political problems facing Turkey such as the conflict in the east and southeast of the country. Turkey is a predominantly Muslim country and religious activities of non-Muslims usually arouse suspicion. Religion, culture, politics and sexuality are some of the issues Paul avoids discussing openly for fear of being reported to authorities. "I hope I don't get deported for missionary work. I thought maybe there is a spy who would go to tell the rector or something" (Interview II).

On teacher-student relationship Paul recounted "I always try to present myself as a friend and someone who is generally interested in what the students have to say" (Narrative I). Paul's beliefs faced a serious challenge in the Turkish context. He was aware that if he treated the students the way he treated them in the US or in Japan, he might experience serious problems, but he also did not have an alternative approach to teacher-student relationship, especially when it comes to his relationship with female students: "In fact, I never know where I am with the female students" (Interview II).

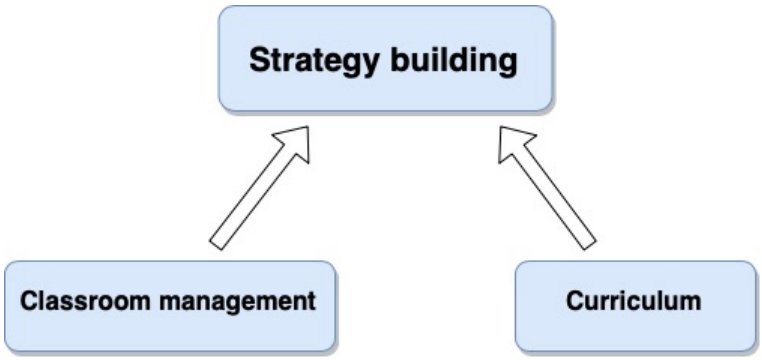

Figure 5. *Strategy building category and its subcategories*

The last category *strategy building* has *classroom management* and *curriculum* as subcategories (See Figure 5).

Paul faced a dilemma when he started teaching in Turkey, but instead of becoming a controlling teacher since he knew this would threaten his survival as a foreign teacher, he chose to remain as a non-authoritarian teacher and cope with contextual challenges of classroom management through different strategies. Paul describes this strategy by comparing and contrasting the Turkish and Japanese contexts:

One problem I have in the classroom in Turkey is that I often develop a good relation with the strongest personalities and more charismatic members of the classroom, and use them as my allies in controlling the classroom. This can come off as playing favorites, but I try to counteract this effect. Perhaps this is a habit inherited from Japan. (Narrative I)

Paul believes the curriculum of any language institution should be developed with the goals and needs of students in mind, and then the skills required to achieve these goals should be determined. To my question about how the curriculum of his institution should be like, Paul responded:

If I had complete control over the curriculum of the EPP [SFL], I would of course start by assessing what the goals of the curriculum were—that is, what skill do the students need to acquire the most? And where and when will they use these skills after acquiring them. (Narrative II)

DISCUSSION

Theme One: Adaptability

This study found that prior schooling experience of teachers has influence on the formation of teachers' beliefs about good language learning and teaching practices as well as images of good teacher models. Lortie's concept of "apprenticeship of observation" might explain Paul's belief in group work. Lortie basically argues that teachers' experiences as learners are critical in shaping their beliefs and identities as educators as they spend about 13000 hours at school observing their teachers. Paul talked about the benefits of group work in second language learning, saying his class did a lot of group work while they were studying a second language. I think it is clear from the data no change occurred in Paul's beliefs regarding group work and the value of participating as members of a group but social dynamics made him change his instructional practice in a way that did not clash with deep-rooted traditional learning. External factors at societal level acted as hindrance (Buehl & Beck, 2015) or constraint (Clark & Peterson, 1984) to Paul in implementing his espoused beliefs. Traditionally, group or pair work has rarely occupied any place in the Turkish education system. Lecturing or making students work on their own has been popular methods of teaching.

Teachers construct images of past events such as images of good teachers and these images filter new information they are subjected to as in teacher education and guide them as they embark on actual teaching (Cole & Knowles, 1993). The images of favorite teachers and teaching styles impact on shaping teachers' beliefs and subsequent educational practices; in other words, teachers use these images as models of action (Calderhead & Robson, 1991). The findings of this study confirm the significance of images of effective teacher models that students start to form during their school years that inform their teacher beliefs in their teaching careers. Paul was highly influenced by his kindergarten teacher as she valued every student in her class and believed each and every student had a role to play in the classroom regardless of their personality.

A teacher might hold certain beliefs regarding a specific aspect of teaching but may not be able to implement their beliefs due to external factors such as curriculum. Some studies have referred to this as incongruence between teachers' espoused beliefs and enacted beliefs (Almarza, 1996; Phipps & Borg, 2006, 2009;

Smith, 1996). This study found that Paul believed that teachers should have some control over lesson planning but this was made impossible by curriculum constraints. For instance, although Paul opposed and did not have faith in the value of highly structured grammar drills such as fill-in-the-gap kind exercises, he was forced to do such drills frequently. This behavioral change in Paul's instructional practice is not backed by any cognitive change in his teacher beliefs.

It is reported in the literature that there are different sources where teachers get their ideas and teaching experience and informal talks with colleagues have been found to be among the top influences (Barnard & Burns, 2012; Crookes & Arakaki, 1999; Farrell, 2003). The current study found that Paul's discussions and consultations with his colleagues, both foreign and local, had a significant impact on the enactment of his beliefs and his pedagogical practice in general. This finding is supported by the literature as exemplified by van den Broek et al. (2019), "teachers will gain a better insight into their beliefs" (p. 345) through collaboration with their colleagues.

This study looked at the interaction of native speaker identity of the participant with his relationship with other teachers and students in the Turkish EFL context and found that the participant as a native speaker felt he had to be conscious of his native speaker identity. He believed if he asserted the fact that he was a native speaker, it could jeopardize his relationship with his non-native speaker colleagues. His efforts not to dominate his colleagues with his native speaker teacher identity could be seen as part of his struggle to adapt to the context. As an observant individual, he read classroom and social dynamics quite well, and threaded carefully in his interactions with students and the community. It seems the Japanese proverb that "the nail that sticks out gets hammered down" guided Paul's relations with the Japanese and the Turkish community.

Theme Two: Critical Thinking

It has been argued that teachers may make certain changes to their pedagogical practices depending on contextual variables such as the socioeconomic level of the school (Rubie-Davies et al., 2011), students' needs and expectations (Johnson, 1990) or the gap between theory and practice (Barcelos, 2015; Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992). The data revealed that not all the roles Paul assumed could be categorized as conventional teacher roles and actually some are not directly related to language teaching. Certain students particularly influenced Paul in his (re)interpretation of teacher roles. He threaded the line between a teacher and an activist in his understanding of teacher roles, which could be associated with critical pedagogy that promotes social justice and transformation of the society through raising consciousness. Paul's beliefs about teacher roles seem to have been heavily influenced by the contextual realities of Turkey.

Paul observed that both in Turkey and in Japan, the curriculums were geared toward grammar drilling and were generally exam-oriented. He realized students needed to be motivated to study English and their past language learning had not been meaningful. These findings are related to hindrances that Buehl and Beck (2015) label external factors in the model they developed. Bai and Yuan (2019) reported similar findings in their study with English teachers in Hong Kong. Working in the Turkish EFL context made Paul believe in the value of meaningful interaction for the students by introducing them to Erasmus and Couchsurfing.

The findings of the current study confirm the significant role "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975) plays in the development of teachers' beliefs regarding effective teacher images and teacher roles. These findings are also supported by Cancino et al. study (2020). The EFL contexts where Paul worked enabled him to enact his beliefs in contextually meaningful ways and through contextually relevant practices. Paul's having student roommates in Turkey while teaching could be seen as a reflection of his beliefs about teacher roles, which seem to have shaped partially during his stay at the French house in his undergraduate years. The EFL context confirmed Paul's beliefs in this regard though the enactment of his beliefs occurred differently in the two contexts. The way Paul tried to make English learning meaningful for EFL students also illustrates the effect context has on the realization of espoused beliefs. His efforts to encourage EFL students to do Erasmus exchange, Couchsurfing or tell their stories of suffering through English are an indication of Paul's tweaking his teacher beliefs to make his pedagogical practice meaningful in the EFL setting. Cancino et al. (2019, p. 309) call this tweaking of beliefs to fit the teaching context "blended apprenticeship of observation."

Theme Three: Contextually-Shaped Teaching

Zheng's (2015) framework of "EFL teachers' complex belief system" (p. 36) suggests a complex and dynamic relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice. He characterizes teachers' beliefs as complex, dynamic and contextualized open systems, and refers to interrelationship and interaction between teacher beliefs, practice and context. This study also found the significant role context played in the interaction of Paul's teacher

beliefs and his instructional practices. He is interested in all aspects of his students and shapes his teaching and classroom management practices with classroom and social dynamics and other contextual factors in mind.

Social, cultural, and historical contexts teachers occupy have an impact on their beliefs (Levin, 2015). In the face of unfavorable societal circumstances, teachers may be forced to make changes to their pedagogical practices that contradict their beliefs. Their free will to put into effect what they believe in may be restricted by external factors in the environment (Cave, 2015). The data for this study revealed that Paul was extremely conscious of the socio-political situation of the region where he worked in particular and of Turkey in general. He always kept this in mind when choosing supplementary materials or discussion topics for speaking or writing assignments. As a Christian American teacher, he was concerned about receiving negative reactions from students, the university management or the wider community. This influenced his classroom actions in such ways as avoiding discussion of certain issues, and relationship with students and the community.

Theme Four: Strategy Building

On the one hand, Paul defines himself as an anti-authoritarian teacher. On the other hand, he believes certain situations may make strictness necessary. To better understand these apparently contradictory belief statements, we need to consider Zheng's (2015) argument that there is an interconnected and co-adaptive relationship between teachers' beliefs and contexts. After several years of experience of teaching young adults in Turkey, Paul has noticed significant differences between the Turkish education context and the Japanese and American contexts. This realization may have led to a change in Paul's beliefs about how to best manage a classroom or just caused certain instructional alterations in his practice without any cognitive change. In either case, the influence of the context in teachers' beliefs and practices is warranted as argued by Borg (2006).

The current study found that the participant teacher's beliefs about classroom management and teacher-student relationship were strongly influenced by a number of teacher figures in his student life and the images of effective teacher models guided him during his teaching career. The findings of the present study, similar to findings reported by Calderhead and Robson (1991), Johnston (1992), Kagan (1992) Cole and Knowles (1993), and Johnson (1994), clearly confirm the strong influence teacher images have in shaping Paul's beliefs as a teacher and guiding his pedagogical practice.

CONCLUSION

The first conclusion of the current study is that teachers' beliefs take shape throughout their schooling experience with effective teacher models having a substantial impact on the formation of these beliefs. The majority of teachers' beliefs that are already firmly established by the time they enter education programs or actually start teaching are resistant to change and show limited variance across contexts. This study also found that the changes that occurred in the participant teacher's beliefs were behavioral rather than cognitive. Specific aspects of EFL context such as classroom and societal dynamics, socioeconomic status of the students, and curriculum constraints impeded the teacher in putting his beliefs into practice. The participant either avoided the practice altogether or chose to adjust it to contextual conditions. Figure 6 summarizes the findings that this study revealed.

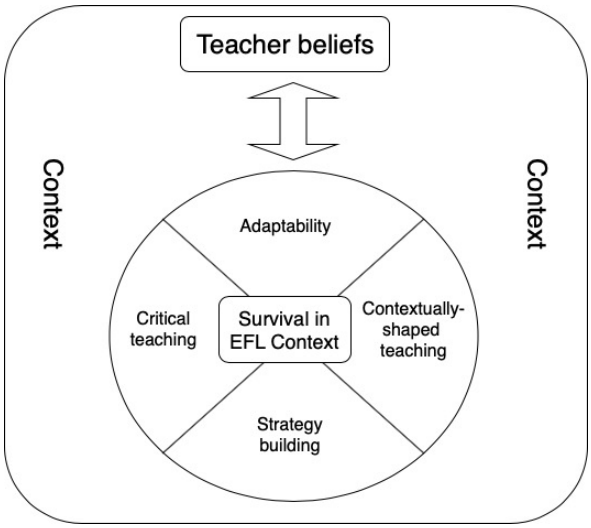

Figure 6. *Theoretical model for survival in EFL context*

Another conclusion this study arrived at is that although EFL context influences teacher beliefs and practice to some extent, the influence is not congruent across contexts. Different EFL contexts seem to influence teacher beliefs in different ways as evidenced by the comparison of the participant's teaching experiences in Japan and in Turkey. Each context has its unique characteristics and the interplay between these characteristics and teachers' beliefs influence instructional practices in different aspects and to varying degrees. This is in accordance with conclusions reported in the literature, by Sato and Oyanedel (2019) for instance.

As a final point, this study concludes that contextual factors have an influence on teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices though this influence seems to lead to limited cognitive change in teachers' beliefs. The context's influence on which beliefs teachers enact in practice is relatively more marked. The context, it may be argued, either impedes or enhance the individual's efforts to shape their lives, and thereby impacting on their "freedom quotient," the scale that aims to capture "the ability to generate options for oneself, to choose, and then to pursue one or more of those options" (Cave, 2015).

The findings of this study offer an insight into the challenging teaching experience of NES teachers in EFL settings who struggle to achieve a balance between their teacher beliefs and identity, and sociocultural dynamics of the community they are situated in. Their experience is marked by a constant struggle for adaptation and survival in a foreign setting. Studies like this one can enable policy makers to better understand NES teachers and to make their teaching experience less challenging. Such attempts to better understand the psychology of language teachers will also contribute to their wellbeing professionally and enhance the quality of their teaching and their students' learning as they are interconnected (Mercer, 2018).

This study sought to examine the case from many aspects in order to draw a holistic picture through thick descriptions and multiple data collection tools to corroborate each other. The in-depth nature of this study with one participant might inspire further studies into the impact of different contexts on professional experience of language teachers and implications for teacher education programs.

Statements of publication ethics

Cag University Ethics Committee issued an approval certificate for the data collection instruments used in this study with the decision number SOBE-2058 on 24 December 2018.

Researchers' contribution rate

The study was conducted and reported by the corresponding author.

Conflict of interest

The author of this article declares there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment

This article is based on the corresponding researcher's PhD study.

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