

DEVELOPING INSIGHTS INTO TEACHER-RESEARCH

Edited by: Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş,
Richard Smith and Mark Wyatt

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Both teacher-research mentors' and teacher-researchers' perspectives are represented in this book, which is the third in a series published by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group. The first six chapters are teacher-research mentors' accounts of helping teachers engage in practitioner research, with those supported including both in-service and pre-service teachers. The remaining chapters provide teacher-researchers' accounts of helping students develop a range of language skills and knowledge, positive feelings about learning, and a greater sense of autonomy. All the researchers, whether mentors of other teachers or classroom teachers themselves, place the improvement of students' learning at the heart of their research, and show that powerful kinds of learning can occur for all involved in the teacher-research process: mentors, teachers and students alike.

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IATEFL Research Special Interest Group



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*Published by IATEFL, No 2 – 3 The Foundry Business Park, Seager Road, Faversham, Kent
ME13 7F*

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ISBN 978-1-901095-98-2

First published as a collected volume in 2017

Edited by Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş, Richard Smith and Mark Wyatt

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Cover design and book layout by Şerikan Kara serikankara@gmail.com

*The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language was founded in
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Introduction

Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş, Richard Smith and Mark Wyatt

Six years and counting ...

The publication of this book comes at the end of a six-year period of activity by the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (ReSIG) during which the SIG has gained an increasing international presence in promoting ELT teacher-research: that is, research by English language teachers into their own practice, for their own purposes and those of their students. ‘Research *by* teachers *for* teachers’ has been a slogan for this initiative since the first ReSIG ‘Teachers Research!’ event in Harrogate in 2014 (see Smith 2015), which itself followed on from workshops in 2012–13 led by Anne Burns; Sarah Mercer, Richard Smith and Ema Ushioda; Dick Allwright and others; and David Nunan. Work for teacher-research initiated independently by Kenan Dikilitaş in Turkey, also from around 2011 onwards, has latterly become intertwined with ReSIG efforts, to the extent that a series of conferences started by Kenan, initially on a small scale for English teachers in Izmir, expanded and became supported by ReSIG, taking on ‘Teachers Research!’ branding in 2015 (Izmir) and 2016 (Istanbul). This is already the third ReSIG publication to arise from the Turkey series of annual conferences, with all of the chapters in the book being based on presentations given at the 24–25 June 2016 conference at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

Given the rapid development of this body of work over the last six years and the way significant new developments appear to be on the horizon, it seems valuable in this Introduction to take stock of what has been achieved to date, and to consider how further teacher-research insights might be developed most

appropriately into the future. We begin, though, by summarising the chapters in this book and the insights they themselves reveal.

Introducing the chapters and their authors

The 12 contributions to this book are grouped according to distinct categories, with both teacher-research mentors' and teacher-researchers' perspectives represented. The first six chapters are teacher-research mentors' accounts of helping teachers engage in practitioner research, with those supported including both in-service (chapters 1–3) and pre-service teachers (chapters 4–6). Interestingly, four of these first six chapters demonstrate a particular commitment to action research. While other forms of practitioner inquiry, including exploratory practice, have been given attention within ReSIG in recent years, action research is clearly particularly influential in the context of this conference. Amongst chapters 7–12, which provide teacher-researchers' accounts of helping students in their contexts develop a range of language skills and knowledge, positive feelings about learning and a greater sense of autonomy, there are three further chapters which also explicitly employ an action research framework. We now discuss the contributions in detail.

In Chapter 1, *Yasemin Kırkgöz* describes her experience of being a research mentor to two highly experienced primary school teachers of English within a collaborative action research teacher development project. Yasemin reports first interviewing the teachers to help establish a research focus, and then doing some reading with the teachers so that they could understand the issue they had identified together in more depth. This led into an action research cycle (involving planning, teaching, observing and then reflecting) that was centred on the use of real objects or images to enhance the memories of young learners in their primary school context. Yasemin then highlights successes, including improved learning outcomes noted by the teachers, their awareness of their own professional growth, and her own awareness of how

she was developing as a teacher-research-mentor, taking on different roles. In conclusion, she highlights how she could continue to grow, with her mentoring practices in the future becoming more autonomy-supportive.

In Chapter 2, *Beril Yücel* and *Melis Akdoğan Gündoğdu* describe an action research project that six teachers they were mentoring had volunteered to participate in to support their own continuing personal professional development. They provided input (both face to face and through readings) on action research, and guided the teachers (working collaboratively in pairs) in planning their research, and then collecting and analysing data. While most of the teachers were new to action research, the mentoring team could draw on Beril's extensive experience of having conducted action research studies herself as well as her experience of having supported action research in different contexts. Benefits of the project Beril and Melis identify include the teachers reporting greater self-confidence in engaging in research, experiencing closer connection with their students and enhanced collaboration with each other, as well as feeling recognised by their institution. Their closing thoughts highlight both mentors' and teachers' goals to continue to engage in action research as a sustainable enterprise.

In Chapter 3, *Seden Eraldemir Tuyan*, who has been mentoring teams of teacher-researchers at her university for several years now, provides evidence of how inspiration, enthusiasm, commitment and the fulfilment of key mentoring roles can help to make teacher-research more sustainable. Introducing herself as an action research mentor, she shares her story of becoming involved, and explains how she has organized mentoring at her university (taking part in this herself as well as encouraging others). Seden then analyses the mentoring she has provided, drawing on questionnaire data provided by her mentees as evidence of her having assumed important mentor roles, such as providing psychological support. She then reflects on how she has grown through the experience with the teachers she has mentored, and how they

have benefited, in terms of feeling more productive and creative, and also experiencing higher self-esteem through being better recognized within the university community.

As noted above, chapters 4–6 report on mentoring pre-service teachers. In Chapter 4, *Sabriye Şener*, an experienced mentor of graduate students, reflects on mentoring undergraduate teacher-researchers for the first time. She describes a 16-week training programme she implemented; this programme started with awareness-raising and theoretical input, addressed practical issues such as data gathering, and then involved participants in thinking more about how to actually do research and collect meaningful data through further input based on the reading and discussion of relevant studies. The pre-service teachers, working in groups and gaining constant tutorial support, then conducted research in schools and afterwards presented their findings orally and in writing. Written feedback elicited from them at the end of the course was mostly positive, with benefits relating to personal and professional development highlighted. After sharing this process, Sabriye reflects on it as a positive mentoring experience she wishes to sustain in a collegial way, working collaboratively with fellow research-mentors in the future.

In Chapter 5, *Hatime Çiftçi*, *Enisa Mede* and *Derin Atay* also report on mentoring undergraduate teacher-researchers. This is in the context of a very practically-oriented university-school partnership project, with pre-service teachers observing, micro-teaching, and critically reflecting on their own teaching experiences. In this educational context, the authors had decided to encourage their mentees to engage in action research, and provide an account here of how they achieved this goal. The first author, Hatime, conducted an initial focus group discussion with the nine pre-service teachers participating, seeking to elicit their awareness of research methodology, and then, over several weeks, provided input and supported the teachers in planning, conducting, observing and reflecting on action research projects they developed in line with their interests. Participant diaries and further

focus group discussions suggested to Hatime and her colleagues that engaging in action research had facilitated their mentees in developing in various ways, in terms of knowledge and critical awareness.

In Chapter 6, *Hatice Çelebi* and *Nafıye Çiğdem Aktekin* reflect on supporting pre-service teachers in identity formation by encouraging those they were working with to engage in school-based research. First, their mentees, who were yet to gain teaching experience, met regularly as a group to discuss issues that interested them, such as language learning strategies. These pre-service teachers then developed a questionnaire together on this topic that they could use with students in the partner schools where they had been conducting observations. Afterwards, they produced a report with findings they could share with these partner schools. Reflective comments the pre-service teachers produced after this experience highlighted what they had learned from interacting with each other and the students, assuming teacherly roles and imagining themselves in the future as classroom teachers utilizing language learning strategies. They also identified ways in which they needed to continue to grow. The study illustrates, therefore, the value of using carefully and collaboratively-structured research engagement at an early stage to support identity formation in pre-service teachers.

From Chapter 7 onwards, the focus shifts to teacher-researchers providing their own accounts of their teacher-research. In Chapter 7, *Beyza Kabadayı*, a mentee of Seden Eraldemir Tuyan (Chapter 3), reports on a study focused on raising students' awareness in reading written instructions. After contextualizing the issue clearly, Beyza reflects on her practices while engaging with the literature, and then presents her research focus. Accounts of four awareness-raising activities introduced over a seven-week period are then provided, with the students' reactions to them, in the form of qualitative comments, included. Beyza concludes by highlighting what she has learned from the research and what she will do in the future to further support students in

developing greater autonomy through being able to follow written instructions.

In Chapter 8, *Hüsni Gümüş* and *Demet Yaylı* demonstrate a similar concern with life skills required beyond the classroom. Focused on how learners might acquire vocabulary in authentic and semi-authentic ways related to their technological interests, they describe an intervention designed to activate and reinforce vocabulary knowledge through the use of videos; these videos were teacher-constructed and thus not entirely ‘authentic’, but nevertheless served to bring the outside world into the classroom and seemed to motivate students, though some would have preferred more formal instruction. From listening to their students’ comments (elicited through reflective writing and semi-structured interviews), Hüsni and Demet gain insights they report will shape their practices.

In Chapter 9, the geographical context switches from Turkey to India, this reflecting an international presence at the 2016 conference in Istanbul that is relatively under-represented in this volume. *Sadeqa Ghazal* and *Smriti Singh* present the findings of an action research study that focused on developing learner autonomy and supporting speaking skills. Sadeqa and Smriti began their research with an exploratory phase, during which they used different methods (observations, interviews and a survey) to gain a deeper understanding of the learners’ context. This provided insights into why students were remaining silent in class: shyness, fear of making errors, worries about being ridiculed. They then implemented their nine-month action research study in three overlapping phases: establishing a supportive culture, introducing class discussions, and then, as the students gained in confidence, debates. Their key finding was that, as the students became more self-confident, their participation in speaking activities increased. Engaging in the research itself also benefited Sadeqa and Smriti, as they grew into their teacher-researcher roles; they developed greater empathy for their students, and learned to scaffold their learners’ efforts more patiently but also persistently. They see a fu-

ture in becoming research-mentors mentoring teachers to make the transitions they themselves have made.

In Chapter 10, *Seden Eraldemir Tuyan* (who of course has already successfully made that transition from teacher-researcher to research-mentor – Chapter 3) and *Esra Altunkol* report on exploratory action research focused on improving learners' psychological well-being; they wanted to learn how to make their students happier, and more optimistic, open-minded and able to engage in their studies. Accordingly, they collected and analyzed questionnaire data on happiness and then introduced activities in the classroom, which were specifically designed to help their students feel happier. Findings suggested that attending to learners' needs for happiness supported beneficial outcomes, such as greater enthusiasm, which might lead to deeper learning, particularly if the happiness is sustained. Seden and Esra conclude by offering the hope that through sharing their research on this too often neglected topic it might inspire others.

Chapters 11 and 12, both produced by mentees of Seden Eraldemir Tuyan from Çukurova University (Chapters 3 and 10, above), relate to helping learners develop listening skills. In Chapter 11, *Neslihan Gündoğdu* and *Cemile Buğra* report on their efforts to encourage learners to listen more carefully to their peers. They outline the activities they introduced in their classes to support this goal, such as group storytelling, reflect on using them, and present students' reactions, as recorded in their learning logs. Five key themes emerged in their analysis, including greater engagement and enjoyment, a willingness to embrace other perspectives, and psychological benefits such as motivation and excitement. The awareness-raising of how to listen more effectively to peers thus seems to have been beneficial. In their conclusions, Neslihan and Cemile highlight how engaging in the research process has aided their own professional development too.

Addressing what she perceives as limited engagement in listening activities, in Chapter 12 *Merve Sofu* reports on use of a cooperative learning method designed to encourage more positive

attitudes towards activities that practise this skill; to implement it, she first redesigned a number of coursebook listening materials, so that there was heightened interaction between learners, and then used the redesigned materials in class. Findings based on her interview data suggest the main impact of the intervention from students' perspectives was on motivation. Students reported feeling more confident, active, relaxed and willing to participate with the adapted materials. Then, after sharing this experience, Merve reflects on the benefits she herself has gained from engaging in the research. She highlights that as a teacher she feels more patient, energetic, and brave, and she acknowledges the supportive atmosphere and mentoring within the university environment for encouraging the beneficial changes she has noted in herself.

Further research

A relatively unique characteristic of this book is the way fully half of the chapters describe and reflect on research-*mentoring* experiences (whether of in-service or pre-service teachers), rather than being accounts of research by teachers themselves. This is one sign of maturity of development – the increased interest in mentoring revealed here has arisen as the idea of teacher-research has spread, and both the prevalence of such mentoring and the way lessons can be learned from accounts like these bodes well for the continuing vitality and sustainability of the ELT teacher-research movement. Networks and communities of practice have begun to be built up, in Turkey and internationally, which are supportive of the further development of teacher-research, and we find some of the authors in this book reporting on a second or even third year of continuing work. This may be seen as a good vantage point, then, for us to look back over achievements to date, consider issues connected with sustainability in some more depth, and identify some directions which might inform future work.

First we will consider a few areas of academic research whose findings might help persuade authorities or agencies to engage and free up teachers for teacher-research projects of their own.

Then we move on to focus on the area of further *practical* initiatives.

One of the most striking aspects of the accounts in each chapter of the present book is that teacher-research, although typically carried out by the teacher, is ultimately dedicated to the well-being of students and to the betterment of teachers' interactions with their students. All the researchers, whether mentors of other teachers or classroom teachers themselves, place the improvement of students' learning at the heart of their research, and show that there were some kinds of change in learning for those involved. However, a major challenge to the concept of teacher-research might be the question: How does it result in improved student outcomes? This question is very likely to be posed by policy makers, funders or school managers who may in principle be supportive of teacher-research, but dubious about its benefits in contrast to other, more easily and cheaply organised, forms of professional development, such as courses and workshops centrally delivered by 'experts'. At present, the field of ELT lacks a body of research that can point cogently and persuasively to the direct impact of teacher-research on student outcomes. Studies of this kind would need to go beyond just simplistic measures from score and test results to demonstrate also the qualitative improvements that teacher-research can make to teaching and learning, through, for example, greater learner and teacher motivation, autonomy, and engagement in learning. They also need to be longitudinal to show development and improvement over time.

Another theme running through all the accounts is the notion of collaboration, giving rise to questions about how it might further be developed. The term 'collaboration', whether it be collaboration between mentor and mentee, teachers working together or teachers working with students, permeates the chapters. However, collaboration is not a natural state for most teachers since classrooms are usually set up as isolated units, and there may be few opportunities offered for teacher interaction. There are

still relatively few studies examining research collaboration, and what social, cultural cognitive, emotional, and discursive factors must exist to enable teacher-researcher collaboration to thrive. It would be very valuable to see more studies investigating these dimensions of teacher-research, and in particular identifying what characterises, facilitates or impedes collaboration. Such studies could provide valuable guidelines for academics and teacher educators wishing to increase their involvement in teacher-research, and also for school principals wanting to integrate research into school development, or for teachers aiming to work together on various projects and research initiatives.

While several references are made in the chapters to the idea that teacher-research enables teachers and students to grow and develop, a major challenge for teacher-research is to show how this development can be sustained over time. Some critics might argue that action research, for example, is not sustainable, as teachers may not possess well-developed skills as researchers, are not generally supported to do research and are likely to have heavy teaching demands that mitigate against doing research. However, as Edwards and Burns (2016a) have pointed out, understanding more about what longer term effects on professional growth are facilitated by teacher-research is not only crucial, but in short supply. They also note that it is not just continuing to 'do' research that is at issue, but more that teachers are equipped through teacher-research to be able to continue to reflect on, critique and transform their teaching. They provide evidence that an inquiry-based mindset enabled the teachers they worked with in Australia to continue to develop personally as professionals. There are still very few studies on what creates sustainability of teacher-research over time, however, and this is an area where retrospective and longitudinal approaches using both qualitative and quantitative data could make a significant contribution.

The concept of sustainability leads us to consider also the important factor of institutional support and recognition. In the Turkish context, where the majority of the studies in this book

have taken place, institutional support seems largely to have been made available to teachers via various kinds of mentoring arrangement. However, studies documenting the effects of the broader environment on language teacher-research are still limited in number (though see Edwards and Burns 2016b for an example). More studies that help to demonstrate the crucial role of school managers and mentors in supporting classroom investigation, so that it can enhance teacher quality and pedagogical capacity and contribute to more positive learning outcomes, may be needed if school leaders are to be persuaded about the benefits of promoting teacher-research in their institutions.

Further practice

Of course, practical experience, suitably shared, can also offer insights which serve the sustainable development of teacher-research, just as much as research *about* it can. As we noted in our initial paragraph, the promotion of teacher-research in Turkey and by the IATEFL ReSIG more internationally – both of which commenced around six years ago – were independent of one another in their first period, but these initiatives have matured and become intertwined in a more recent second phase.

The two phases can be characterized as follows:

Pioneering period (2011–2014): This first phase of activity saw ReSIG organising one-day workshops in the UK on both Action Research (by Anne Burns) and Exploratory Practice (by Dick Allwright and others). Dedicated spaces for sharing of teacher-research were provided in the SIG's regular publication, *ELT Research*, and on its website (<http://resig.weebly.com>), and an innovative one-day event was held in Harrogate, UK, in April 2014, called 'Teachers Research!'. This was billed as 'a special, participant-centred day dedicated to research by teachers for teachers'. As explained in the book associated with this event (Bullock and Smith 2015), 'the emphasis on "for teachers" in this slogan was intended to push back an increasingly dominant idea that aca-

demic quality criteria should necessarily be applied to teacher-research' (p. 3).

Meanwhile, Kenan Dikilitaş had begun to organize annual conferences showcasing teacher-research work carried out by teachers in an English preparatory programme in a private university in Izmir, Turkey (see Dikilitaş 2012; 2013; 2014; also, for more on this history, Wyatt 2016). These showed that in such a context voluntary teacher-research could be productively conducted and developed as an alternative to more prevalent, relatively top-down, workshop and short course-dominated professional development schemes. The conferences began to be advertised to teachers and professional development coordinators from other institutions, and the 2014 conference in Izmir was, for the first time, officially supported by ReSIG, broadening its reach still further.

Maturation period (2014–2017): In 2014–15, work was carried out to bring to publication two ReSIG books and associated video material arising from the 2014 events – *Teachers Research!* (Bullock and Smith 2015) and *Teacher Researchers in Action* (Dikilitaş, Smith, and Trotman 2015). Following on from this, the 'Teachers Research!' conference in Izmir in 2015 was a fully-fledged ReSIG conference, organized along similar participant-centred lines to the previous year's event in the UK, with a similar focus on short poster presentations, interactivity, and placing teachers at centre stage rather than there being a top-down expert-centred focus. The year 2014–15 had been remarkable, also, for the way groups in various English language preparatory programmes at universities across Turkey became engaged in teacher-research, with a large number of different groups reporting back at the 'Teachers Research! Izmir 2015' conference (see Dikilitaş, Wyatt, Hanks and Bullock 2016). Several of these groups carried on with their work and gave presentations at the following year's conference in Istanbul, consolidating the focus on devolved mentoring which had been such a highlight the previous year (cf. Dikilitaş and Wyatt 2017; Eraldemir Tuyan, this volume).

In the meantime, two further ReSIG-supported activities have signalled a recent expansion and – in these cases – internationalization of activity: a free online ‘course’ in teacher-research mentored by several ReSIG members in 2016 and 2017 (TESOL EVO 2016; 2017), and a ‘Teachers Research!’ conference organized by Paula Rebolledo and Richard Smith in Chile in 2016 (repeated in 2017 in Buenos Aires).

This has, then, been a period of sustained achievement by teacher-researchers in Turkey and by ReSIG more internationally, contributing to greater visibility for teacher-research generally. Related research studies have also been conducted and published *about* engaging and mentoring teacher-research (see Dikilitaş and Mumford, 2016; Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016; Dikilitaş and Wyatt, 2017). Just as importantly, however, the cases presented in the video material and books emerging from conferences have served as an inspiration to teacher-researchers and research-mentors in other contexts who have themselves been unable to attend the conferences, including participants in a recent All-India Network of English Teachers (AINET) teacher-research mentoring scheme (<http://resig.weebly.com/india>).

The above initiatives have, then, provided a solid foundation on which to continue to build practical insights. We turn to some suggestions in this area in conclusion.

Firstly, further reflective reports of ‘mentor-research’ like some of those in the first half of this book might be considered worthy of particular encouragement, since, as has been shown in countries like Chile and India as well as Turkey, there may already be an increasing interest in engagement in practitioner research from teachers themselves, with the major issue being not a lack of willingness or of persuasive research but a continuing and urgent need for *practical* guidance and models for teachers and, in particular, mentors. Honest, reflective documentation of achievements and difficulties in implementing teacher-research – containing self-criticism of limitations as well as successes – will need to be deliberately encouraged in the face of prevailing

academic cultures which still tend to undervalue qualitative and practice-focused enquiry in general.

It has become clear, also, that – whereas teacher-research mentoring initiatives have tended in the past to be confined to small groups of teachers in language school or tertiary settings – there have been some notable positive experiences recently with larger-scale initiatives involving secondary or primary teachers in relatively difficult circumstances (cf. Smith, Connelly and Rebolledo 2014; Pinter, Mathew and Smith 2016; TESOL EVO 2017). Further reports of practice in such situations are likely to provide important pointers for others in similar situations elsewhere. However, with the concentration of the conferences to date in Turkey, it has proved to be difficult to incorporate insights from developing countries – or, indeed, from many places outside Turkey at all – to anything like the extent that such insights *have* been shared in recent online experiences supported by ReSIG (e.g. TESOL EVO 2016; 2017; and various online discussions moderated by Mark Wyatt). The chapter in this book by Sadeqa Ghazal and Smriti Singh, on Indian experience, is the exception that proves the rule in this regard.

This might indicate that, for enhancement of possibilities of cross-fertilization for teacher-research worldwide, the future lies with online or, at least, blended and interconnected conferences – and with associated forms of sharing which go beyond conventional research report writing (cf. Smith, Bullock, Rebolledo and Robles López, 2016). While it will be important to continue to nurture and assure sustainability for the achievements already gained, notably those in Turkish university English language preparatory programmes, it seems both plausible and desirable to assume that we are entering a new phase of activity for the benefit of other contexts in which principles of wider accessibility may be key (see, for example, Burns and Kurtoğlu-Hooton, 2016). There is a difficult and delicate balance to aim for between maintenance of existing achievements and expansion for the benefit of hitherto under-considered situations, but the practitioner research

movement in ELT / TESOL seems bound to be heading, from now on, in more international, less elitist directions. For new insights to be developed which are appropriate to this challenge, ReSIG will need to build both on and beyond past achievements and engage in practical innovations which are supportive of even wider teacher-research engagement.

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1 *Insights into the process of mentoring action research by teachers of young learners*

Yasemin Kırkgöz

Mentoring is often described as an interpersonal relationship that comprises a series of purposeful, social interactions (Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt & Crosby, 2007). This chapter describes my experience of being a research mentor to practising primary school teachers of English within a collaborative action research (CAR) teacher development project. I will illustrate this experience with descriptions of lessons, interview data from the teachers, and reflections on the roles I adopted.

Mentoring background

Working as a teacher educator in the pre-service teacher education department of a state university in Turkey, I have been supervising teacher candidates during their school practicum, providing pedagogical advice and guidance for developing the mentees' practices. During the last two years, additionally, I have also been leading a CAR teacher development project with in-service teachers of English in primary education. The aim of the project was to enhance teachers' professional development. Under my supervision, teachers identified a problem that they wished to explore or a new idea that they wanted to implement, designed an action plan, implemented it with their grade two classes and reflected on their action (see Kırkgöz 2016 for further details).

The mentoring process

I collaborated with five teachers of English in grade two primary education. Teachers were working in three different schools. One

teacher was the only grade two teacher in her school but the remaining four teachers were working in two different primary schools. The rationale for having two teachers from the same school, where possible, was to encourage collaborative learning.

The mentoring process started with holding a meeting with the participating teachers to establish a partnership in the project. I held the first meeting in the meeting room of a cultural center, which had a friendly ambiance and easy access for all the teachers. I chose this place to make the teachers feel comfortable and to initiate them into this collaborative partnership. I made it clear that my role as the mentor was to facilitate teacher-researchers' implementation of action research (AR) in their classes and to serve as a co-researcher by sharing my research expertise with them. I also encouraged the teachers to assume the dual role of teacher and researcher. In the next meeting, I introduced the teachers to the principles of AR. Over the following six months, the teachers, under my mentorship, completed four cycles of AR.

Here, I describe the first AR cycle of two teachers, one male and one female, teaching English in the same primary school. Both teachers had 18 years teaching experience. In the course of my description I illustrate how I mentored the teachers during the successive stages in the AR cycle.

As the first step of my mentoring, I interviewed the teachers in the staff room in their school to find out whether they had encountered any specific problems and/or if there was any aspect of teaching they wished to improve in their grade two classes. The interview was held in Turkish. The problem both teachers reported experiencing was related to *students' forgetting what they learn quickly*, as the teachers wrote to me in an email after the meeting:

Children in our grade two classes are young; they are six years old. They receive only two hours of English lessons weekly. They do not revise subjects at home. Due to these reasons, they quickly forget what they learn. They come back to lessons the following week having forgotten what they have learned the previous week. So, the problem we want to explore is: Why does not learning become permanent? How

can we solve this problem?" (I have translated this and all quotations below from the original Turkish).

To determine the reasons underlying this problem, I asked the teachers to describe their existing teaching practice and the materials they used in their lessons. I found out that both teachers relied exclusively on the textbooks assigned by the Ministry of National Education, and they rarely used real objects in their lessons.

As mentor, I conducted some library research and also guided the teachers to engage in some reading with a view to resolving this particular issue. A review of the literature on the related topic showed that association techniques can be exploited to enhance young learners' memory, whereby, for example, real objects or images can be used to enable learners to link certain concepts with those objects and images (Oxford & Crookall, 1990). The teachers and I therefore agreed that they would start using real objects or images to enable young learners to make an association, thus enhancing their memory.

In the *planning* stage of the AR, I suggested to the teachers a list of activities from which they could make a selection and prepare a lesson plan. During the *action* stage, both teachers put the same lesson plan into action, described below on the basis of my observation notes:

Before the lesson, the teachers put up the colourful balloons and a poster of a rainbow on the board. As using such real objects as balloons and a colourful poster was a new experience for the teachers, I assisted them in preparing these materials to teach colours, revise *numbers* and *how many*, which were the topic of the lesson.

After completing the preparation stage, the teachers individually applied the planned activities in their grade two classes. The female teacher, for example, first introduced the colours to the students, as seen in Picture 1 below. She, then, had the students repeat colours after her.



Picture 1. Display of balloons and a rainbow poster on the board

Later, she called one student to the board and asked him to touch the balloon she pointed to and say its colour in English. She repeated this with other students. This took one lesson period, 40 minutes.

In the next lesson, she continued with a *playing with balloons* activity. This activity involved the teacher throwing a balloon to students, one at a time, and asking its colour. The student who got the balloon threw it to another student and asked “*what colour is it?*”. S/he said the colour and the game continued. The lesson continued with a “*colouring balloons*” activity. The teacher put up the following picture on the board and asked a student to come to the board and colour a balloon. For example, she asked one of the students to paint a balloon red. This continued with colouring the remaining balloons with other students.

The lesson continued with revising numbers. The teacher put more balloons of the same colour on her desk and wanted students to count the balloons. “Let’s count blue balloons...One, Two, Three...” She also asked “How many red balloons are there in the classroom?” Having completed the activities with the balloons, she used another real object, the rainbow poster on the board, as seen in Picture 1, and elicited the colours.



Picture 2. Colouring the balloons activity

The next stage in AR involved *observing* the effectiveness of the ‘action’. The following week, the teachers and I therefore agreed that they would use similar activities and real objects to those they used in the previous week to check whether or not students could remember colours and numbers. The teachers also agreed to ask the children for their perceptions of the use of real objects.

I collaborated with the teachers in helping them evaluate their practice, sharing my notes and photographs of the lessons with the teachers in the course of post-lesson interviews with them. The female teacher (FTeacher) evaluated her practice in her reflective writing after completing this AR cycle as follows:

There are 28 students in my class. When I asked students to pick up a balloon and say its colour, to my surprise, almost all students recognized colours. I observed that using objects had a real effect on students’ recalling the words in later lessons.

The male teacher (MTeacher) expressed a similar view in his own reflective writing:

My students never wanted the lesson to end. They enjoyed it a lot.. I observed that when topics are supported with real visuals, remembering becomes more effective.

The female teacher, in her reflective writing, stated that when she asked her students' perspectives on her using real objects, they also expressed positive responses, for example:

Wonderful, very good. We learned very well.

We both learned and got entertained at the same time.

This is confirmed by the male teacher, who expressed in his reflective writing that:

When I asked students' opinion about using real objects, they all stated that they enjoyed it and insisted that I should continue using them in my lessons. Lessons became more productive.

Both teachers agreed that students' use of words like 'wonderful' and 'entertaining' made them feel very satisfied. They felt that our initial plan to use real objects had been very effective in improving students' memory. As evidenced from the interviews and student reports, using real objects, images and related activities appeared to have been effective in enabling young learners to remember, both immediately and for later recall. My observations as the mentor also confirmed this.

Developing as researchers and as a research mentor

In the post-lesson interview I held with the teachers at the end of the first AR, teacher-researchers' reflections indicated that the AR experience had increased their awareness of how using real objects could help overcome students' forgetfulness, and this inevitably improved their teaching.

This is illustrated by the teachers' transcribed oral reflections below:

After I used colourful balloons and a poster of a rainbow as authentic material in teaching colours and numbers, the pupils' attention doubled and the lesson became more enjoyable. These activities drew the students' attention. When I checked their knowledge of colours and numbers the following lesson, I observed that 26 out of 28 students in my class were able to remember the colours correctly and the remaining two students made a mistake with only a couple of colours. (FTeacher)

Confirming this, the male teacher reported:

Colourful balloons and the poster attracted the students' attention. I observed that the students were able to recognize the colours correctly and more and more students participated in the lessons.

My overall reflections about the impact of the AR process on these two teachers are consistent with their own comments. Observing the effect of real objects on enhancing young learner memory, both teachers developed confidence and enthusiasm for using various objects such as toy animals, masks, fruits, and drama in successive AR cycles rather than using the textbook as the sole teaching material.

Teachers' written reflections on the impact of their AR engagement at the end of the 4-cycle process indicated that their involvement in this project had been a very good opportunity for professional development. The male teacher explained this as:

Teaching through real objects has been a major change I experienced in my profession.

The female teacher:

While helping my students, I improved myself as a teacher. I feel happy that teaching a foreign language using real objects provides a permanent effect on remembering.

Teachers acknowledged the value of mentoring, highlighting the benefits of the support I provided, and reported that "with the help of guidance and research, my self-confidence improved in using real materials" (FTeacher). For the male teacher the mentoring was also highly appreciated: "The guidance I received helped me understand how to teach young learners effectively. I am happy that my students perform the activities with great joy".

As the mentor, I also developed through my experience in supporting the teacher-researchers in many ways.

First, I came to realize that mentoring is a multifaceted process. I agree with Ambrosetti & Dekkers (2010), who state that a mentor needs to nurture, advise, guide, encourage and facilitate real learning experiences and developmental growth of teachers. I assumed both professional and personal responsibilities. In the professional dimension, I was an 'organizer' of the AR process, including location and dates of the meetings and school visits. As an 'observer', I monitored the research process, observing the teachers' implementation of the action. I was an 'evaluator' of the teachers' practice by providing constructive comments and encouraging self-reflection. As a 'supporter', I guided teachers to identify issues, assisted with lesson-planning and supported them to implement the actions.

I also evolved in my roles as a co-researcher and a facilitator. As a 'co-researcher', I shared my knowledge and expertise, suggested articles and websites, and encouraged teachers to take ownership in bringing about change and improvement in their teaching practices. Using real objects was my suggestion, which teachers took up and applied in their lessons. Hence, I facilitated teachers' professional growth.

On the personal dimension, I tried to be an effective communicator with the teacher-researchers (Ihmeideh, Al-Basheer, & Qablan, 2008). I communicated regularly through phone conversations, emails and meetings, discussing issues raised and clarifying uncertainties. The teachers were new to the idea of AR, so I was sensitive to teachers' feelings and provided them with non-judgemental support. I learned that the mentoring relationship is crucial for the effectiveness of a collaborative partnership. Hence, establishing a supportive relationship and a climate for open communication with the teacher-researchers was an important aspect of this process.

Looking to the future

I have illustrated how my mentoring two teacher-researchers supported them in enhancing young learners' memory for new lexis. Being a mentor for teacher-researchers has been a rewarding experience for me, but in my future research mentoring practice I would potentially make one main change. Although initially I defined my responsibilities as the mentor and explained my expectations of the teachers, I realized that the teachers were depending too much on me in planning their actions. So, in future, I would sustain guidance and support in a collaborative manner, yet give teacher-researchers an opportunity to take more responsibility from the beginning for their professional development.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the contribution of TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) for funding this research under the Project number 114K036, and express my gratitude to the two participating teachers, who did not wish their names to be acknowledged.

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2 *Mentoring teachers as researchers: Implementing a small schoolwide programme*

Beril Yücel and Melis Akdoğan Gündoğdu

Introduction

TOBB University of Economics & Technology (TOBB ETU) is a private non-profit foundation university in Ankara and it was founded in 2003. The Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) is the preparatory school of the university. Unlike in other universities, there are three semesters, each of which consists of 13 weeks. Although TOBB ETU is a Turkish medium university, one of the aims of the DFL is to help the students of this university learn English to as high a standard as those in English medium universities. Students are placed in 3 levels – A, B and C (with C being the highest) – and the proficiency exam for English is the TOEFL ITP. C level students with a score above 65 are given a chance to take the TOEFL test. If they score 500 or more in this exam, they are not required to study in the preparatory class anymore and they can start their departmental courses.

In the DFL, there had not been a consistent professional development system or Professional Development Unit (PDU) until 2015. Workshops, peer observations, and conferences had been held; however, they were not regular and there was a perceived need for a more systematic professional development programme. Besides this, as almost 80% of the academic staff in the DFL have a MA or PhD, it had proved difficult to decide on an appropriate kind of development programme to implement. In 2015, Beril Yücel started to work at TOBB ETU DFL and she set up a new PDU. Based on classroom observations of all the academic staff she identified their needs, and on this basis and with due regard to the background of the staff, a new CPPD (Con-

tinuing Personal Professional Development) programme was designed. It started to be implemented in the 2015–2016 academic year. Melis Akdoğan Gündoğdu started to work in the PDU in 2016, joining Beril Yücel in implementing the new project.

As part of this programme, instructors were asked to set a classroom related target for something they wanted to improve in their teaching. Then, they were given the choice of five collaborative CPPD activities, namely Team Teaching, Video Coaching, Special Interest Group Project, Article Club and Action Research Project, and they were asked to choose one of these to participate in. Action Research was therefore an important component of this programme but most of the instructors were not familiar with it, even though some had already experienced the steps of academic research. Others had never attempted any kind of research at all and this would be the first experience for them. As it turned out, six instructors, whose experience levels ranged from 1.5 to 10 year, chose to take part in the collaborative Action Research project (see Table 1).

Table 1: Names and areas of research in the Action Research Project Group

Participant names	Focus of research
Ceren Karaca Ceren Korkmaz	The Practice of Free Writing vs Guided Writing
Hüsna Yalçın Şebnem Güzelbayram	The Effect of Implementing Different Learning Techniques on Comprehension and Attitude Towards Reading
Kübranur Toplar Nurhan Tütüncü	Increasing Motivation in Repeat Students

This paper aims to describe how this project was carried out, what the participants gained from this experience and to share some of the reflections of the mentors about what they learnt and observed in terms of both benefits and challenges. It also focuses on what potential changes will be made to the future research

mentoring practice and how the sustainability of the project can be ensured.

Mentoring background

As noted above, the Action Research Project conducted as part of the professional development programme was run by two mentors, who were also the members of the PDU in the institution. The Unit Coordinator Beril Yücel and fellow PDU member Melis Akdoğan Gündoğdu worked together in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the project.

Beril had previous experience in running such projects, while Melis was quite new to the idea. Beril had herself been involved in a small scale collaborative AR project when she was an instructor at Bilkent University in 1995. She also took part as one of the lead mentors in a schoolwide collaborative Action Research Project conducted at Başkent University in 2001. The focus of this was to provide opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively on an area of concern they identified in their classroom practice. In 2002, when she became the president of İNGED (ELEA-English Language Education Association-Turkey), she ran another AR project with English teachers from different parts of Turkey in collaboration with the other members of the İNGED Board and the British Council. All these projects helped her become an experienced mentor and enabled her to use the skills she had gained in different other projects.

Melis worked in collaboration with Beril and helped her with all the preparations of the project. She also had the chance to observe and shadow Beril to develop herself more in the area of AR and with regard to the implementation of projects. She also developed her own AR project plan with the rest of the group.

Both mentors took part in the TESOL CALL-IS Classroom-based Research Electronic Village Online 2016 online experience (TESOL, 2016) to develop themselves more in the area and refresh their knowledge about AR. This EVO Project aimed

to help teachers with hands-on, research-based teacher development. It offered a number of sessions run by different teacher educators on different stages or forms of teacher research for teacher development. Sessions focused on commencing teacher research, developing a plan, sustaining research and developing research autonomy. By attending these sessions themselves and by encouraging the other six instructors to take part in this online programme, the mentors tried to be role models to them.

The mentoring process

The new CPPD system started in the 2015–2016 academic year. As the academic year at TOBB University of Economics & Technology consists of three semesters, each semester was allocated to a different aspect of the programme: the fall semester to target setting, the spring semester to collaborative CPPD activities and the summer semester to individual CPPD Activities. In the fall term, instructors were asked to set a target for themselves focusing on one of the areas they wanted to improve in their teaching. The instructors were provided with feedback by the mentors, so they had a chance to revise and finalise their targets. In the second term of the academic year, the five CPPD activities mentioned above were introduced to the instructors in a general meeting. The goals, the procedures and the outcomes of the activities were shared and the instructors were asked to choose one of the activities in relation to the targets they had set before.

As stated above, six instructors were interested in the Action Research Project. Regular individual meetings and a total of three group meetings were held with these instructors to provide enough guidance for them during this process. Before the first group meeting, these six instructors generated some questions and identified their classroom-related problem by reviewing their current practice. In order to do this, they were given some tasks to think about or brainstorm what kind of challenges they had

to deal with in class, whether there were any activities or tasks that did not go as well as they had expected/planned, what topics they were interested in teaching and learning and what their students' needs were. They also had the chance to reflect on these points while they were setting their targets at the beginning of the programme. At the end of this target setting process, they got feedback from us.

Our first role as mentors was to introduce Action Research with its rationale, steps, and examples. In the first meeting participants were informed about how the AR Project would be conducted and the stages of planning, action, observation and reflection, according to the AR model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The fact that participants came with questions regarding their classroom practice meant that they were able to formulate research questions relatively easily, working in pairs. Another role of the mentors was to provide the instructors with relevant sources of reading. Between the first and the second group meetings, the instructors were provided with some sources about AR by the mentors and they were asked to plan their research schedule. They made a weekly plan showing when they were planning to collect their data, the tools they were planning to use and how they would analyse the data. During this period, individual meetings were held with pairs and some feedback was given to them about their plan. Taking account of the feedback, they finalised their plans and prepared their research tools.

In the second meeting, the instructors were ready with their AR plan and the tools they were planning to use. They shared these with other pairs and received peer feedback. Between the second and the third meetings, they took steps to collect their data. This process did not take the same amount of time for each of the pairs, so the mentors went on with individual meetings with the pairs in order to follow their progress. These individual meetings were beneficial as the pairs carried out their projects at their own pace. The pairs collected their data and started to analyse it. From time to time, they were guided by the mentors with

the help of sources presented in the Classroom-Based Research EVO 2016 online sessions.

In the third and last group meeting, the projects were almost completed and most of the time was allocated for reflection. The mentors had prepared some questions regarding the AR process and got feedback from the instructors about the process.

The main role of the mentors had been to guide the instructors and follow their process throughout the semester. As most of the instructors were new to the AR idea, they did need support at different points from the mentors, especially while planning their research and deciding on the data collection tools. Another useful aspect was encouragement. Participants felt disappointed from time to time because they thought they had not got the response from students they had expected at the end, or they thought they had not accomplished their goals. In this respect, it was really important that Melis was also developing an AR plan herself together with the rest of the group during the process. It was a clear message to say that learning and teaching go hand in hand.

Developing as researchers and research mentors

The last meeting was allocated to oral feedback on the process and the instructors reflected on what they had gained. This meeting was video-recorded. After the meeting, mentors watched the video, transcribed it and analysed the feedback instructors gave. Besides this feedback session, individual interviews were conducted with the instructors. The interviews helped us get further feedback about the instructors' ideas. Both the oral feedback from the meeting and the interviews showed that the instructors were all positive about their AR project experiences although some steps had been quite challenging for them.

Primarily, the instructors focused on the steps of their AR projects and stated that this experience had been beneficial as it made them become familiar with classroom research. One of the instructors said, "I developed myself in doing research." Another

instructor said that the process had helped her design a teacher research study. The other instructors also commented on the fact that it was satisfying to carry out research in their classes and collect data from their own students. As Atay (2008) highlights “the research process, especially collecting their own data, seemed to have positive effects on teachers’ perspectives towards research”.

Secondly, instructors felt more connected with their students (cf. Edwards and Burns, 2016) by means of this AR project, as it had impact on students’ learning and it was a meaningful, realistic practice. Working with the students in this project was the most enjoyable part for one of the instructors. However, it was not very easy in every class. Another instructor stated “the most difficult part of the project was to encourage my students.” Although there were some differences in the attitudes of the students, all the instructors accepted that the research process made it easier to have a connection with the students. One instructor mentioned that there was collaboration in her class during the semester because of this research experience. She said “The students helped me a lot and they were really happy to be a part of this experience.”

Thirdly, there was beneficial collaboration between the instructors and the mentors, which provided collegiality and a sense of trust. There was continuous exchange of ideas and experiences and this increased awareness and reflectivity. One of the instructors stated that the mentors “didn’t force us to do things. They were really helpful and they guided the group well.” All the instructors said effective leadership and smooth running of this project led to many positive personal and professional gains.

Finally, and most importantly, instructors felt empowered at the end of this project as their work was recognised by the institution. These instructors had the chance to present the results of their projects both at an in-house professional development event held in June 2016 and at the IATEFL Research SIG ‘Teachers Research! İstanbul 2016’ Conference at Bahçeşehir University. As Wyatt (2011) points out, teachers find this kind of experience rewarding and highly motivating. Sharing their project with other

professionals definitely helped the instructors gain self-assurance and a developed sense of professional identity.

As for the mentors, they were also satisfied with the process and it brought a wealth of experience to them. For the experienced mentor, Beril, it was an opportunity to share her previously gained experience with instructors who were new to the idea of AR. She had the fulfilling opportunity to lead a young group of instructors to do AR again after a long period of time.

It was a very beneficial experience for Melis as well since it provided her with the opportunity to reflect deeply about how to lead an AR project and how to guide instructors during the process. She also observed some points that can be problematic such as how to help the instructors identify their focus of research or find the most suitable ways of collecting data. In addition to mentoring other instructors, she had the chance to work and reflect on her own Action Research plan. By doing so, she set a good example to other instructors.

Looking to the future

Despite the many above-mentioned advantages, obviously there are certain things to reconsider with regard to implementing such projects in the institution like ours. One of the challenges in the AR project at TOBB ETU DFL was to make the instructors see the difference between a more large-scale, academic type of research and Action Research since they were all pursuing MA and PhD studies in parallel. Some of the instructors had some difficulties during data collection and analysis as they were a little bit confused about what techniques to use. Two of the instructors who were working on “increasing student motivation in repeat groups”, for example, wanted to do a detailed statistical analysis and compare students’ test scores with those of other students at the same level in other classes. This, in fact, meant changing the aim of the research to a great extent. In this case, more guidance was needed and they were reminded to focus more on their own

observations and students' reflections. Based on this experience, in the future more regular individual and group meetings should be organised for the instructors to explain what is exactly expected in Action Research.

Sustainability is another important factor to consider in our project. Since we received positive feedback from the instructors and thought that AR is quite a suitable CPD activity for our profile, we would like to go on organising AR projects as part of our programme. Therefore, forming new AR groups and creating a mentoring system among the instructors might be another plan for the future. We believe this would be a good idea to provide sustainability and have long-term effects on instructors' teaching skills. As Edwards and Burns (2016) suggest, "a balance of top-down institutional support and individual teacher motivation is essential in ensuring sustainability of the impact over time." In future AR projects, this definitely needs to be kept in mind. As another future plan, these six instructors are planning to write their reports and send them for consideration to the IATEFL Research SIG's *ELT Research* publication or other journals as they believe that publishing is another useful way of sharing their research with other colleagues from different institutions. Some of these instructors are planning to continue with academic studies and/or careers and they think that their work will be recognised, which will be another source of empowerment for them.

Conclusion

This project conducted at TOBB ETU Department of Foreign Languages provides evidence that involving instructors in Action Research can be very advantageous. Our advice for those who would like to implement schoolwide Action Research projects would be to have clear aims, engage in careful and meticulous planning, develop mutual trust and respect, attempt to ensure a balance of inner motivation and top-down institutional support, and be willing to take risks and provide effective leadership

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3

What I've learned as an action research mentor: Some highlights

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan

Background

This is a study of my learning experience as an action research mentor over the last two years. For twelve years in total, I have been responsible for conducting professional development activities in the School of Foreign Languages (YADYO) Staff Development Unit (SDU) at Çukurova University, ten of them between 1998 and 2008, both as a member and as coordinator until, sadly, SDU was almost closed because of the need for extra teaching staff and unavoidable workload. So, unfortunately, between 2008 and 2014, while existing in name, all that could be done by SDU for in-service development purposes were some workshops and/or seminars given by guest speakers. In sum, during those six 'lost' years, despite not being officially assigned, both my mind and my heart longed for structured professional development activities that could help us keep growing continuously. So, at the time when my research mentoring story began, in 2014, I was still in that idealistic mood which consistently urged me to look for a magic touch of enthusiasm in my institution.

In that year (2014) I attended the 'Teacher-researchers in Action' Conference, which was supported by IATEFL Research SIG and hosted by a private university in Izmir (see Dikilitaş, Smith & Trotman 2015). There, I met Kenan Dikilitaş, the main organizer of the conference and the coordinator of an emerging nationwide initiative. The initiative, which Kenan had begun to develop at his own school as a teacher trainer in 2010, was mainly about engaging teachers in reflective practice

through doing action research. Thanks to his devoted efforts, the idea was spread, rising successfully from in-house, small conferences to annual international ones officially supported by the IATEFL Research SIG. At the 2014 Izmir conference, I had the opportunity to refresh my knowledge about doing action research and got highly inspired by Kenan's suggestion to become a part of the initiative with our own team of YADYO instructors, and to join the following year's conference and present our own research studies.

Feeling nurtured and fuelled by the special ambience and the embracing community of the conference, and, above all, by Kenan's encouragement, the challenge felt manageable. By the following year, at the 'Teachers Research! Izmir 2015' conference, we were a part of that unique community, with our own research team reporting on action research projects which I had mentored. I reported on that first year's overall experience in the book which came out of the conference (Eraldemir Tuyan, 2016), and several of the teachers also wrote up their studies (Balçı, 2016; Buğra, 2016; Kabadayı, 2016; Sucak, 2016). The project carried on into 2015–2016, and, as a consequence, I have now mentored two groups of teacher-researchers in these two years, and have developed as a research mentor myself through supporting their engagement in doing action research.

In this chapter I aim to share some of the insights I have gained from this two-year process, for the benefit of others who might be interested in mentoring teacher-research. While doing this, I will focus mainly on the perceptions of the teachers in the second year, using the feedback I gathered from an evaluation survey I gave out at the end of the year. I will also make use of the reflections I made in the second year regarding my self-questioning and insights gained, on the basis of notes in which I recorded my feelings, mentor roles, and the changes I was undergoing during the mentoring process.

The mentoring process

Organising mentoring

During the two years of my research mentoring experience, eighteen teacher-researchers overall have taken part in the action research program which I organised within SDU. In the first year, eight, and, in the second year, ten participant teachers developed action research projects based on an aspect of their classroom practice, either individually or collaborating with a colleague on a common puzzle that needed to be addressed. Their research topics are listed in Table 1 to provide insight into the kinds of concern they focused on.

Table 1: Teacher-research projects, 2014–2016

Teacher-researcher(s)	Research topics
2014–15	
Eda Kahyalar & Figen Yılmaz	Teachers' corrective feedback in writing classes
Berna Balcı	Using peer-assessment to enhance EFL learners' perceptions of speaking
Cemile Buğra	Using creative writing activities as a trigger for active participation
Beyza Kabadayı	Baby steps to autonomous learner
Esra Altunkol & Elçin Petek	Training EFL students on effective study habits – a trivial or a futile attempt?
Diser Ertekin	The role of personal goal setting in learning
2015–16	
Seden Eraldemir Tuyan & Esra Altunkol	The possible taste of students' happiness in EFL class recipes
Cemile Buğra & Neslihan Gündoğdu	On the way to become more effective listeners

Olga Kunt	Brainstorming techniques as a tool to develop the adult students' ideas into well-built paragraphs
Kamile Kandıralı	Using recasting & elicitation techniques to improve learners' speaking performances during speaking activities
Merve Sofu	Effectiveness of cooperative learning on students' attitudes towards listening
Beyza Kabadayı	Raising awareness on reading written instructions
Pınar Torun	Exploring the role of vocabulary portfolios in EFL Learners' vocabulary learning & retention
Diser Sucak	Using a course book for linguistics classes
Tolunay Ekiz	The effect of peripheral teaching on expressing the native culture in the target language

Throughout the two years, I kept field notes about the experiences I was going through, and at the end of the second year I asked teachers to respond to an evaluation questionnaire. Below, on the basis of this feedback as well as my reflective writing and insights gained from discussions with Kenan Dikilitaş and Mark Wyatt, who were themselves researching my ongoing experience (see Dikilitaş and Wyatt, 2017), I consider the roles I took up and the outcomes, before moving on to highlight some of the lessons learned.

The roles I took on in supporting the teachers

While Halai (1995) defines mentoring overall “as a nurturing process aimed at the personal and professional growth of the mentee” (cited in Halai 2006, p. 702), she also claims that “there appears to be a lack of consensus about what mentoring constitutes”. Ac-

cordingly, she suggests that the mentoring process can best be described in terms of the roles that mentors play (*ibid.*). In line with this, as well as with my own reflections and participants' feedback in my survey, I can see that I took on different roles during the mentoring process, which can be listed as follows:

- **Provider of psychological support**

As a teacher-research mentor, I was always there, caring, listening, empathising, encouraging and motivating participants as a supporter during their often emotionally-charged process (cf. Malderez & Bodóczyk). I tried to keep their motivational levels high by transmitting my own enthusiasm for what we were doing together and helping them feel the power of our community. Of course, there were times when I faced challenges. To give an example, despite my efforts in this area, two members of the 2016 group decided not to remain in the program, dropping out after four months of my mentoring. Their reasons were mainly related to heavy workload, difficulty and discontent in devoting time for structured implementation of their research in their classes, and family. Still, I didn't feel discouraged and tried my best to help the continuing teacher mentees rest assured that they could overcome any challenge they faced during their action research process. There were satisfactory outcomes to this, as noted by some teachers in their reflections (unchanged from the original English):

T6: *"In this study, the biggest motivation was you for me indeed. You are always there when I need help and this make me feel comfortable and confident."*

T2: *"You calmed us down when we thought there were lots to do and panicked."*

T9: *"I guess that being a research mentor is quite demanding because you need to take the control of all the process. However, you have managed it through your endless energy and effort. You have motivated and encouraged the participants."*

- **Subject-specialist (Halai, 2006)**

In the way I view my mentoring experience, my subject-spe-

cialist role as a mentor entailed that I was expected to have – and I really felt responsible for having – “a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject content”, as Halai (2006: 705) has suggested. Thus, I read a lot about my mentees’ research topics and had one-to-one meetings to help them narrow down their research topics, formulate their research questions, decide on their data collection tools and find appropriate ways to analyse their data. In this way, I was sharing practical knowledge (or pedagogical content knowledge), not only of language learning and teaching but also of how to conduct research as well as how to manage a research project. As one of the teacher-researchers reflected in the survey:

T6: “You were very active in shaping our research topics, even titles, narrowing down if necessary but not changing anything.”

I remember one of the teacher mentees experiencing difficulty in narrowing down her research topic and finding the right data collection tool that would serve the objectives of her research. She was about to give up after almost five weeks of hard work when we finally found a way to keep the research going and her discontent about the scope of the study started to grow into positive expectations. It makes me happy to know that her study will be published in this same book.

- **Expert-coach (Halai, 2006):**

While trying to build rapport among the teacher-researchers, I was also observing them and providing supportive feedback, eliciting, scaffolding, considering my knowledge of how and when to give advice, and serving as a model. When we could not meet monthly as a group due to our workload and teaching schedules, I arranged one-to-one meetings with them for advice and approval regarding the content and the conduct of studies. The following reflections relate to my intended role as an expert-coach, as perceived by the teacher-researchers:

T5: “Actually, I like the way you give corrective feedback because you do it without discouraging the participants. If you don’t like something related to work, you try to find a way to revise it together with

the participant. Another characteristics of yours that I appreciate is that you always create new ideas and show new ways to the participants.”

T4: “Yes, we see that you are a part of your study, your group, your class. You always include yourself into what you have done. You never give up and you are fully motivated. All these qualifications of yours show that we should follow your strategies as a group member.”

T6: “I really like you as a research mentor. Being friendly and helpful makes you a great mentor. With your guidance and assistance, we managed to do our research.”

- **Acculturator (Malderez & Bodóczyk, 1999):**

I was an acculturator in the sense that I tried to create a community of critical friends focused on research for CPD, creating a research culture within the school and linking it to wider ones. The following reflection by T8 shows how she perceives the dynamics of being among a community of critical friends who aim to further their professional knowledge.

T8: I think this group activates us as teachers. We are always trying to apply new things both in our classes and our teaching experiences. This group brings us together to share our ideas and thoughts about everything happened in this teaching experience.”

In the following reflection, T1 agrees with T8 while focusing more on the contribution of a critical friends’ group to refinement of one’s ideas by fostering concentration and creativity:

T1: “I think you were quite good in answering my questions. But I must also say that the members of the group also made a lot of contributions with their ideas. It was always good to discuss as a whole group. Also, I believe besides hearing other people’s ideas to others makes a person quite focused and creative. At least it works well for me. I feel that I come up with a lot of ideas when I am articulating my own ideas.

- **Sponsor (Malderez & Bodóczyk, 1999):**

I brought the participants to the Teachers Research! conferences, the first year to İzmir and the second year to İstanbul, where they met a wider community of people who shared simi-

lar interests; I also encouraged them to publish their reports that grew out of their action research presentations. The following quotation is from my mentor notes, revealing my contentment about how I enjoyed my sponsoring role while supporting the teacher-researchers' personal and professional growth at the 2016 conference:

"Words cannot tell how I feel... This is like harvesting the fruit after spending a lot of time and effort for its growth and ripening. They look very happy and keep thanking me for creating the opportunity to present their work at the conference. They seem to benefit from the feedback they have received from Richard Smith, Kenan Dikilitaş, Mark Wyatt and the other people who attended the conference. And the people loved and appreciated their work. I really feel very proud of what we have achieved."

Below is a photo which represents our happiness as a group when we had the chance to continue our discussions at lunch with Richard Smith, a distinguished researcher from the UK, and one of the organisers of the Teachers Research! Istanbul 2016 Conference, after some of the teacher-researchers in my group completed their poster presentations. The occasion has remained as an irreplaceable memory, besides adding to their self-efficacy as teacher-researchers.



- **Learner (Halai, 2006):** I grew as a consequence of my mentoring interactions, that is, I enhanced my knowledge of how teachers learn, refined my skills of working collaboratively with teachers and read a lot to expand my subject knowledge. In this respect, my own reflection at the beginning of our studies with the second group is worth citing here:

“Some teacher-researchers are interested in researching in the areas that I have never dealt before. This feels like a challenge because I need more knowledge to guide them in the rightest way possible. I should devote time to read more...”

- **A critical friend (Halai, 2006):** Like everyone in the team, I was supportive to participants as a friend but also in encouraging them to have a critical look at their practices. Essentially, this was our perspective on professional development, as we conceived of ourselves as a ‘Critical Friend Group’ (Kuh, 2006) (see Eraldemir Tuyan, 2016). The following reflection provides some corroboration from a participant perspective regarding this role of mine as a teacher-research mentor:

T6: “As I remember the whole period, you are not just a leader of this group but also a member of this, thus with your energy, high motivation and guidance we feel more willing to do this action research.”



Developing as researchers and as a research mentor

Developing as researchers

All the researchers who gave written feedback at the end of the academic year 2015–16 reported having met their expectations for being a part of our research group, stating the following gains:

- Feeling more productive and satisfied while doing research (T1)
- Gaining more awareness about the research topic (T1, T9)
- Becoming more reflective and creative in teaching through the process of research (T1)
- Seeing students happy (T2)
- Being able to change what doesn't work (T3)
- Sharing our ideas, experiences, feelings (T4)
- Gaining new perspectives/broadening horizons (T4, T9)
- Supporting each other in the process (T4)
- Exchanging ideas about my research (T5, T8, T9)
- Implementing new strategies (T6)
- Experiencing new things with the students (T6)
- Having fun by coming together as a group (T7)

Developing as a research mentor

In my two years' experience as a research mentor, I have also developed and had a lot of gains. My first gain was in understanding my mentor roles better and improving related mentoring skills and knowledge, mainly in the areas of practical and pedagogical content knowledge relating to how to conduct research, eliciting, scaffolding, and giving supportive feedback. Another gain has been in the area of increasing my self-efficacy beliefs regarding my research mentoring. That is, after gaining satisfactory outcomes as a group like presenting successfully at the confer-

ences, being appreciated and praised for our work, and seeing our reports published (2015 group), I have started to feel more confident and resourceful during the mentoring process. Related to this, I strengthened my resilience and positivity towards the difficulties I have encountered during the research processes, and have therefore become a better model to my mentees.

My first year's experience also helped me reconfirm my insight regarding the need to find various ways to keep common ground and continuous contact among group members. Indeed, one of the best insights I gained and reconfirmed as a rule of thumb in my second year has been 'empathising with the teacher-researchers'. As I had done in the first year, I kept on conducting my own classroom research in my own class to explore how it felt to be a team member regarding the possible challenges emerging during their research processes, while mentoring the participants at the same time (Eraldemir Tuyan, 2016). Doing this helped me a lot while organising my mentoring since it enabled me to take into account the time constraints of the teacher-researchers regarding their workloads, and to understand the difficulties they encounter in following the program. In this respect, to be more helpful, I tried to create extra opportunities and keep common ground via means like having telephone conversations, keeping in touch on WhatsApp via texting messages, and taking advantage of chats in the corridors, break times, coffee breaks and office hours when coming together at scheduled weekly group meetings was impossible (see below). In this way, I did my best to keep the participant teachers motivated and involved in doing their research.

Lastly, I have recognized my own importance as a mentor to the teacher-researchers, appreciating my own worth and value in line with the feedback I gathered. When the perspectives I gained on my own mentoring practice through the evaluation survey at the end of the second year were added to my personal reflections as a mentor, my experience felt more meaningful to me. This was because, despite all the encouragement and supportive guidance I got from Kenan Dikilitaş, I had felt all alone

at some points. Especially in the second year, I experienced some disappointments like some of the participant teachers not coming to scheduled group meetings, even delaying or cancelling one-to-one meeting appointments, not meeting the deadlines, and so on. I never took these kinds of operational impediments personally or felt discouraged. I perceived that the participants needed continual tolerance, encouragement and supportive guidance on my part. I attended to them with care and understanding, accepted their excuses, talked to them a little more, and met at another time to help them clear away their distractions and get rid of the various problems that blocked their way throughout their researching process. I tried to remain a good model in terms of my motivation, enthusiasm and belief regarding what we were all doing together, and I believe that my passion for what we were doing was so strong that it was passed on to the teacher-researchers. Looking at the challenges within such a perspective helped me keep my teacher-researchers on board as well as strengthening my own resilience, saving my patience and, most important of all, keeping me going. Some of the teacher-researcher reflections revealed my success in having transmitted these intended messages as a teacher mentor, as follows:

T9: "You have always provided a great deal of help for the participants. The times I feel lost or puzzled about my action research, you always do your best to give a hand to me. You have always helped me about my personal problems. Although I had some questions about being a part of this AR group at the beginning of the project since I was quite busy, you encouraged and motivated me to join this group. During this AR project process, you have been quite kind and helpful. Whenever I ask for your help, you are there."

T5: "Your positive energy and friendly attitude helped me carry on my research."

T3: "Definitely you motivated me and guided me. If it weren't for you, I would be demotivated and give up already☺"

Looking into the future

I have aimed to develop my own qualities as a mentor as well as helping my teacher mentees develop in personal and professional ways during the processes of my two-year action research mentoring experience. In this sense, we have developed together, reflecting on our teaching practices with and for our students, and in my case also with and for my mentees. As my mentoring model was basically built on positive relations through which we could truly practice values like honesty and mutual trust, we could also succeed in becoming a community of people who value one another, and listen to and respect one another's ideas, in both years. The feedback I received from the participants confirmed my sense of value as a mentor in keeping the group going and providing psychological support via encouragement, positive attitude, and tolerance towards the challenges which emerged during the process. Additionally, my mentees have had satisfactory outcomes from their action research studies which made them feel enthusiastic about reflecting on their practice and conducting research. They have come to feel more productive and creative, have gained new perspectives, and have enjoyed their teaching. When our manager uploaded our posters to the school web page, we really felt proud to share our studies with other colleagues at YADYO. Hearing about the good works of our group, more teachers have become interested and started to ask about the action research program. This makes me feel very hopeful about its future. As I am fully aware that all kinds of development require consistent effort, I will continue attempting to strengthen my skills and improve my knowledge as a research mentor to meet future needs.

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4 *Involving undergraduate students in research*

Sabriye Şener

Mentoring background

At present, I am working as a teacher trainer at the English Language Teaching Department (ELT), Faculty of Education of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Turkey. My teaching role includes firstly the preparation of undergraduate students for the teaching profession at the Faculty of Education. I also train graduate students as specialists, instructors for universities or as teachers. I deliver English language Teaching Theories and Methods, and Research Methodology Courses for such students at the Institute of Educational Sciences. In the Research Methodology course, it is my responsibility to guide graduate students to perform research studies and present their studies at the end of the term. During this period, I have experienced that they had little or no research experience. Some of them were English teachers, working in different schools, with no or little research background.

As a researcher, I believe in the importance of research oriented training programs, which may help to address the concerns of prospective teachers. I also believe that educators should adopt research in their classes because research serves to improve their practice, gives information about the teaching profession, and serves as modeling for future teachers to become researchers. Keeping all in my mind, and believing that the earlier the better, I decided to involve my undergraduate students in research studies while receiving theoretical knowledge at the same time, and motivated and encouraged them to take an active role in research before they graduated from university. This could also give me a

chance to explore their beliefs and perceptions regarding research and analyse their increased interests or difficulties they experienced during this process.

This study presents the results of a descriptive and exploratory case study that investigated the development of undergraduates' research experience through involvement in classroom research. It was conducted at a state university during the winter-term of the 2014-2015 academic year. 66 trainees participated in the study. They had already taken the compulsory course Research Methodologies, which covered some basic concepts (phenomena, knowledge, absolute, right, wrong, universal knowledge), basic information about the history and structure of scientific research, scientific methods and different views on these methods, problems, research models, population and sampling, data collection and data collection methods. However, they had not yet done any practical classroom research.

Although I had provided mentorship for graduate students during MA courses, this was the first time for me to work with undergraduates. When I provided mentorship for these senior students, it was my responsibility to teach the contents of the ELT Methodology II Course, which aims to introduce theoretical knowledge on classroom-based research, teacher directed research and action research, and on diagnosing learners' language-related needs and remedial teaching activities.

The mentoring process

The development of the quality of training that students receive has been a special interest since I started to work as a teacher trainer at university in 1999. To me, this could be achieved by engaging students in research. As Wyatt (2016) stated, engaging in research could be motivating for them. It was also motivating for me. During the winter term when the present study was carried out, participants received help and guidance each week throughout the term in order to design individual research projects. This

gave the researcher a possibility to understand them better and provided a means for the collection of data (the written reports of the participants). To this end, the role of the researcher is insider participant, which can be a challenging role to undertake (Herrmann, 1989).

In my course, I noticed that participants had learned some concepts of qualitative and quantitative research and prepared some tasks on different topics but did not have any research experience. As Campbell (2013) advised, I believed that the research experience that undergraduates would receive might support their efforts to understand the learning needs of their future students and help them make decisions that can have an effect on their professional lives. Bearing all this in mind, when the academic term started I implemented my plan. The training program started on September 29th, 2014 and included the following steps.

Phase I: Supplementing trainees with theoretical knowledge (5 weeks)

Week 1: First, the contents of this course and general aims were introduced. The participants were reminded that they would be involved in a real research environment during this period. Then, in order to elicit their initial beliefs and understandings about research, they were given 4 open-ended questions and asked to answer them truthfully.

When the written documents were examined, some of the participants' responses suggested that they saw research as a way of collecting data about the topics, to become more knowledgeable. To quote them, Student (St) 13 said "Research is the way of collecting data in a proper way"; St 14 said "Research is well-organized to search topic". According to St 17, "Research is to make preparations about the topics which we want to improve ourselves". St. 18 described research as "a method including any gathering of data, information and facts for the advancement of knowledge". Only a few students admitted that they had no idea

about research. Most of them were able to remember aspects of dictionary definitions of research without, however, highlighting benefits.

Nevertheless, a few were able to list benefits of research for teachers, and associated research with professional development. St 21 said “I love my job and want to be successful. The way to go depends on research and improving ourselves”; St. 20 thought that “It helps to develop myself”; for St 30 “Research is a state of mind, is a problem solving method and is making effort to make things better and have information about it. It means broaden your horizon, improve yourself in anything”; St. 47 thought “Research is investigating specific information systematically. Classroom research is observing student behaviours in the classroom to help their improvement. This provides better circumstances for learning in class”.

Week 2: The researcher assigned the students to read the introduction of Dikilitaş (2014) to understand the role of teacher/classroom research on professional development and the phases of engagement in research were introduced (p.6).

Week 3: In the following three weeks, theoretical knowledge on qualitative and quantitative research traditions were introduced by means of brainstorming, question and answer techniques and getting students’ views.

Week 4: The definitions of research, elements of research, teacher research, and classroom research and action research (Table 1, below) were introduced. Nunan and Bailey’s (2009) views on the role of empirical research to help teachers, ‘General characteristics of teacher research’ described by Dikilitaş (2014: p. 10), and ‘Why we need more practitioner research’ by Campbell (2013) were discussed as a group activity.

Table I. The descriptions of research

	Described by	Definition
Research	Brown and Rodgers, 2002, p. 3	<i>“Research is an exploration of experience of one kind or another, sometimes formal and technical, but not necessarily so”.</i>
	Dörnyei, 2007, p. 15.	<i>“Research means trying to find answers to questions, an activity everyone one of us does all the time to learn more about the world around us”; “Research is disciplined inquiry”.</i>
Class-room research	Allwright, 1983, cited in Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p. 16	<i>“Classroom research concentrates on the inputs to the classroom such as the syllabus, the teaching materials, or the outputs from the classroom (learner achievement scores), and it does not devalue the importance of such inputs and outputs”.</i>
Class-room action research	Nunan and Bailey, 2009	<i>“Classroom action research is unique in that it is conducted by classroom practitioners, who investigate some aspect of their own practice. In other words, it is carried out by those who can change and improve what goes on in the classroom”.</i>
Practitioner research	Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009)	<i>“Practitioner research is a hypernym or a blanket term that encompasses many different traditions, movements, and methodologies and includes teacher research, practitioner inquiry, problem-based inquiry, action research and action learning” (as cited in Ellis, 2016).</i>
Teacher research	Celce-Murcia, 2001.	<i>“Teacher research is research conducted by classroom teachers, and it is connected with the concept of teacher development and empowerment”.</i>
	Borg, 2013	<i>“Teacher research is a systematic inquiry, conducted by teachers, into some aspect of their own context, with the aim of improving both understanding and practice.”</i>

Week 5: Data collection issues, data collection methods, ethical issues, and developing a research design were the main focus of the week.

Weeks 6–9: Phase II: Reading and examining different research studies:

In order to help trainees become familiar with the structure of a research report, general principles of report writing were firstly introduced, and how and what should be described in each part of a research report were discussed. To facilitate understanding, questions such as those below were asked about each part: 1) Is the title informative? 2) Does the abstract cover the aims, setting and participants, methods, analysis and findings? 3) Are the concepts and theoretical issues discussed relevant to your research? 4) Is the research design clearly described? 5) Does it include the main outcomes? 6) Are works correctly cited by the researcher?

After introducing the parts of a research report, the research study ‘Learning through observation: Changing beliefs and practices’ (Aksel, 2014) was examined as a whole class activity with the guidance of the questions given above. The researcher asked them to focus on the abstract, which gives brief information about the article. They almost had no idea about what should be included in this part of a research article. In the following weeks some of the articles, such as “Teacher learning for observational study” (Fenik and Savaş, 2014) and ‘Using critical thinking in grammar lessons’ (Günbay and Aydemir, 2014), were assigned as tasks and evaluated as group work as an out-class activity. At the end of the course each week, participants received guidance and feedback about their research topics, instruments they wanted to use, and sample articles.

They were asked to locate other articles themselves but found this difficult, so they were suggested to read articles written by their trainers first. They were delighted to read these, published in different journals. Then they were reminded to read more widely, consulting articles published by different universities, and some professional journals. Some internet sources were also introduced.

While they were examining these, they were reminded that they should think about their research topics and find relevant articles, and they were also asked to arrange their research teams in order to work together.

Week 10: Phase III. Organizing groups:

During this week, groups and topics they wanted to investigate in the next four weeks were finalized. Group formation seemed based on friendship and familiarity.

Weeks 11-14: Phase IV. Doing research:

Every week, the trainees in two different classes met the researcher, and received guidance about writing research questions, developing research instruments, validity and reliability issues, literature review, data collection, data analysis, and report preparation. Firstly, they learned that they needed to get permission from the authorities to collect data. During this stage, they were regularly sharing their drafts with me through e-mail messages, and the biggest problem I noticed was plagiarism. They had no or very little idea about paraphrasing and how to cite. They were instructed on some important rules (how to cite sources in text and in references, how to use integral vs non-integral reporting, and some common verbs to present citations).

During class hours, the trainer organized groups from the members of two different teams and asked them to share their literature review texts with their peers and receive feedback about their citations in order to increase awareness. However, when their papers were examined, there were a lot of examples of improper citations and plagiarism.

Weeks 15-16: Phase V. Presenting research studies:

In the final phase, each team was required to present their research studies orally within 15 minutes in front of the class. They were all excited but very proud of themselves in this final step. Research topics the undergraduates investigated are;

- Examining occupational burnout levels of academicians and teachers

- English teacher learning through observational study
- Motivation levels of non-major English students
- The perceptions of teachers and students on use of L1 in foreign language classes
- Language speaking anxiety of English preparatory class students in oral communication classes
- Turkish ELT students' willingness to communicate
- Motivational problems of young learners
- Speaking problems in EFL classrooms
- The perceptions of prep students in ELT classes regarding cooperative learning
- Discovering vocabulary learning strategies of ELT students at a state university
- Communication strategy use of Turkish students
- The effect of learning styles on students' success
- Teacher competency and effectiveness of instructors.



During the presentations, most of the trainees were able to present their final reports successfully because they had experi-

enced such presentations in their methodology courses during micro-teaching activities previously. When I examined the written reports they presented, I mostly appreciated their efforts and layouts. Especially, the trainees who asked for more tutorials and required feedback from me presented better written reports. However, some of them did not seem to resolve their problems related with quoting sources and analysing data. In conclusion, this experience provided evidence that incorporating research into their education program seemed to be beneficial.

Developing as researchers and research mentors

After completing their research studies, in the final session they were asked to write how they felt about the research process. Undergraduate students' feelings were mostly positive. They pointed out that involvement in research was really very important for their personal and professional development. They also stated that it helped to develop their reading and writing skills, and increased their self-confidence. Benefits of research highlighted by participants include helping them to get feedback to improve (St3), providing a clear focus and supporting lesson preparation (St16), benefitting from doing research for academic studies (St20), helping them become more open-minded, confident, and affecting their professional development (St5).

However, some of them also expressed that it was a stressful and demanding work (St9), and required spending a lot of effort and time (St12), and some favoured the view that research is done only for academic purposes (St28). This finding might be due to their concerns about receiving low scores. In Atay's (2008) study in-service teachers too expressed their problems related with their research experience. Most of the participant teachers in her research expressed that research was a demanding task and some others posited that data analyses seemed to be the most troublesome area.

Looking to the future

In this study, I aimed at involving undergraduates in research, and developing their cognitions and learning while doing. Engaging undergraduate students in research activities gave me some opportunities for reflecting on my research practices with them.

The participants have described various benefits of their engaging in real research contexts. Firstly, analysis of reflective writing suggests that the students' perceptions regarding doing research had changed in a positive way. They mostly expressed that doing research has a good effect on both their personal and professional development. Secondly, they seemed to learn how to develop research instruments, to collect data, to write a research report, and how to reflect on this experience. It also seemed that they gained increased confidence and motivation about research. Thirdly, as a trainer, I was highly motivated by providing my students with a motive for doing research (and subsequently helping one of them to present her study at an international conference). Additionally, my research practice gave inspiration to my colleagues in the department, and increased their awareness.

However, when I reflected on my experience regarding providing mentorship for my undergraduate students, I noticed that it was a challenging work to carry out alone. My next step should be starting or founding a research team at our department to work collaboratively in order to support our undergraduates to become more powerful and more confident to do research for their professional development. I believe that my colleagues in the research team will serve as a sounding board and support undergraduates to find out answers to the questions in their minds by means of providing mentorship to do research in real classrooms. The students will receive feedback, guidance, and support. The biggest challenge for the trainees was inadequate time to collect data from schools. This finding

could be related to the structure of the course. If the relevant theoretical knowledge was delivered not as a block but gradually, starting from the beginning of the period, their practical experience could commence earlier, giving them more time for data collection. It was also a problem for them to handle data analysis, which is very normal at this stage. It is suggested that some extra courses which aim at developing research experience should be included in the teacher training programs of education faculties.

In conclusion, I hope that this research study will give inspiration to my friends, and encourage them to take part in a similar activity. I am entirely convinced that undergraduates should be engaged in such activities, which can increase their self-confidence, experience and motivation.

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5 *Action research as a professional development tool for pre-service English language teachers*

Hatime Çiftçi, Enisa Mede and Derin Atay

Mentoring background

Mentoring has been traditionally associated with workplace-related or school-based support, e.g. with regard English language teachers' initial professional decision making or learning. Mentors have been defined by the Centre for Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) and elsewhere (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Malderez, 2009) as experienced colleagues or teachers with necessary knowledge of their roles. The mentoring process is elucidated by Roberts (2000) as one where "a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning with another less experienced and knowledgeable person so as to facilitate that person's career and personal development" (p. 162).

Likewise, we, as academics training pre-service English language teachers (PTs henceforth) in a relevant undergraduate program, align with the very same goal of providing professional development support for our preservice students. This is in the Department of ELT at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, Turkey. Additionally, positioning ourselves as research mentors by integrating an action research (AR henceforth) project into their school experience, we assume the role of partners in the development of our PTs' self-awareness and reflective practice. This is in a relatively recently redesigned program. Indeed, even though we, all three authors, have been mentoring PTs with regard to the formation of their knowledge base for many years, we are reporting on something new here. Guiding PTs in conducting AR and designing the practicum course accordingly represents

our first attempt to link research and practice in our undergraduate program.

That being said, we employed this AR project with 9 third-year ELT students taking a school experience course in Spring 2016. In the context of Turkey, initial teacher education has been provided at undergraduate level through ELT programs for many years. Like many preservice ELT methodology or practicum courses, the overarching goals of the course were to better facilitate these PTs' school experience, which would take place for two days per week throughout the semester. We wanted to help them engage in observations, micro-teaching, mentor-mentee meetings, peer observations, and reflections, and critically reflect on their own teaching experiences. In alignment with these objectives, we, as colleagues at the same department and research mentors in this study, re-designed the course according to the stages of AR in Burns' (2010) *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching*, and our PTs were asked to implement AR on a topic they selected through our guidance and support.

Mentoring process

As a part of university policy, the Faculty of Educational Sciences at Bahçeşehir University has been leading a larger scale project involving university-school partnership for the last few years. Unlike traditional practices of starting the practicum only in the last year of ELT undergraduate programs, our students start observing real classrooms and teachers much earlier (e.g. in their second year) as required by this university-school partnership project. Since it is a very recent project still in its evolving stage, faculty members in each department come together to evaluate the program-wide processes and practices implemented at the end of each academic year so that we could refine and revise the integration of this university-school partnership project into our methodology and practicum courses for better outcomes. Indeed, our AR project with PTs originated from such an evaluative perspec-

tive. We were looking to guide our PTs towards more informed and focused observations and microteaching goals and activities. Also, believing in the value of involving our PTs in a self-reflective, critical, and transformative process through conducting AR (Burns, 2009, 2010; Nunan & Bailey, 2009; Richards & Farrell, 2005), we decided to design a course such as this.

As a part of our mentoring process, we assumed different roles in contributing to the implementation of AR by our PTs. The first author, Hatime Çiftçi, was the primary research mentor undertaking a central role in the AR project by offering the course and working closely with the PTs throughout the semester. The second and third authors, Enisa Mede and Derin Atay, provided their supervision at the initial stages of planning the course, synchronizing the goals of such a school experience course and program mission, and making broader decisions for course materials. In setting up the AR project and mentoring process, we had short meetings to discuss how to integrate the AR project by allowing our PTs to both understand what AR is and be able to mindfully practice each stage throughout the semester. In that sense, Hatime, as the course instructor, designed the course syllabus and divided the 14 instructional weeks in the semester into the chunks of understanding, planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages of conducting an AR cycle. That is, conducting AR was the sole and primary requirement for our PTs taking the school experience course. However, even though it was a course requirement, most of our PTs evidently displayed motivation and willingness to participate in this AR project since they believed in the role of more purposeful school experience relying on their previous classroom observations as a part of the larger project of university-school partnership.

Developing as researchers and researcher mentors

The development of our PTs in this AR project was actually monitored by Hatime, as the course instructor, from the begin-

ning of the spring semester in 2016. Therefore, we present the development of PTs as researchers and her own development as the primary research mentor from her introspective perspective in this AR project as follows:

(Hatime's introspective account of becoming a research mentor and her PTs as researchers)

In order to monitor and gain insights into the entire process of PTs' AR experience, I utilized focus group pre- and post-interviews, 4 diary entries by each PT; and conducted observations of their microteaching lessons as well as post-observation conferences. I audio-recorded all our interviews and post-observation conferences, and took notes during the observations of microteaching sessions. All this process of collecting and sorting out the data enabled me to document and follow up each stage as well as make revisions in the syllabus or implementation when needed.

In our first in-class meeting, I conducted a 15-minute focus group pre-interview with 9 participants to elicit what they know and think about AR, and/or if they had any such experience (e.g. conducting AR). It was mutually important to see not only their overall knowledge but also perceptions of PTs at the outset of the semester because it would be a big challenge for me as a research mentor to work with a group of reluctant PTs. As a back-up to the pre-interview, the PTs also wrote their first diary entries right before the AR project. In fact, my analysis of focus group pre-interviews and the first diary demonstrated that PTs had only basic knowledge of AR. In other words, most of them roughly knew what AR is but they did not have actual experience of conducting AR. Yet, interestingly, they all had a positive attitude toward conducting AR as prospective language teachers. The following excerpts from diaries and the pre-interview exemplify their overall positive attitude of AR:

I think action research will be really helpful for us to teach in a better way. By doing action research, we can

realize our problems or deficiencies ... (Diary 1, on February 18, 2016)

I think action research is not only beneficial but also it is fun to do. Learning about the way you teach, criticizing yourself as if it is someone else... (Diary 1, on February 18, 2016)

I think it would be very useful to do AR on the class to figure out why these students are all acting out. (Pre-interview, on February 18, 2016)

In the second and third weeks of the course and study, I introduced what AR is and its main stages to PTs in the class. Relying on the pre-research data, I found this initial stage crucial since it was necessary to provide a basic knowledge base and ensure that the stages of AR were clear. However, rather than receive traditional knowledge transmission about AR, the PTs read about the case situations in Burns (2010) to understand AR. This was followed by discussions to refine their understanding. It needs to be highlighted that the reason PTs had to read the assigned readings involving such AR cases and some additional sources subsequently was because we felt it was tremendously crucial “to challenge and develop their thinking as a basis for creating knowledge” (Fletcher, 2012, p.68). Presupposing that reading the content before our in-class meetings would constitute a potential challenge for PTs, I employed short quizzes at the beginning of each class, which also served as a basis for our collaborative discussions.

Then, in weeks 4 and 5, the PTs started to plan their AR with the help of several activities. Since they were doing classroom observations, they brought their field notes into class, and also shared what they remembered from previous coursework as well as their talks with cooperating teachers. Additionally, three

PTs brought their video-recorded mini teaching demos in actual classes for feedback purposes, and this collaborative feedback session was the most influential and vivid tool for PTs to problematize an aspect in their teaching. This planning stage took 2 weeks, and some areas they problematized during this stage included classroom management, improving language skills, differentiated reading instruction, and variety or more interactivity in teaching English. Upon focusing on a more specific area, they started to develop some literature review on their potential areas to be improved, which was a bit of a demanding step for them as stated by one of the PTs in her diary entry (*While planning my AR, I had to do a lot of theoretical and practice-based reading*. Diary 4, on May 5, 2016). Meanwhile, I assumed the role of a facilitator in class discussions and collaborative feedback sessions and a guide for reaching out to some relevant literature. Otherwise, the choice of focusing a specific instructional aspect to improve was made completely by the PTs themselves, and I believe that it was the most motivating way for them to conduct AR.

Starting from week 6, the PTs worked on how to prepare their AR plan and put it into action throughout the following 4 weeks. Depending on my observations as the research mentor and their second diary entries, I would argue that this stage was quite challenging as well as rewarding for PTs in their process of not only conducting AR but also of becoming more self-aware and self-efficacious as teacher candidates. Even though each PT was able to prepare a full lesson plan with an action plan, almost all of them struggled with designing materials and activities specifically for improving the aspect of their practice they problematized. However, after getting feedback on their lesson plans and materials both from cooperating teachers and me, PTs' readiness for implementing their AR plans in the classes they had been observing from the beginning of the semester was obvious. In that sense, considering our experiences at this stage, I would argue for an intertwined nature of conducting AR by simultaneously involving challenges and achievement for

both PTs and myself. As for PTs, they were improving their AR research skills and meanwhile facing the demanding aspect of preparing for an actual class as real teachers do. In a similar vein, as a research mentor, I was dealing with giving one-to-one feedback on their lesson plans to help them maximize the effectiveness of their action plans. While doing so, I utilized indirect questions, such as “Do you think...?” or “How would you do this instead?” to promote a more self-regulated process of planning their AR rather than directly saying what to do. Meanwhile, two of the PTs started to show their reluctance to implement their plans since they believed that they would not be able to solve the problem identified by themselves in one class. However, I kept explaining to them the ultimate goal of conducting AR in their school experience course is to enable them to gain critical and reflective skills and perspectives for ongoing professional development.

At the end of week 9, every PT completed the implementation of their action plans, and I conducted post-observation conferences with each PT immediately after their microteaching lessons (except for a few cases due to my schedule) not only to share my observation notes but also understand their own perceptions of implementing their AR plan. Looking at our post-observation conferences and diary entries, I was able to identify 3 major gains out of PTs’ implementation of their AR: long-term awareness, teaching as a problem-solving process, and increased self-efficacy beliefs. In diary entry 4, for instance, one of the PTs instantiated gaining a long-term awareness as, “*I mean actually I decided that I need to make what I did in my AR a general philosophy in my professional life.*” (Diary 4, on May 5, 2016). Similarly, another PT stated, “*I will use such research to develop myself in my professional teaching life.*” (Diary 3, on April 21, 2016). Again, as for developing a sense of teaching as a problem-solving process, one of the PTs explicated her experience as “*Thanks to our observations and micro-teaching, we realized various problems that we experience now and later.*” (Diary

4, on May 5, 2016). This idea has also been supported in our post-interview as well:

“I think it was different from our regular lesson plans. We were like identifying a problem and then preparing a lesson plan to solve that problem. It wasn’t like that before.” (Post-interview, on May 12, 2016)

Finally, another rewarding aspect of conducting the AR project with PTs turned out to be the development of increased self-efficacy beliefs as expressed by PTs while reflecting on their own learning process. One student said, *“I developed several strategies for young learners when compared to last year, and this year I feel more knowledgeable.”* (Diary 4, on May 5, 2016).

However, when considering the process of conducting the AR project, most of the PTs also felt frustrated after their micro-teaching lessons. As the research mentor, I was also able to witness such instances of frustration in our post-observation conferences. Most of them did not hesitate to voice their feelings after implementing their AR plans, and two explicit statements include *“I am totally frustrated now because I was so prepared for this micro-teaching and I lost control over the kids at some point.”* (Post-observation conferences, on April 15, 2016) and *“I think I should do this AR again because something went really wrong when compared to my previous micro-teaching experiences.”* (Post-observation conferences, on April 18, 2016).

During weeks 10 and 11, the PTs conducted a basic analysis of what data they had gathered to see if they could identify any improvement or not after implementing their AR plans. These data sources varied but they included mainly informal interviews with their students, comparison with a regular class, completed in-class activities in their AR plans, and video-recordings. Finally, PTs in this study reflected on their AR experience through post-observation conferences and focus group post-interviews during the last 2 weeks of the semester. They

also wrote their final diary entries to express their beliefs and ideas on the whole process of learning to implement AR. Once the AR project was completed, they finally submitted a brief AR report to the course instructor as well.

Looking to the future

As delineated in this chapter, our project with PTs demonstrates that conducting AR could play a mediating factor in PTs' knowledge and critical awareness construction of L2 pedagogy. Looking at their active involvement in the stages of conducting AR, the PTs in this study had the opportunity to co-construct their own understanding of L2 teaching, and thus realize their personal theories of L2 teaching practice as articulated in the previous sections, and also this agreeably resonates with the role of personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 2009) in L2 teacher education by allowing them to make meaning out of their own problem-solving and real teaching experience. However, mutually experiencing the process as research mentors in this AR project, we find it crucial to critically reflect on our experience as well. In that sense, several aspects to be considered, or possibly to be changed, for similar future implementations are in order.

First of all, it was a great challenge to help PTs acquire multiple skills at the same time, such as introducing the bits and pieces of conducting AR, refining PTs' understanding of crucial steps and resources as well as enabling them to utilize these resources efficiently, providing constructive feedback and monitoring the whole process, and more. As Fletcher (2012) points out, being a research mentor requires many skills but most importantly "research mentor pedagogical content knowledge" and "research skills pedagogical content knowledge" (p.71). In that sense, simultaneously developing knowledge of teacher research and necessary research skills and aptitudes on the part of PTs could be integrated into and practiced through a longer period

of time. Even though we spent the entire semester on this process, developing as a research mentor in this study also indicates the substantial role of some core components. As Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2015) present, these core components involve developing complex skills, practical knowledge in various research aspects, and positive self-efficacy beliefs of conducting research. Additionally, we would possibly turn such an implementation into a group project by allowing out PTs to do it collaboratively for larger groups of PTs. Since we had 9 PTs taking the course, it was relatively manageable in our case but individual work for conducting AR for larger groups does not seem to be practical and doable for research mentors at all. Finally, affective aspects of taking the role of a research mentor should also be considered seriously throughout the process. Becoming a research mentor in this project has eventually resulted in developing a much deeper sense of sensitivity and support in such processes because it was the first time our PTs were involved in conducting AR.

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6

Teacher identity formation in teacher education

Hatice Çelebi and Nafıye Çiğdem Aktekin

Introduction

In the context of New Times (Gee, 2000; Luke & Elkins, 1998), teachers are seen to have fluid identities and be able to negotiate their positions in the workforce as “shape-shifters” (Gee, 2004; Hallman, 2015). The term New Times is characterized by the social, economic and technological changes in the current era. In the New Times, job security is reliant upon one’s shape-shifting portfolio: “the skills, achievements, and previous experiences that a person owns and that he or she can arrange and rearrange to sell him or herself for new opportunities in changed times” (Gee, 2004, p.97).

This chapter considers student teacher identity formation during the practicum experience. Given student teachers’ conflicting perspectives on practicums (Kosnick & Beck, 2003; Kroll, 2004; Taskin, 2006; Glenn, 2006; Laker, Laker & Lea, 2008), and the need to meet the demands of the New Times, it is essential that teacher education programs provide alternative opportunities for student teachers to “‘try on’ different teacherly selves” (Hallman, 2015, p.284). This study illustrates how this opportunity is attained through partnership between the university and school and through a structured research project assigned to 22 first-year ELT student teachers.

Background to the study

A recurring theme in the field of teacher education is the notion of the ‘teacher-self/teacherly-self’ along with several concepts

that cluster around it—self-image, identity, individuality, self-identity, and teacher roles. The role of the teacher has changed significantly in recent years along with the status of teaching as a profession (Graham & Phelps, 2003); therefore, demands and expectations the community places on teachers and schools have led teacher education departments to offer courses in combination with internship opportunities. According to Tobin (1995), new teachers must compose teacherly identities through invention, performance, integration, revision, and trial-and-error. In order to make purposeful decisions about specific, concrete issues, graduate students must first recognize, develop, and invent themselves as teachers (Tobin, 1995, p.71). Hall (2000) characterizes identity as something “not already ‘there’; rather, it is a production, emergent, in process. It is situational – it shifts from context to context” (p.xi). The implication is that teacher identity is shaped by the conditions and through the opportunities supplied by the situational conditions which are always in a state of flux.

‘New Times’ is a term used to characterize the changing social, economic, and technological conditions of the current era (Luke & Elkins, 1998). The identities of future teachers in New Times are shaped according to these conditions, where teacher roles are becoming increasingly diversified and expectations of the community are getting higher. Teachers at work often verbalize the difficulties of dealing with the changing environment and expectations (Guðjónsdóttir, 2000). Darling-Hammond (2005) summarized this situation as follows:

Around the world, the importance of education to individual and societal success has increased at a breath-taking pace as a new knowledge-based economy has emerged. As a consequence, most countries have been engaged in intensive reforms of their education systems, and many have focused especially on improving teacher education, recognizing that preparing accomplished teachers who can effectively teach a wide array of learners to high standards is es-

sential to economic and political survival (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 237).

Still, there are many teachers who continue in the profession and feel motivated for various reasons, such as making a difference in students' lives (Gose, 2007; Brunetti, 2001; Stanford, 2001). In relation to how to train student teachers to move towards the needs of the New Times, we believe practices such as assisting student teachers to step into teacherly roles, and to become metacognitively aware of these roles, improve teacher quality, as they increase a sense of professionalism in student teachers.

Based on their analysis of the literature, Guðjónsdóttir and Karvelsdóttir (2013, pp.77-78) summarize the features that characterize teaching professionalism under four headings: 1) practical professionalism 2) reflective professionalism 3) responsive professionalism 4) shared professionalism. The first two are essential in the theoretical frame that we envision for our study. Practical professionalism can be defined as the personal practical knowledge that teachers develop, use and share with other educators (Clandinin, Connelly & Craig, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). Reflective professionalism is a concept that takes thoughtful and informed professional reflection as the basis of improved professional practice, judgment and decision-making (Beck & Kosnik, 2000; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996; Schön, 1983). We transfer these two characterizations to our student teacher training, by which we mean the undergraduate training of the students at our education faculty who are studying to become teachers. They are pre-service teacher candidates, not yet fully qualified to teach. We maintain that undergraduate training years should be utilized to form practical and reflective professionalism as early as possible.

In order to practise varied teacher roles and develop their teacher identities, it is essential for student teachers to experience the environments in which they will work. However, this experience is not what is generally offered in teacher preparation pro-

grammes. Often, the environment where student teachers gain knowledge of the teaching profession during their undergraduate years is at the university. However, the environment where they will learn how to be teachers is the school where they will perform their profession. These two dimensions, the knowledge base and the practical pedagogical base feed each other. Therefore, quality teacher education requires building a bridge from the university to the school. This is why university-school partnerships play a crucial role in assisting teachers to contemplate how their content knowledge merges with what and who they imagine themselves to be as a teacher (Hallman, 2015).

This chapter demonstrates how such opportunities were planned as part of a research study and presents the findings.

Research methodology

In relation to our main aim, which was to provide opportunities to construct practical and reflective professionalism in student teachers through university-school partnership, we developed the following questions:

- 1) What personal practical knowledge do the student teachers develop, use and share with other peers?
- 2) What improved professional practice, judgment and decision-making are narrated by the student teachers?

The participants were 22 student teachers in their first year of a four-year program. The student teachers were therefore quite new to the discourse of teaching and the teaching profession itself. To unite the university and school environments we designed a collaborative partnership scheme with a high school where our students' teaching focus could be channelled. Since they would not be practising teaching in actual classrooms, but would be experiencing what involvement in teaching might mean through the different stages of the study, we adopted the term "teacherly roles" rather than "teacher roles" with the students. We wanted to imply that the study created a hypothetical environment for them to reflect on.

Our first step was to plan a cyclic study frame to purposefully facilitate practical and reflective professionalism. In Cycle 1, student teachers were familiarised with four key terms: language learning strategies, inventory formulation, teacher roles, and reflection. After reading articles on language learning strategies on different skills such as listening speaking, or independent learning (Hurd & Lewis, 2008), they met five times for one hour with their classmates and a teaching assistant who chaired the discussions. In these meetings, the student teachers discussed the content, asked questions about points that were not clear, offered their opinions related to the information, and considered how they could transfer the ideas into practice. During the discussions, they collaborated with other student teachers, took roles as a leader or a negotiator, formulated questions, and learned to adapt the way they expressed questions in collaboration with others. Based on their discussions, in every session, they developed inventory items for a questionnaire on learning strategies to be piloted with the high school students.

In Cycle 2, student teachers transferred the inventory items to an online environment for the partner school students to respond to the questionnaire. While they did this, they revisited the literature on language learning strategies and developing inventories. They paid visits to the partner school to gain more insight about the student profile for which they were preparing the inventory. In Cycle 3, the student teachers interpreted the data they had collected from partner school students and wrote a report with findings and suggestions for the partner school administration. Throughout these cycles, the student teachers reflected continually on the teacherly roles they felt they were adopting.

The data collection tool used by us as the researchers was reflective journals and the data were interpreted qualitatively. Each student teacher submitted eight journal entries, where they reflected on the teacherly roles they felt they were experiencing. In total the data comprised 166 journal entries consisting of 18.956 words. We analysed all the reflections collected from the students

independently. First, the reflections were scanned for an initial analysis and commonalities in themes were noted to form a draft of general headings such as identity, development and so on. This step was repeated for a second time, so that similar opinions generated by the students could be categorized under relevant headings and new ones added to the list if necessary. Each researcher carried out a crosscheck of what was produced and the final version of the emerging categories was created.

Findings and discussion

The findings of the study are elaborated in the subsections below.

Forming teacher identity

Many reflective comments around the idea of ‘the kind of person a teacher is’ emerged from the reflections of the student teachers. In the first two examples below the participants’ expression of their feeling of belonging to a community signals their sense of beginning to close a psychological and durational distance between being student teachers and becoming teachers.

It is really important part of being a teacher to grade exams or assignments. We felt like a real teacher.

Everything I have observed from my teachers are more familiar.

This development of a teacherly identity is also observed in the use of the first-person (we and us) as in these examples:

I think it is a good experience to us. When we will be a teacher, we can use all of these strategies.

I think learning about these strategies will be useful for us in future and to develop our creativity to come

up with new strategies. Thinking of students' abilities and teaching according to their tendency will help us, and knowing what activities we can use is a very significant facility for us.

Other reflective comments further mirrored the student teachers' inner talk, particularly about their feelings of needing to be more in control and having the power to overcome challenges

Teaching is hard; I have years to decide.

After the first week of studies, discussion sessions it was a little bit easier for me to get acquainted with the process of this project. I was more eager to find out features of the articles and acquire some knowledge from them.

One of the difficult issues revealed by inner talk was the challenge of time management.

We have only one hour to do this work, so I have limited time. I tried to manage the time for listen everything and take notes. That makes me a time manager.

However, there were also comments emphasizing student teachers' motivation to improve, a feeling of empowerment through being more independent to learn subject matter and to learn pedagogical aspects of teaching more collaboratively.

From the moment I start interacting with others, I see that every one of us is being guided, consulted but I realize that I don't need to be in a job to do that. Sometimes, I am a role model, a mom, a friend, a leader, a life coach etc..... I feel like I mean something that change or lead. Meeting their needs is what all people need. It is good to be able to do that.

Team works and brainstorming help a teacher to find the essential things of the topic.

Knowing oneself as a learner and developing a foreign language teacher knowledge base

The developmental course of a professional teacher identity is not easy to understand. When students enter a teacher education program, they are likely to have pre-formed beliefs of what it means to be a teacher based on their own previous educational experiences. As Lortie (1975) suggested, students acquire generalized notions of what ‘good’ and ‘bad’ teaching is based on how particular kinds of teaching have affected them. His phrase “the apprenticeship of observation” has been used to suggest that teachers teach the way they were taught. However, this initial sense of what it means to be a teacher is likely to undergo considerable development as student teachers progress through their coursework and teaching practice, and start to develop a professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). During this study, student teachers frequently reflected on their subject-matter knowledge and evaluated themselves as learners. The practices student teachers were provided with (for example, reading articles on language learning strategies) during this university-school partnership encouraged them to evaluate their competencies in terms of subject matter:

Listening skill is hard for me; I need to improve before being a teacher. Understanding articles are hard for me.

As I said, those were more interesting because the subjects were something what catch my attention as because I am a L2 learner too. I skimmed the two articles and highlighted some key points of the articles to take down them as notes on my papers. For instance, I saw that there are many L2 learners

who create their own schedule while working on, improving their L2 skills. This the way I also follow.

The readings and discussions also helped them to reflect on their own learning processes:

We need to apply these on ourselves before our students.

The difficulty of the articles is because of my lack of English.

I learned a lot of things and I will apply them in the future. But the different thing that I will do is increasing the visual items like videos, short films, gestures, images etc. instead of just standing and speaking.

I used dictionary to understand the articles and became more confident in understanding articles.

I learn a lot from my friends while discussing in class.

Setting target domains for future professional development

While discussing their teacherly roles, student teachers used various similes, metaphors and analogies. Some of their reflections related to their perceptions about ideal teacher roles they wished to achieve:

I felt like an investigator who searches how students learn.

Teachers should be facilitators, counsellors, researchers (useful but I felt nervous) patient, punctual, and a leader.

While doing something with students, teachers have to cope with many responsibilities. The teachers must be in complete charge of the class. He or she must observe what they are doing on the course of the action. If it is necessary, he or she must interfere and enable them to find out the right way to do it. Teachers need to be the organizer.

The success of many activities is dependent on organization and instructions from teachers to students. Briefly, teachers also need to be a coach in a way. A teacher also needs to encourage her or his students while working on something.

Others indicated the domains they wanted to work on for their future professional development:

Reading the articles hard and uncomfortable. I need to internalize, digest, difficulties with adaptation.

The most desperate part was, however, was writing the inventory items. I tend to form long, elaborate sentences...but I am required to form basic, understandable sentences. They have to be kept at a certain length and they have to be at an intermediate level, and I just can't get to do that. And since the audience is teenagers, writing long sentences is like a sin. I need to change my style in my sentences, I am aware of that.

Reflections

The findings of our study suggest that, while the student teachers experienced a sense of teachers' different roles over time, they began to adopt new perspectives on their teacherly selves and

form feelings of familiarity towards their future teaching profession. This study offers an example of some initial steps that can be taken towards encouraging the teacher identity formation of English language teaching students in their first year of pre-service education. Through such an initiative, as early as their first year in their program, pre-service teachers can explore the essential elements of professional identity, defined as “the principles, intentions, characteristics and experiences by which an individual defines him or herself in a professional role” (McSweeney, 2012, p. 367), which are acquired through acting in various role over a period of time.. Being able to accommodate various selves and feel more familiar with the teaching competencies required empowers student teachers and may bridge the durational and psychological gap student teachers experience until they become qualified practising teachers. Preparing teachers to consider their roles in the context of New Times, to develop the fluid identities needed to negotiate their positions in the workforce as “shapeshifters” (Hallman, 2015), and to teach considerately, involves creating opportunities for reflective practice for beginning teachers as early as possible.

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7

Raising awareness in reading written instructions

Beyza Kabadayı

Main focus

“Why is learning to listen easy but learning to read hard?” ask Schallert, Klelman and Rubin (1977), focusing on the phenomenon that students’ listening ability develops instinctively whereas to be able to read, they need formal instruction. During my research process, this question has been on my mind and I have been able to adapt it to my ongoing problem in class, as I explain. Following oral and written instruction was a problematic area which needed immediate solution for it affected my students’ academic success. Concerning oral instructions, a few precautions which improved the quality of my instructions seemed to help the problem. However, in order to overcome their tendency to skip reading written instructions, I needed a more elaborated and systematic plan since this habit or tendency might have been rooted in their previous academic background and experiences. Therefore, I drew their attention to potential benefits of reading written instructions and I prepared a 4-step-rescue plan, which I will be discussing in methodology.

Background

I believe that classrooms are important places we can use to expose students to target language. Creating an atmosphere where students are provided with opportunities to use L2 has been one of my priorities and underpins my general teaching philosophy. Researchers have also revealed the correlation between target language use and student success (Moeller & Roberts, 2013).

However, I couldn't help but realize that for the sake of exposing them to the target language, I was keeping my talking time relatively longer than students', which, as Harmer (2001) states, was not to the students' advantage. Increased talking time, if it is not comprehensible (Krashen, 1985), may lead to confusion and unnecessary complexity in the classroom discourse. Students' tendency to switch to L1 while preparing for a task could be considered as one of the indicators they need to use L1 to comprehend the task.

If oral instructions are to avoid unnecessary complexity and not result in comprehension problems, planning is the first step, as Scrivener (2005) asserts. Thus, I planned my lessons accordingly. I used shorter sentences and sequenced my instructions in a clear and direct way. With comparatively longer instructions, I preferred to write them on the board to keep the students interested. In time, I observed that they were asking fewer clarification questions. However, regarding the written instructions, the conjuncture was different. Although students faced a seemingly much easier task, which only included reading and following written language, they seemed to have similar problems. More often than not, they needed L1 translation of the task, or sometimes they completely ignored reading the instructions and started doing the activities.

I felt the urge to check the written instructions first to identify if there were any ambiguities in the instructions. Worksheets which were used as in-class activities involved standard wordings and the types of the activities were not vastly different from each other. Nevertheless, the students insisted on asking me to explain what they were supposed to do the second they were given a task, even though it was a follow-up activity which they were familiar with and the instructions were rather clear.

In order to get a deeper insight, I referred to the testing department of our school. Their experiences were not any different from mine. Not reading written instructions was a common but unstated problem among our students. Then, I asked anxiously

about what type of activities students mostly missed because of not reading the instructions thoroughly. The person in the testing department I spoke to said there were problems with three specific types of activities.

- *Complete the activities with no more than two words. (Listening)*
- *Complete sentences below using the words in the box. Use each word once. (Vocabulary)*
- *Match the letters (titles) with the paragraphs. Use each letter once. (Reading)*

As an assessment policy, when students did not follow the instructions properly in the given activity, their answers were automatically considered wrong.

It became a major issue in my classes as based on my observations, not only their academic success suffered from this, seeking for a mother tongue translation or completely ignoring the instructions also started to affect my classroom flow, so that I found myself teaching less effectively.

The classes were becoming more teacher-oriented, which was not consistent with my ideals. The students were counting on the idea that I was going to explain what they were supposed to do; therefore, most of them didn't even bother to read. It was a conundrum for me because I have always considered prep schools as a transitional period for many students. I believe that prep schools are the place where they start to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour. It is the time when they break out of their shell and develop autonomy.

As an instructor, I also have a manager role (Roberts, 1998), which requires me to plan and organize my lessons accordingly. If I refused to give further explanations, I would put them at risk of failure. However, the more I helped with the instructions the less autonomous they were becoming. I needed to find some practical solutions to encourage them to read the written instructions, which ultimately would increase their autonomy.

Research focus

Setting

The research started at the beginning of the second term. My students were having evening classes and they had 24 hours of lessons a week. The system in our school required three different teachers to share the responsibility of the same class, so students were taking classes from three different teachers. We had only 8 hours of lessons together each week.

Participants

This research was conducted with 20 male and 2 female intermediate level engineering students in Çukurova University, School of Foreign Languages. This demographic information is of great importance as it reveals some significant background information to understand the reasons behind this phenomenon.

Data collection analysis procedure

I preferred a direct interaction with students in a group setting and developed a qualitative approach to collect my data. Group discussions were my primary data collection tool. Field notes and observation was also used to strengthen the procedure. I analysed the qualitative data by coding the students' responses and defined the emerging categories with a colleague of mine who has expertise in coding data. We negotiated over some themes and created a final matrix.

Findings and discussion

The starting point of this research was to explore the reasons underlying the students' tendency to skip written instructions. However, if it is going to be considered a problem, both sides should agree on the existence of the problem. Apparently, in my

case, my students were not aware that they were not reading the instructions when they were supposed to do so. To begin with, I implemented an awareness-raising activity to draw their attention to this problem. Then, periodically, based on the most problematic areas, I gave them tasks to work on.

Week 1

As it is mentioned before, it is 4-week-plan. The first week was allocated to highlight the issue and define the problem from the perspective of students. I prepared a reading activity and at the end of the paper, in relatively smaller font size, I put a note that said:

Now that you have read all the directions and have read the entire test, you only need to write your name at the top and do not answer any questions, give your test to the teacher and do not tell anybody the secret of this test. Take out a novel to read or your homework and work quietly. Do not make a noise or tell anyone. Good Work!

In the group discussion part after the activity, some important themes occurred concerning their reasons of not reading the instructions first.

Table 1: Reported causes of not reading instructions – week 1

Themes	Comments
Lack of Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The text was long and I didn't want to lose time reading the instructions.</i> • <i>There were unknown words in the text, I focused on those words, and I panicked.</i> • <i>I was going to finish the task and leave so I didn't read the whole text</i>

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Overconfidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It was an easy activity, I'm familiar with these kinds of activities.</i> • <i>I thought we were just supposed to read and answer the questions; I didn't need to read the instructions.</i> • <i>It was a basic true / false activity and I knew the routine.</i> • <i>I didn't read the instructions because I'm good at reading and it seemed an easy activity.</i> |
| Lack of reading habit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I don't like reading activities, so I wanted to finish it quickly.</i> • <i>I don't like reading something. If you had warned us orally, I would have listened.</i> • <i>I don't even like reading novels or news, it is boring for me.</i> • <i>I don't read any instructions; I look at the activities and start doing them.</i> |
-

For the first and the last theme, we can understand their reasons by considering their academic background. As I have stated before, they are engineering students and they have spent a great amount of time solving math problems in limited time. They expressed that they did not have to read most of the questions as they consisted of geometrical figures and formulas.

Week 3

As a follow up activity, I decided to address one of the problematic areas which were discussed before. It was a listening activity and the instructions were as below:

Direction: "Listen to the audio and write one word only for each blank."

Lack of time was one of the most common reasons which they claimed to prevent them from reading the instructions. To minimize these complaints, I allocated more than enough time to go over the text before and after.

Before the activity, a few students asked the routine question and expected me to make further explanations on the task. I resisted the temptation to explain the instruction in L1 and reminded them to read the instructions carefully.

Despite the clear and short instruction, the number of students who used more than one word was remarkable. Almost half of the students didn't follow the instructions carefully. In following group discussion, they stated why they ignored reading the instructions. The reasons sounded like those that emerged in the first week.

Table 2: Reported reasons for not reading the instructions – Week 3

-
- *The activity seemed clear; we were going to complete the blanks. I thought I didn't need to read the instructions.*
 - *I thought using two words was not going to be a problem.*
 - *I was going over the sentences so I didn't think of checking the instructions carefully.*
 - *I was not listening to you when you warned us about the instructions. I was reading the questions.*
 - *I read but I didn't understand the instruction.*
-

The reasons were varied. I believe it is essential to add a note here that one of the students who read and clearly understood the instruction wanted to confirm with me asking if they were going to use only one word. I was both confused and enlightened at the same time. It took me some time to comprehend this behaviour. Then, I came to the conclusion that we live in a community in which listening to an authority figure is sacred. This starts at home listening and obeying your parents, followed by school years where you listen and obey your teachers and this prevails in other parts of society such as politics, and religion. Students have not been encouraged adequately to think for themselves or ask questions. They show great respect to the authorities and follow their words. Thus, listening to a person or following an oral

instruction has always been easier compared to reading. Then, in the absence of an oral directive, they get confused as they may think, if it was as important as they think, the authority figure would make the necessary explanation even though it is explained in writing clearly.

Week 5

The activity I designed in the fifth week of the plan was awareness raising. Compared to the activity implemented in the first week, this activity stressed the importance of proper instructions. It was a pair work activity which required students to write instructions for the given tasks. There was a wide range of tasks necessitating different instructions for each.

After the completion of the task, the feedback session started. They were supposed to give feedback on each other's instructions. The feedback session revealed important changes in the perception of students. They were able to make some constructive comments:

Table 3: Students' feedback on each other's instructions – week 5

-
- *How am I going to complete this activity? Do I have to use the correct tense or just the verbs as they are?*
 - *How am I supposed to fill the blanks? Which words am I going to use? (It was a listening activity)*
 - *This is a listening activity. Why didn't you write, "Listen to the audio first"*
 - *Do I have to change these words? (It was a word formation activity.)*
 - *Am I going to write the answers or just talk about this? (It was a reading activity)*
 - *There are more letters than numbers. Do I have to use each one only once? (It was a matching activity)*
 - *This instruction is too long. You should make it shorter and clearer. (It was a word formation activity)*
-

As usual, we conducted a group discussion after the feedback session. Their comments on the activity were positive and promising. I wondered how they had been making use of these activities since the beginning of the term. A few students shared how these sessions had helped them in the quiz, stating that until they read the instructions, they misunderstood the task. One of them suggested that we should do these kinds of activities at the very beginning of the first term, adding only then could they make a habit of it and derive greater benefit from it.

Week 7

As the last step of the plan, I switched back to a more traditional vocabulary activity in which they were supposed to use the words only once. My focus on these types of activities results from my consultation with the testing department. As was mentioned before, these kinds of activities are the most problematic ones. The reaction they showed when they checked the instruction was priceless. They took a minute to read it before they started the task and they warned each other to use only one word for the gaps.

It became evident that the students went through a learning-to-read instruction process. The summary of the changes in students' perceptions towards instructions is tabulated below:

Table 4: Changing perceptions

Process	Developing perceptions
Week 1	Lack of awareness and habit of reading instructions
Week 3	Continuance of neglect
Week 5	Trying reading instructions
Week 7	Developing awareness and understanding

Reflections and looking into future

One of the things I learned was, as one of the students stated above, that I should have started it earlier. I should have addressed the issue at the beginning of the term and throughout the semester by following a more systematic approach. One of the main reasons why I wanted to do this research was to help my students gain autonomy. I believe that by refusing to explain the written instructions orally, I could have given them responsibility for their own learning. It may seem a small step but I believe it is essential. Moreover, I realized that teaching to read the instructions takes time and effort. It is a skill that can and must be taught explicitly. I had to be patient to break the habit and I had to be consistent in my behaviour. I think of developing different ways of drawing students' attention to the instructions and monitor how students perform better when they do so. I also believe engagement in helping students understand what they are going to perform plays a critical role in their learning process too. Through this study, I developed my own understanding of an issue I neglected without being aware of it. The next step is going to be designing different activities that would help students read and understand the instructions better. I think I can do the following:

- Find out whether the written instructions are comprehensible enough
- Read and revise before sharing with students
- Monitor if instructions are clearly explained and understood
- Develop different ways of providing instructions
- Avoid using complex language
- Allow students time to read and understand instructions.

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8 *A small practice with teacher-prepared videos to reinforce already studied vocabulary*

Hüsnü Gümüř & Demet Yaylı

Main focus

As an English instructor, I (the first author of this manuscript) have always wanted to find a way in which I can teach vocabulary without making it seem like I am forcing new words into the memories of my students. I believe that the key to ‘real-life-like’ vocabulary acquisition means learning it naturally. So, two questions which have challenged me are: What is this situation like in my case? Do I teach vocabulary in a natural way? In order to find the answers, I decided to investigate my practice. As Burns (2010) indicates, doing research in the classroom helps teachers close a gap between what they see happening in their classes and what they would like to see. Considering what I really want to see in my class, I have realized that I should not limit my instruction to fill-in-the-blank worksheets, matching, and vocabulary quizzes prepared in a traditional way. Instead, I have always believed in making use of social media, technology, and authentic videos for vocabulary instruction. Therefore, when my advisor, (the second author) asked me to carry out a small study as a course requirement in the MA program on English language teaching in which I was enrolled, I was eager to focus on vocabulary teaching enhanced with videos, as one of my central points of interest.

Background

In recent years, authentic videos have been more frequently emphasized as valuable tools to improve word recognition and vocabulary acquisition skills, together with other skills in the

English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom (King, 2002; Stempleski, 1992, 2002; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990). Videos allow teachers to introduce any aspect of real life situations into the language learning environment, which helps learners contextualize their learning in a meaningful way (Sherman, 2003). Especially when enriched with complementary tasks, they can serve different teaching goals. When students engage with a video task, for instance, the visual element of videos enables low proficient learners who often cannot get help from contextual cues to retrieve lexical information more easily (Al-Seghayer, 2001). The visual element can likewise help high proficient learners to be conscious of new and unfamiliar vocabulary items that might be otherwise simply lost to them without the support of visual aids (Al-Seghayer, 2001). Canning-Wilson (2000) proposes also that images contextualized in video can facilitate the reinforcement of language learning. The visual dimension makes recall of the vocabulary easier because such recalling is enhanced with gestures and contextual features (Talavan, 2007). Stempleski and Tomalin (1990) suggest that video sequences need to be kept short so that students can focus on the target vocabulary without losing their interest. Also, “[o]ne of the greatest challenges a teacher of English in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context faces is that English is not used authentically in the settings in which students live” (Seferoğlu, 2008, p. 1).

It can be argued that in Turkey, which is an EFL setting, students need films and videos to be exposed to authentic language use. Some studies have been conducted in this context to find the perspectives of students of an English language teaching (ELT) program on integrating feature films in oral communication classes (Seferoğlu, 2008) or of pre-service teachers of English on their practice with films in microteaching sessions (Yaylı, 2009). In Seferoğlu’s (2008) study, a group of pre-service EFL teachers integrated movies into their oral communication classes. The researcher was the instructor who helped the participants design group activities that included previewing, viewing the whole

film, using viewing sheets, keeping vocabulary and pronunciation notebooks, keeping film response journals and role-playing. The results obtained from a Likert-scale questionnaire and some open-ended questions at the end of a semester revealed that all participants found this experience enjoyable and rewarding. They also unanimously agreed that through films they had the opportunity to learn about how people initiate and sustain a conversation, how they negotiate meaning and non-verbal communication.

In a similar study, Yaylı (2009) investigated a group of pre-service EFL teachers' initial perspectives on using feature films in language teaching and then traced how these perspectives evolved after their microteaching experience of using films. The participants integrated film segments in their speaking, reading and listening activities. The qualitative content analysis of the data gathered through open-ended survey questionnaire items and semi-structured interviews revealed that there were differences between the initial and final perceptions of the participants. After their microteaching experience with movie segments, the participants' reflected their increasing awareness of specific language used in specific situations.

Keeping in mind students' needs for at least 'semi-authentic' language use in class (if not totally 'authentic' through being unscripted and created for a purpose other than teaching), the teaching practice that we will describe below aimed to offer students a better recall of previously learned lexical items and for this purpose two short 'semi-authentic' videos were prepared.

Research methodology

This 'small practice' with teacher-prepared videos was carried out with two groups of students (pre-intermediate and intermediate) at a School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey. Before the actual practice, I (first author) informed my advisor about the proficiency levels of my students, their existing knowl-

edge of vocabulary and the content of the videos I was planning to prepare. My advisor suggested using Stempleski's (2002) film viewing activity stages and types, which involve pre-viewing, during viewing and post-viewing activities. Stempleski (2002) advises teachers to "promote active viewing and increase student comprehension and recall by planning video-related lessons for three stages of activity: previewing, viewing, and postviewing" (p. 366). I decided to design my teacher-prepared video classes based on these stages.

Considering the vocabulary knowledge and proficiency levels of my two groups of students, I prepared short videos. I recorded videos in which some of my colleagues (i.e., two native speaker teachers and two non-native speaker teachers of English) performed the dialogues. In class, during viewing and after viewing the videos, the students completed vocabulary activities which I had designed to reinforce some of their already studied vocabulary. At the end of the classes, my students shared their ideas about the use of videos in language learning. The purpose of doing this was that I was both curious about my students' reflections on this practice and I wanted to share their views with my colleagues and my advisor.

For the pre-intermediate students, the video included a dialogue between two colleagues on a health issue. The words they used in the conversation were mainly from the students' reading book, *Read This 2* (Mackey & Savage, 2010). I asked warm-up questions for the pre-viewing part and distributed questions to be answered during the video viewing activity. After watching the video twice, the students' answers were discussed. Following this activity, I asked these students to do a speaking activity which served as a post-viewing activity to encourage them to use the target vocabulary again (see Appendix A).

For the intermediate-level students, the video included a news report presented by two native speaker colleagues. Like the first video, the report they presented included several target vocabulary items that the students had already studied in their textbook,

Read This 3 (Savage, 2010). After the warm-up students watched the video and participated in some during-viewing activities (see Appendix B). For instance, students supplied missing information in a summary of the news report, while watching the video. After the second viewing, their answers were discussed. Following this activity, I asked the students to discuss some post-viewing questions which urged them to use the target vocabulary one more time. The questions in the post-viewing activity were again related to the video and the students exchanged their ideas in groups. They also practised some grammatical structures as well as vocabulary while discussing these questions.

At the end of these two sessions using videos, the students in each level shared their views on this experience both in written and oral form. I videotaped their oral responses and reaction and I also collected the views of students in both groups through semi-structured interview questions. For the analysis of the verbal data, I first transcribed the utterances and translated them into English. Following qualitative content analysis procedures, I read the transcripts several times to develop categories. In other words, I searched through my data to “for regularities and patterns as well as for topics” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.161). I will discuss the students’ views by quoting their actual statements below.

Findings and discussion

The aim of this practice was to reinforce already studied vocabulary items with the help of a semi-authentic video and some pre-, during- and post-viewing activities. As was evident in the students’ interviews, viewing videos was not only warmly welcomed but was also observed to motivate them during the class. Although it would be wrong to assert that only one practice with the integration of videos reinforced the knowledge of existing vocabulary, it was observed that the students pushed themselves to use their existing vocabulary, especially in the post-viewing discussions. The participating students’ positive comments on this practice were as follows:

I think it was an effective activity as we have been practicing vocabulary through watching and then we transferred the knowledge to some written exercise. Watching, speaking and writing were together. I hope we will do similar exercises again. (Participant 28, Pre-Int)

I liked this activity because I learnt vocabulary items much better. I am not good at memorizing words but by watching videos and doing activities with friends, I think I have learnt words more easily. (Participant 17, Int)

The participants mostly focused on the ease of vocabulary learning or activation of their existing vocabulary, the fun they had while studying together and the integration of skills as the benefits of video viewing for vocabulary reinforcement. In contrast, I also gathered some negative views in these follow-up interviews. Some students complained of a lack of grammatical practice that could help them with the formation of vocabulary items (i.e., providing exercises for antonyms, synonyms and prepositions used after some of the target vocabulary).

Vocabulary activities with videos would have been much better if the synonyms and antonyms of some words had been given as well because we need such knowledge especially in exams. I also find it difficult to find the suitable prepositions after some words (Participant 18, Int.)

I was aware, however, that their biggest concern was to pass tests and so it was not surprising to hear comments emphasizing their need for more grammar-based rather than usage-based vocabulary practice. Some participants also mentioned the difficulties they had with vocabulary in writing classes which may have accounted for their statements that they needed more practice to

form sentences with words. Since our activities were limited to the recall (i.e., dictation activities in viewing stage) and reinforcement (i.e., speaking activities in post-viewing stage) of some already studied vocabulary, extra practice with usage of these words in different contexts (e.g., using words in text writing and etc.) was not provided.

I can learn words easily but when it comes to using these words in essay writing, I fail. (Participant, 11, Int.)

In my study, my focus was on activating and reinforcing the previous vocabulary knowledge of the learners. Based on the students' positive reflections, it seems that semi-authentic videos can be valuable in an EFL setting. Collecting students' views at the end of this new practice meant that I learnt a lot from my students. My intention was to do what I thought would be good for my students, and I received a lot of positive reactions to the use of videos for vocabulary recall. In terms of the negative views reflected, my colleagues and my advisor were a little surprised by the students' emphasis on grammar exercises to support their vocabulary. However, our students are conscious that they live in a test-oriented country where their exposure to authentic language is limited. What I have learnt from these negative comments is valuable. It means that next time I make use of videos for vocabulary teaching I should focus more on word formation, antonyms, synonyms and collocations of targeted vocabulary. Also I should design longer writing activities in which students will challenge themselves to use words, not just in sentences or short dialogues, but in creative texts as well. Although I did this practice as a part of an academic requirement, I found both the video and activity preparation and data analysis stages edifying. I was able to combine my theoretical readings and the experience I gained in the practice while writing this manuscript under the guidance and with the support of my advisor.

Reflections and looking into the future

Even if only to motivate learners and to expose them to authentic language, teachers should create some outside-the-class time to prepare their own videos. After this experience, I have learnt that vocabulary practice with different videos which can be designed according to both the communicative and grammatical needs of learners might be more effective in my teaching context. Although authentic materials have immense benefits for the communicative needs of learners, their need to practise the grammatical structure of words should not be ignored, especially as some students feel highly pressured in their test-oriented institutions to pass certain tests. I have learnt a lot through listening to my students' views, in line with Wyatt's suggestion (2016) that "[i]f we listen, though, to the voices of learners and teachers connected through teacher research, the psychological and educational benefits of such activity very soon start to emerge" (p. 3).

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APPENDIX A

Dialogue

fever manager on the market pain patients pill prevent similar

Seher: Hi Ceren. How are you ? Ohh ! What's the matter? You don't look very well.

Ceren: I don't know exactly, but last night I was in a lot of **pain**, so I went to the doctor.

Seher: So, what did the doctor say?

Ceren: He could not examine me in detail because there were a lot of **patients** in the queue. He said I had high **fever**.

Seher: Did he prescribe any medicine for you?

Ceren: Yes. He gave me some **pills**. He said he recommended these pills because they are the best **on the market**. He also said these pills not only reduce fever but also help to **prevent** headaches.

Seher: Yes... I had a **similar** problem and I took these pills. They relieved my pain and fever in a short time. You still look bad, though.

Ceren: I know. If I don't feel very well, I will talk to the **manager** and ask for permission to go home.

Seher: Yes, I think you should do that. Anyway, get well soon. If you need anything, just call me OK? See you later.

Ceren: Thanks a lot. See you.

During Viewing Activities

Part A: Answer the following questions.

- 1- Why did Ceren go to the doctor?
- 2- Was the doctor able to examine Ceren very well? If not, why?

- 3- What kind of medicine did the doctor prescribe for Ceren's problem?
- 4- What will Ceren do if she doesn't feel very well?

Part B : Watch the video and write True or False. Correct the false ones.

- 1- Ceren had a terrible headache so she went to the doctor.

- 2- The doctor examined Ceren very well. _____
- 3- The doctor gave Ceren the best medicine for her problem.

- 4- The pills the doctor gave are only useful for high fever.

- 5- Ceren might go home early today because of her illness.

Post Viewing Activity

Part C : Discuss the following questions with your partner.

- 1- What would you do if you had a similar health problem?
- 2- What do you think will happen if her boss does not let Ceren go home?
- 3- What should Ceren do in order to recover?

APPENDIX B

Dialogue and During Listening Activity

Part A: Samantha and Kristy interviewed some people about the coming elections. You are going to watch a video about it and complete the summary of their results.

The first question: First of all, what was your reaction when you found out about the _____ (a)?

Response: It was not a surprise for me. I think _____ (b) parties made smart decisions. All of them have a successful

political background. However, they should organize really good _____ (c) in order to affect the public's opinions positively. They should come up with original ideas to _____ (d) the country.

The second question: Are you satisfied with the economic _____ (e) proposed?

Response: Economic developments are very important for the _____ (f) of the country and I have to confess that this year was not a good one in terms of economy. Better strategies should be implemented as soon as possible.

The third question: Finally what are your expectations from the next president?

Response: I strongly believe that the next president should _____ (g) the country respecting all people's opinions and life styles. He should also prevent the _____ (h) activities in the country. He should deal with some _____ (i) issues such as election system, or capital punishment. But most importantly, he should not be like a _____ (f) we live in a democratic country.

Journalist: Thank you very much for your time. Have a good day.

Post Viewing Activity

PART B: Discuss the following questions with your partner.

- 1- What should governments do to develop their countries?
- 2- What are the current problems in your country? Economy, education, employment etc.
- 3- If you were the president of your country, what changes would you make in the country?

9

Twofold transformation: Promoting learner autonomy and teaching speaking skills to ESL learners

Sadeqa Ghazal & Smriti Singh

Main focus

This paper presents a selection of the findings of a nine-month long action research study conducted in a high school in India. This study emerged from the need of our learners to speak in English and become better language learners. We focused on the dual goal of fostering autonomy while teaching speaking because effective communication needs the speaker to be autonomous (Little, 2003). When learners are actively engaged with their learning, it is likely to be more effective, more focused and personally relevant. Also it would solve the problem of motivation because the learners would be proactive. Here we describe how we used class discussions and debates as effective tools for increasing student talk-time and optimizing language learning affordances. We go on to explain how the learners' attitude, language learning behaviour and speaking skill improved. We conclude by critically reflecting upon how this study influenced us as teachers and researchers.

Background

Speaking in English remains a challenge for many students in India (Patil, 2008; Singh, 2011). The prevalent Indian educational scenario still follows the teaching style which Paulo Freire famously called "the banking concept of education" (Freire, 1996). The use of text books is mostly prescriptive becoming the teaching method itself (Akbari, 2008). Quite often English is taught as a content-based subject like History wherein the meaning

of a prescribed text is explained by the teacher and the answers to post-chapter questions are dictated to the students. They are asked to memorize these answers for examinations (Singh, 2011). Students read the prescribed text, complete writing tasks, and practise grammar lessons. But they seldom get a chance to practise speaking in class. L1 remains the language for classroom communication even in ESL classes. This is a pervasive issue affecting ESL learners across India. It results in serious problems such as lack of motivation, rote-learning, learner passiveness, and low level of learner engagement (Patil, 2008; Singh, 2011; Little, 2003; Little, 2016; Meddings & Thornbury, 2011).

Our teaching-learning context was a microcosm of the above scenario. The school policy strongly favoured the grammar-translation method; so much so that they had two different teachers for the teaching of the textbook and the teaching of grammar. The teachers did not coordinate their lessons as a result of which grammar and language learning were perceived as unrelated tasks by students. Students' existing autonomy was neglected as the focus was on 'covering the syllabus'. Moreover, the classes were held in challenging circumstances. The class size was large. The classrooms were overcrowded, technologically unequipped, with little space for movement, and prone to outside disturbances. The students did not have their own laptops, gadgets or smart phones.

Literature review

Speaking is a "combinatorial skill" that involves doing various things at the same time (Johnson, 1996). Burns (2012) defines speaking as "...a highly complex and dynamic skill that involves the use of several simultaneous processes – cognitive, physical and socio-cultural – and a speaker's knowledge and skills have to be activated rapidly in real-time" (p. 166). As a productive skill it involves responding to the incoming information without any time lapse. The speakers need to maintain the flow of the talk and need to have achieved a degree of automaticity in both planning and

production of sentences (Thornbury, 2006). For teaching speaking it is valuable for teachers to understand what speaking competence means and why it takes more than simply “doing” speaking activities in the classroom (Burns, 2012). Second language speaking competence comprises knowledge of language and discourse, core speaking skills, and communication and discourse strategies (Goh & Burns, 2012). The following model explains this combination further:

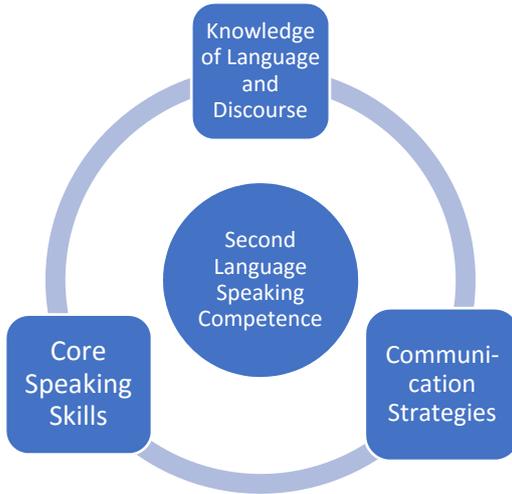


Figure 1. Components of second language speaking competence (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 53)

Learning to speak in a second language involves increasing the ability to use these components, enabling the learners to produce spontaneous, fluent, appropriate, and accurate spoken language.

This ability can be developed only through use and it also requires learners to be aware of their own language learning processes. This is why, as teachers, we believe promoting learner autonomy must be an essential aspect of ESL teaching. Put simply, learner autonomy is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learn-

ing” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). It is also defined as “a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person” (Dam et al., 1990, p. 102). The classroom should provide an optimal learning environment through the establishment of the discourse of learner autonomy by the teacher (Little, 2016). In such a class, learners are encouraged to make choices, use the target language and monitor their outcomes. Learners’ intrinsic motivation is engaged deliberately by exploiting their drive for autonomy, while promoting relatedness, and insisting on competence. The goal is always to enable them to produce the target language (here English) through spontaneous and authentic activities. Such a learning environment allows learners to master a range of second language discourse and keeps them motivated (Little, 2003).

Research methodology

In this section we first introduce students who participated in this study. This is followed by pre-study findings which helped us in framing our objectives and research questions. Next we describe the tools used for data collection and our action plan.

Participants

The research involved students of grade eight and nine in a high school in Patna (India). There were 83 students in all, 48 in grade eight and 35 in grade nine. They studied English as a part of their high school curriculum. In this paper we are presenting selected results from the study focusing only on grade nine (35 girls). They all spoke the same first language and had very limited experience of speaking English. Their English proficiency level ranged between A1 and A2 level (CEFR, 2001). We explained the purpose of this study to them in their L1 and got their permission to use their writings, photos, and recordings. We also shared our plan in detail with the school administration and permission was duly granted by them.



Photo1. Participant students (Source: Authors)

Pre-Study findings

In order to check the authenticity of our assumptions about our context, we spent about three months identifying the problems and needs of students through classroom observation, informal interviews of learners, and a pre-study questionnaire. On triangulation of this data, multiple issues emerged confirming most of our assumptions. The learners cited several reasons for not speaking English in class. Shyness, fear of making errors and being ridiculed for it held them back. They strongly believed that their classroom was a not supportive place to speak English. They also shared concern about the prevalent culture of rote-learning. They were aware that the lessons were mostly focused on reading and writing but there was very limited or no speaking practice. They were unable to form sentences to express their own ideas. About 87 percent of students felt they needed more speaking practice than working on other skills. They also expressed willingness to make extra efforts to work on their speaking.

Objectives and guiding questions

Our objectives were to improve learners' speaking skill and to foster learner autonomy. The research questions were: Which activities would facilitate teaching speaking skills while fostering learner autonomy among our students? How do learners benefit from them? Were there any negative effects on learners?

Data collection tools

We used multiple data collection tools to ensure accuracy of results. We used teacher journal entries of classroom observation every week for reflecting upon our lessons, changes in students' behaviour, and for keeping track of emergent issues. We collected samples of learners' spoken language using audio and video recording. We took feedback from students using questionnaires, with both five-point Likert-type questions and open-ended questions, administered at the end of each AR cycle (about three months apart). At the end of the study, students were asked to submit a written report about their experience of participating in this study.

Action plan

The action research (AR) study was conducted in three cycles over a period of nine months. The period and plan of each cycle was not pre-fixed; rather each cycle was shaped and developed according to authentic and spontaneous learning needs. The first cycle focused on establishing a supportive culture where learners would feel confident to speak in English without the fear of being ridiculed or scolded. We constantly reminded them that they were learning speaking and making errors is a part of learning. We aimed to ensure that the fear of being grammatically incorrect would not hold them back. During this period, they worked on very easy speaking tasks such as summing up a lesson or describing their weekend. They were also trained to complete simple writing tasks on their own rather than ask the teacher or copy

from others. These were our first steps towards an autonomous class where students were constantly made aware of the 'why' and 'how' of language learning. At the end of the first cycle, we took feedback from students asking them to choose some speaking activities for further practice. Students could select more than one activity from a given list or suggest one of their own (see Appendix A). Fourteen out of 35 learners voted for group discussions and 13 voted for debates. A few chose role plays, games and telling stories (11, 10 and 10 respectively). Group discussions and debates were practised regularly.

During the second AR cycle, as a supportive class culture was taking root, we introduced class discussion. Discussions were mostly on topics that were relevant to students or emerged from the reading of their course book. For example, they decided to organize a school fair and discussed their plans in class. Students took turns to share their ideas. Later, they added to ideas shared by others or criticized them if needed. The teacher facilitated this discussion but did not interrupt to correct errors. Feedback about language use was given only when the discussion was over. During this cycle we observed and confirmed with our learners that they felt more confident when they wrote down their ideas before speaking. This insight led us to use writing as a scaffold for speaking. Students were encouraged to write their ideas before they spoke. This helped them to be prepared. As the learners' became more capable of producing connected sentences we introduced debates during the third AR cycle. The topics for debates were suggested by students and they voted to select one for each week. By this time their critical thinking ability and fluency had developed enough to speak for a sustained time. The speakers prepared the argument on the selected topic on their own. They were also able to ask critical questions during the debate and reply to those questions immediately. Since all students could not participate as speakers in a single period; the rest of the class was assigned the role of listeners. The debates were recorded for a post-debate analysis. The listeners were asked to notice the use of language

and then comment upon it during post-debate analysis. This was a crucial stage for learning language through self-correction and peer-correction. Students were trained to notice not only errors but also the correct use of language. For example, if a student used a discourse marker correctly or used language innovatively, this was to be mentioned.



Photo 2: Students participating in debate (Source: Authors)



Photo 3: Students participating in debate (Source: Authors)

Findings and discussion

Findings from the questionnaires administered at the end of each AR cycle (see Appendices A, B, and C) indicated a positive change over time in the attitude and beliefs of students regarding self-confidence, dependence on the teacher, and the learning environment.

Figure 1 shows the changes in students' confidence level as the study progressed. It can be observed that the number of students who felt confident about speaking English doubled from 7 to 14 from the first AR cycle to the third. The number of those who felt nervous or very nervous did not change considerably (8 to 7) but the number of students whose attitude changed according to the situation was reduced from 16 to 7. Three students felt very confident at the end of the study whereas no one felt so in the beginning.

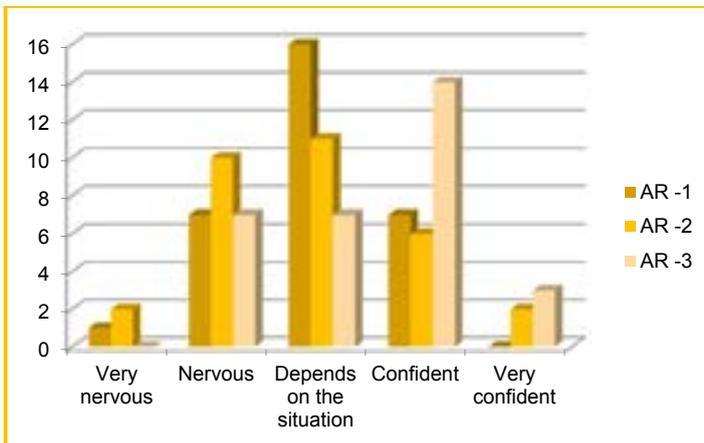


Figure 1: How confident do you feel about speaking in English?

Figure 2 shows how students' beliefs about the teacher's responsibility changed. The number of students who thought that the teacher should not provide answers increased from 11 in the first AR cycle to 24 in the third. The number of those who were

not sure was reduced from 13 to 2. But the number of those who believed that it is the teacher’s job to provide answers did not change considerably (7 to 5) during this study.

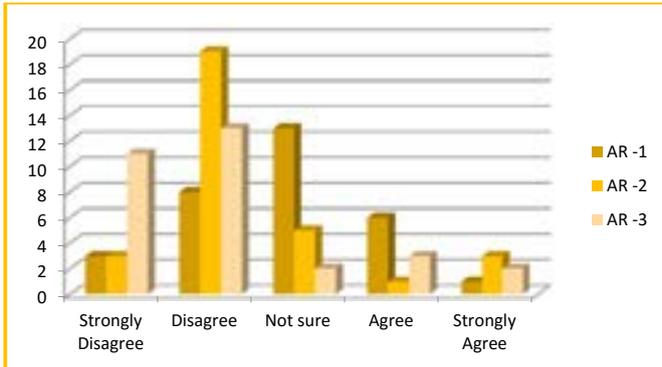


Figure 2: *The teacher should be responsible for providing the correct answers.*

Figure 3 shows changes in students’ beliefs about their classroom culture in terms of how supportive it was for speaking English. The number of students who felt it was supportive grew from 16 to 31 from AR-1 to AR-3. This means that all respondents agreed about this aspect at the end of the study.

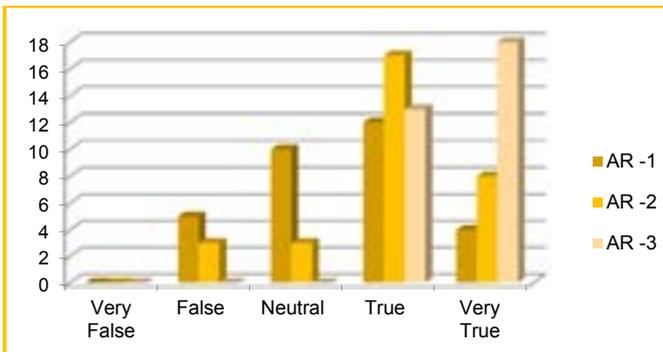


Figure 3: *We have a positive classroom culture which helps in speaking in English.*

A final questionnaire at the end of the study further confirmed these findings.

Table 1: Frequency analysis of end of the study feedback from students (See Appendix C)

Sl. No.	Statement	Very False	False	Neutral	True	Very True	Total
1.	This year I participated in class discussions more than I did last year.	0	1	3	16	11	31
2.	I share my ideas in my own words.	0	1	4	10	16	31
3.	I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English.	2	14	7	7	1	31
4.	I learn from my own mistakes.	0	1	5	13	12	31
5.	I correct my mistakes on my own.	0	1	11	14	5	31
6.	I think critically while writing and speaking.	1	1	3	20	6	31
7.	I practice speaking even outside the class.	0	0	9	9	13	31
8.	I keep working on small goals as an English language learner.	0	4	4	17	6	31

(Four students were unable to submit responses for this feedback. Therefore only 31 responses are included here.)

According to Table 1, most of the students (27) believed they were more actively involved in class discussion than in the previous year (Item 1). The number of students (26) who believed that they were capable of thinking critically is the same as those who believed that they could share their ideas in their own words (Item 2 and 6). This finding clearly supports the previous one that students became less dependent on the teacher and more confident while speaking. The result for Item 3 indicates that a substantial number of students (8) were still afraid of making errors and some others (7) were likely to feel the same. However, this did not stop them from participating in class. Comparison of Item 4 and 5 reveals that the number of students capable of self-regulated learning (25) was higher than those who practised self-correction (19). About 35 percent of students (11) recorded a neutral response to self-correction. Item 7 and 8 indicate that the majority of the students (22 and 23 respectively) were motivated enough to practise speaking even outside the class and to work on their personal English learning goals.

Critically reflecting upon this data and comparing it with our observational notes we can conclude that there was a noticeable increase in students' participation and self-regulation. Though students were still dependant on the teacher to offer corrective feedback, they were producing more connected and logically sounding discourse to express themselves and were regularly retrieving newly learned vocabulary, lexical chunks, and sentence structures. The instances of rote learning and copying declined sharply and students reported feeling relieved as their own words following the study suggest.

Student A: I feel that now I am a good language learner and my confidence level is rising up gradually.

Student B: I feel like I am now more confident than earlier. Now I can speak English without hesitation and fluently too.

Student C: I am feeling very confident while communicating in English with my friends and family. Now I can speak during debate in English in front of my class.

Student D: I learnt to express my own ideas by using phrases. I learnt self-correction.

Student E: I liked the debate most and also sharing about our own experiences.

Student F: I learnt to speak, not fluently, but with very few mistakes. I take part in debates. It makes me a good speaker and also makes me able to speak on any topic. It helps to take part in debates in other classes.

Reflections and looking into the future

The study aimed to establish an autonomous classroom discourse to provide optimal language learning affordances. As the study progressed learner autonomy was developed and fostered through the speaking activities themselves, which became a complimentary cycle where one enforced and sustained the other. Working to achieve our goals, while negotiating a prescribed syllabus, was a considerable challenge. Although the use of a different approach was permitted by the school administration, we had to research within the test-oriented framework of a high school curriculum. At the beginning, students were worried about their examination scores and could not understand the importance of giving feedback. Later, their attitudes grew more positive, especially after they scored excellent marks in the mid-term exams.

Initially we found it challenging to reconcile the research and teaching aspect due to lack of time. As the study progressed we embraced the idea of being a researcher-teacher-learner, all at the same time. Also, critically reflecting upon our notes and students' feedback enabled us to teach with more empathy. We learned to design and scaffold lessons keeping in mind our learners' background and limitations. Rather than demanding sudden

change from them we learned to be patient and persistent. This research has also led us to believe that it is possible to bring about change without depending on technology. In future, we aim to make action research accessible for fellow teachers working in similar contexts, thereby bridging the gap between research and classroom practices.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for Students' Feedback after Action Research Cycle – 1

Select only one answer for the questions given below:

1. How confident do you feel about speaking in English in our English class these days?
 - a) Very nervous
 - b) Nervous
 - c) It depends on the situation
 - d) Confident
 - e) Very confident

2. Would you like to have more speaking practice in our English class these days?
a) No, it is more than enough b) No, it is okay
c) Not sure d) Yes, some more
e) Yes, a lot more
3. How useful it is to get some time to think over an idea before speaking in the class?
a) Quite useless b) Useless
c) Not sure about it d) Useful
e) Very useful
4. Our class culture is positive and helpful for speaking in English.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree
c) Not sure d) Agree
e) Strongly agree
5. I think the teacher should be more responsible for providing the correct answers.
a) Strongly disagree b) Disagree
c) Not sure d) Agree
e) Strongly Agree

You may select more than one answer for the question given below:

6. We should have more of this type of activity in class -
a) Group Discussions b) Reading in class
c) Vocabulary games d) Debates
e) Story-telling f) Role play and acting

Reply to these questions carefully. You may reply in any language you like (Eng, Hindi, or Urdu).

10. Suggest any class activity or homework which you would like to do.
11. What would you change about our current English class?
12. What would you not like to change about our current English class?

You may select more than one answer for the question given below:

6. I would prefer to _____ in English.
- a) do role play and drama
 - b) speak using idioms and words which I have learned from my textbook
 - c) have simple conversations
 - d) debate
 - e) have a discussion about topics I am interested in
 - f) deliver a speech before the whole class
 - g) tell stories, jokes, or share my own experience

Answer these questions carefully. You may reply in any language you like (Eng, Hindi, or Urdu).

7. Suggest some important and interesting topics/issues which you would like to be included in our speaking lessons.
8. Share your experience of the recent summative assessment of English (SA-I). Was it easy or challenging? Mention those tasks or ideas which you learnt in the class and which helped you in this exam. Also mention the problems you faced.
9. What would you change about our current English class?
10. What would you not like to change about our current English class?

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Students' Feedback after Action Research Cycle – 3 (End of the study)

Select only one answer for the questions given below:

1. How confident do you feel about speaking in English in our English class these days?
- a) Very nervous
 - b) Nervous
 - c) It depends on the situation
 - d) Confident
 - e) Very confident

2. Our class culture is positive and helpful for speaking in English.
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Not sure
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly agree

3. I think the teacher should be more responsible for providing the correct answers.
 - a) Strongly disagree
 - b) Disagree
 - c) Not sure
 - d) Agree
 - e) Strongly Agree

4. I share my ideas in my own words.
 - a) Very false
 - b) False
 - c) Neutral
 - d) True
 - e) Very true

5. I think critically when I write or speak.
 - a) Very false
 - b) False
 - c) Neutral
 - d) True
 - e) Very true

6. I learn from my own mistakes.
 - a) Very false
 - b) False
 - c) Neutral
 - d) True
 - e) Very true

7. I check and correct my mistakes on my own.
 - a) Very false
 - b) False
 - c) Neutral
 - d) True
 - e) Very true

8. I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in English.
 - a) Very false
 - b) False
 - c) Neutral
 - d) True
 - e) Very true

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9. This year I participated in class discussions more than I did last year.
- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| a) Very false | b) False |
| c) Neutral | d) True |
| e) Very true | |
10. I practice speaking English even outside the class.
- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| a) Very false | b) False |
| c) Neutral | d) True |
| e) Very true | |
11. I keep working on small goals as an English language learner.
- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| a) Very false | b) False |
| c) Neutral | d) True |
| e) Very true | |

Any other remark:

10 *The possible taste of students' happiness in EFL class recipes*

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan & Esra Altunkol

Main focus

The main focus of this exploratory action research was to understand the possible reasons that could make our students feel unhappy during their EFL learning experience at YADYO (The School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University in Turkey), with a view to helping them. As two colleagues working in the same institution and having a teaching philosophy that aims at an enthusiastic learning practice in our classes, we collaborated to find out about our puzzle with different levels of students in different classes. Our further aim was to make our students feel happier, i.e. more optimistic, open-minded, engaged, etc., as Seligman's PERMA Model (2002) suggests, so that they would feel eager to learn English and develop a positive attitude not only towards learning English but to their lives in general as well. For this purpose, 20 C1 and 16 B1 level students participated in our study to help us expand our knowledge beyond our own classrooms. Before our intervention, we collected data through the 'Oxford Happiness Questionnaire', the 'Happiness in an EFL Class Survey' and interviews with students. Then, we implemented some activities to help our students feel happier while learning English in our classes. We wanted to see if a 'pedagogy of happiness' (Zabihi & Ketabi, 2013) might be developed in our classroom settings. Throughout the study, we kept on writing our reflections related to our concerns and feedback regarding the processes. The findings and the students' resultant comments revealed that attending to our students' happiness would lead to more enthusiastic EFL learning experiences, as we report below.

Background

As EFL teachers, we believe we are in a strong position to create physical and interpersonal environments which are likely to generate more enthusiastic EFL practice. We are also aware that taking our students' emotions into consideration during our lessons might be a good starting point to achieve our aim. Antonio Damasio (2003, cited in Scoffham & Barnes, 2011, p. 537), who has conducted some influential research into the neural basis for emotions, contends that everything that happens to us is accompanied by some degree of emotion, especially if it is associated with social or personal problems. According to this view, which we endorse, "when we educators fail to appreciate the importance of students' emotions, we fail to appreciate a critical force in students' learning. One could argue that we fail to appreciate the very reason that students learn at all" (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007, p.9).

Additionally, Positive Psychology, defined by its founder Martin Seligman as the "scientific study of optimal human functioning [that] aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive" (in Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), contributes to our thinking. Among the topics studied in this field, happiness is very distinct thanks to its benefits such as positive affect and well-being leading to sociability, better health, success and resilience. Happiness in this respect, "is a positive force which enriches our sense of meaning, enhances our capabilities and enlarges the scope of our thinking", as Scoffham & Barnes (2011) claim in their study (p.547). Seligman (2011) recommends that people are capable of achieving a state of conscious and lasting happiness by being aware of the following five important pillars:

- Positive emotions
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Achievement

According to this PERMA model, no one element defines well-being, but each contributes to it. Drawing on the past literature on well-being, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) propose that a person's happiness is governed by 3 major factors: genetically determined, happiness related circumstantial and happiness relevant activities and practices. From their third point, we can conclude that happiness is teachable and can be incorporated into our daily teaching programs to help our students become happier.

Research methodology

The focus of our research revolved around the following research questions:

1. Why do some of our students seem unhappy in our EFL classes?
2. Are they really unhappy?
3. What makes them feel happier?
4. How can we help our students feel happier while learning English in our classes?

Research participants

Based on the results of a placement exam at YADYO, the students study English at different levels (L) such as L1-L2-L3. The academic year lasts for 8 months divided into four two-month blocks. So, L1 students start practicing EFL from A1 level and finish the one-year course completing B2, while L3 students finish the course by completing C1 according to the CEFR. For the purpose of this research, 2 different levels (L1 & L3) from 2 different classes, Class A (L3), twenty and Class B (L1), sixteen students participated in this study. Both of us were teaching general English to our classes ten hours weekly. We started collecting our data at the beginning of the third block and our implementation finished towards the end of the academic year.

Research approach and methods

Our research consisted of a collaborative, hands on approach through use of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, the Happiness in an EFL Class Survey and informal interviews with the students before and after our implementation. In this sense, we used both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data from our students to quantify our puzzle as well as gaining a deeper understanding of our students' experience. To be precise, as suggested by Allwright (2015), our aim was not necessarily to bring about change, although that might occur; we wanted "to contribute to our teaching and learning ourselves" (p.32).

Results

Step 1

OXFORD Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ)

As a first step to collect data, we used the 29-item Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (2002) (see Appendix 1). This scale was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University and is suggested as a good way to get a snapshot of one's current level of happiness in general and not related to activities such as studying in particular (Wright, 2008). Therefore, to initiate our discovery we had a look at our students' OHQ results. According to the results, despite seeming happier, the average class score of Class B could be interpreted within the same range with the average class score of Class A (see Table 1). When we interpreted the results according to the scoring guide of the questionnaire, we found that our students were not "particularly happy or unhappy" (see Table 2).

Table 1. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Results- Class A & Class B

Class	YADYO Level	Mean Score	Percentage of happiness
A (15 STDS)	3 (C1)	3.7	61.7
B (14 STDS)	1(B1)	4.1	69

Table 2. Interpretation of students' scores (OHQ, 2002)

3-4	Not particularly happy or unhappy. A score of 3.5 would be an exact numerical average of happy and unhappy responses.
4	Somewhat happy or moderately happy, satisfied. This is what the average person scores.

Step 2*Happiness in an EFL Class Survey (HECS)*

As a second step to our exploration, we developed a 4-question survey specifically related to happiness in learning English. In the survey, we asked the students to respond to the questions as openly and realistically as possible to help us understand the issue from their own perspectives. We clarified to them the importance of their contribution, which would help us create happier classroom environments. We didn't ask them to write their names to make them feel comfortable to express themselves freely without any ethical concerns. We also asked them to comment in Turkish to avoid the language barrier. When analysing the data, we translated students' responses and then classified and tabulated them. In answer to our first question, students gave the following responses (in Table 3 & Table 4, below).

Question1- Are you happy while learning English in this class? If your answer is negative or if you have other feelings, please clarify.

Table 3. Students' Responses to Question 1 (A & B)

Class	Number of Students	Happy N/N	Happy, but... N/N	Unhappy N/N	Unhappy, but... N/N
A	16	5/ 31.25	9/ 56.25	1/ 6.25	1/ 6.25
B	12	4/ 33.3	5/ 41.6	2/ 16.6	1/ 8.3

- * Happy but... implies that students were generally happy but they also had their unhappy moments.
- * Unhappy but... implies that students were generally unhappy but they also had their happy moments.

The frequencies in Table 4 are direct quotes from the individual students:

Table 4. Students' clarifications for feeling unhappy & happy, but... to Question 1 (Class A & Class B)

Students' clarifications for feeling unhappy & happy, but...	Frequency (F)
• The lessons are monotonous. This makes me feel unhappy and bored in class. (Class B)	2
• My happiness in class is dependent on the attitudes of my teachers. We have very nice teachers, but some of them affect me negatively. They are strict and intolerant to our language mistakes. Because of my fear of making mistakes, I keep silent and shy in class and the lessons become very boring and I feel unhappy. (Class A)	5
• When I get high grades, I feel happy and energetic. I love lessons and attend the lessons. When something goes wrong, I don't know how to do. I try to be strong against difficulties, but they exhaust me and I feel desperate. (Class A)	1
• It depends on my mood that day. If I'm sleepy, I have a bad day at school. (Class B)	1
• When I get a low grade, I feel unhappy. (Class B)	1
• I don't like the course book (Class A & Class B)	2+2
• Being evaluated by exams makes me feel unhappy. (Class A)	1
• I don't feel comfortable in this class. The characters of my friends, their attitudes, behaviors, my lack of knowledge in English (my level of English is lower) and our boring book make me feel this way. (Class A)	1
• Not the teachers nor the books, or something related to class make me feel unhappy. The system itself makes me unhappy. We have difficult exams and compared to the other universities, our passing grade is higher. Students at different universities pass the proficiency test when they get a 60, while we fail. (Class A)	1

As can be concluded from Table 4, some of the factors that made students unhappy were boring lessons, attitudes of their teachers and classmates, the course book, the assessment system and their own moods. These factors are presented in order of importance in Table 5 which also shows the students' answers to the second question of HECS.

Question 2- Thinking about the feeling you mentioned in your answer to the first question, write about the 10 factors that make you feel happy/unhappy or any feeling else... Please prioritize the order of importance according to yourself and explain the reasons.

Table 5. Ten factors that make students happy/unhappy in an EFL class (Class A & Class B)

Order of importance	HAPPY	UNHAPPY
1	Teachers' attitudes (friendly, supportive, encouraging, caring)	Boring topics
2	Friends (fun to be with, supportive, friendly)	Boring lessons (because of the book (monotonous), classroom participation, not enough extra activities for fun)
3	Classroom interaction (happily ever after...)	Anxiety, feeling nervous while speaking in English
4	Love of learning English	Being/feeling shy
5	The curriculum (the program itself, contributing to their development)	Teachers' intolerance towards students' mistakes (anxiety provoking)
6	Teachers' methodology and approach (having enjoyable lessons and learning at the same time)	Compulsory attendance, the time and the number of the lessons
7	Interesting topics	Exams, quizzes
8	Learning about something other than English	Teacher's oppressive behaviour towards attendance, homework, etc.
9	Speaking activities	Daily conflicts
10	Teaching aids (projector)	Personal problems

As can be seen in Table 5, teacher and classmate attitudes were the most important factors that made the students feel happy while lack of fun and uninteresting topics in the lessons were the most important causes of unhappiness in our classrooms.

The third question of the HECS was about what students themselves could do to feel happier while the fourth was what other people could do to make them feel happier considering the classroom environment, teaching aids, resources, attitude and behaviour, while learning English in our classes. In answer to question 3, some students responded that they should give up being shy, get rid of their speaking anxiety and participate more in the lessons, focus more and try to enjoy, prioritize their goals and attend more lessons. Their answers to question 4 revealed that our students wanted more interesting lessons with extra tasks like learning songs and

watching films in English accompanied by a more understanding, tolerant, caring and supportive attitude of their teachers. Consequently, considering the results we have gathered from our enquiry into our students' happiness in general and specifically in EFL lessons, we developed an action plan and started our intervention by using the ideas of PERMA for about 8 weeks.

Step 3

After discovering our students' thoughts regarding their happiness in their daily lives and in our EFL classes via OHQ, HECS and informal interviews which we referred to in the research methods section, we started implementing some ideas of PERMA and some related activities to our classroom practices.

Applying the ideas of PERMA in our classrooms

'P' of PERMA suggests building positive emotions to achieve a state of conscious and lasting happiness. Therefore, we both tried to ensure sustaining positivity during our lessons and outside the classroom in our relationships with the students. To do this, we encouraged sharing, caring, understanding, openness, appreciation and kindness by our short talks at the beginning of our lessons or while dealing with an ordinary daily event of the classroom life. Every day, we greeted our students with our genuine smiles and advised them to do the same whatever unfortunate thing happened that day.

For building engagement, the 'E' of PERMA, we told them about flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), to focus as much as they can and be involved in whatever they do to do by their entire bodies, including EFL learning.

According to Seligman (2011), positive relationships, the 'R' of the PERMA model, together with celebrating strengths and virtues can promote thriving groups, flourishing individuals and greater well-being. For this, we tried to build positive connections among the students by organizing different socializing activities

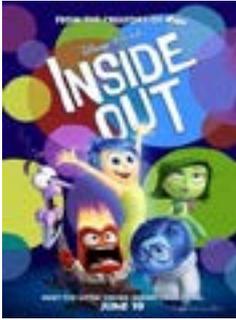
like going to the cinema together, having the coffee breaks in the school garden and preparing our food together at the lunch break and eating. We cared for the missing students, called them when they were absent in class or visited them at the hospital when they were ill.



For building meaning, the M of PERMA, as teachers of EFL, we tried to enhance students' speaking skills through the themes like family, mental and physical health, old people, community service and environment. Since every student had some background knowledge related to these issues, students enjoyed the speaking tasks we did in the classroom.

Lastly, achievement, the 'A' of PERMA was about the students' accomplishing their goals which required their skill and effort. Therefore, we aimed to work on the issues which may hinder their development on their way to succeed happily. To achieve our aim, we made use of some reading, writing and speaking activities whose related themes were about goal setting, self-esteem and conflict resolution.

All in all, we are very happy to say that as themes of PERMA were interconnected, practicing one building block of PERMA contributed our efforts to build the other in our students. To help students wrap up what we intended to mean, we also had movie hours and watched mainly two films; *Inside Out* (2015), a movie about how our emotions guide us and *Freedom Writers* (2007), the real story of a teacher and her students discovering ways of resolving conflicts, having positive relationships to feel engaged and have a feeling of achievement by writing their own book as a class with their teacher.



Moreover, 'Happy' by Pharrell Williams was the song of our study. We distributed the lyrics of the song to both classes and asked them to learn how to sing the song by heart. The song was a good ending activity to finish our lessons happily; at the same time it served us by sending our message of happiness subliminally to our students. We even created a video clip to the song as a whole class with the students of Class A. Finally, we asked the students to prepare posters in groups as a project work that required them to do some research and think about what makes a student happy in a language classroom/or a person in life in general and put their ideas in posters.



Figure 1 Posters of Happiness (Class A & B)

Students' reported gains

although we did not administer the survey again, as we had intended this to be diagnostic, some of the gains as reported by the students during the informal interviews at the end of our implementation are shown in Figure 2:



Figure 2. Gains from the happiness intervention as reported by the students (Class A & Class B)

Reflections and looking into the future

We once read an article named “Happy teachers make happy students” by Parker & Parker (2011) and despite having always been happy teachers who want to make their students happy, the ideas in the article enchanted us and we wanted to learn more. Then, we decided to conduct this study as it is every teacher’s dream to see his/her students’ happy faces, while they are learning enthusiastically in their classes. After exploring our students’ thoughts

related to our puzzle, we prepared a happy EFL classroom recipe adding certain ingredients. We are aware that both the students' and our gains were worth the efforts, yet, by conducting this research, we are also aware that these efforts should be continuous for sustained happiness of both parties involved. By writing about our research, we hope that this study will be a source of inspiration to teachers who read about our experience and understanding.

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Appendix 1

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by psychologists Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University.

Instructions

Below are a number of statements about happiness. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each by entering a number in the blank after each statement, according to the following scale:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = moderately disagree
- 3 = slightly disagree
- 4 = slightly agree
- 5 = moderately agree
- 6 = strongly agree

Please read the statements carefully, some of the questions are phrased positively and others negatively. Don't take too long over individual questions; there are no "right" or "wrong" answers (and no trick questions). The first answer that comes into your head is probably the right one for you. If you find some of the questions difficult, please give the answer that is true for you in general or for most of the time.

The Questionnaire

1. I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am. (R) ____
2. I am intensely interested in other people. _

3. I feel that life is very rewarding. _____
4. I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone. _
5. I rarely wake up feeling rested. (R) _
6. I am not particularly optimistic about the future. (R) _
7. I find most things amusing. _____
8. I am always committed and involved. _
9. Life is good. _____
10. I do not think that the world is a good place. (R) ____
11. I laugh a lot. _____
12. I am well satisfied about everything in my life. ____
13. I don't think I look attractive. (R) ____
14. There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done. (R) _____
15. I am very happy. _____
16. I find beauty in some things. _____
17. I always have a cheerful effect on others. _
18. I can fit in (find time for) everything I want to. ____
19. I feel that I am not especially in control of my life. (R) ____
20. I feel able to take anything on. _____
21. I feel fully mentally alert. _____
22. I often experience joy and elation. ____
23. I don't find it easy to make decisions. (R) _
24. I don't have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life. (R) _____
25. I feel I have a great deal of energy. ____
26. I usually have a good influence on events. _
27. I don't have fun with other people. (R) _
28. I don't feel particularly healthy. (R) _
29. I don't have particularly happy memories of the past. (R) _

Calculate your core

Step 1. Items marked (R) should be scored in reverse:

For example, if you gave yourself a “1,” cross it out and change it to a

“6.” Change “2” to a “5”

Change “3” to a 4”

Change “4” to a 3”

Change “5” to a 2”

Change “6” to a 1”

Step 2. Add the numbers for all 29 questions. (Use the converted numbers for the 12 items that are reverse scored.)

Step 3. Divide by 29. So your happiness score = the total (from step 2) divided by 29.

Your Happiness Score: _

Reference:

<http://www.meaningandhappiness.com/oxford-happiness-questionnaire/214/>

11 *On the way to becoming effective listeners through peer listening*

Neslihan Gündoğdu & Cemile Buğra

Main focus

This joint study emerged as a result of ongoing discussions between two EFL instructors. While reflecting on our class sessions during the breaks or in our social gatherings, we realized that we suffered from the same kind of issues and some things were going wrong. Therefore, we wanted to take action together accordingly. The purpose of this study is to help students improve their listening skills while listening to their peers through peer-listening which may help them learn from one another in class sessions. We teach general English to undergraduate students from elementary level to intermediate at the school of foreign languages of Çukurova University. Students come from different educational, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. During the class hours, we have the students do the pair work, group work activities of the course book or additional activities that we prepare outside the class. In addition to this, in individual or group presentations, they give a presentation about a topic that they are interested in. So far what we have described may sound like a healthy classroom environment, but what these class sessions lack is the full attention of students in the interaction process while listening to their friends who are performing their learning tasks. We observed that students have a lack of peer listening habits and may not know how to listen to one another efficiently, which can be improved with some effective guided listening activities. We decided to provide some tips for listening to their peers in class.

Background

One of the biggest problems we have faced in class is that students do not listen to each other while expressing their ideas. From our perspective, there are several underlying causes for this issue. We discussed some potential misconceptions: for example, that they believe they can learn English by only listening to their teachers and that they are not aware that they could also learn from their peers by paying attention to the way their peers use language while participating in class activities. Another cause could be not having developed the habit of listening to others in their former educational life. However, although we came up with all these assumptions as to how they can benefit from listening to their peers and learn with and from them, it was inconclusive. We then decided to design an action research study to investigate this issue and to understand actual underlying causes and develop some actions to increase peer interaction. We wanted to see the impacts of active listening practices on students' performance to listen to each other attentively and develop communicative listening skills through peer learning. Regarding this, Wieserma (2000) states that sharing one's ideas and responding to others' improves thinking and deepens understanding, which means peer listening may provide our students with a great deal of input, which may contribute to the learning process positively. In short, students can learn a lot by interacting with others and by taking part in the activities efficiently.

The essential steps to better listening

The listening process can be broken up into five distinct stages: receiving, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. This is the model most commonly referred to when analysing good communication because it helps isolate the necessary skills required at each individual step in effective listening. Regarding these stages, we designed our study through tips and activities (Paris, 2013).

Receiving: This is the process where the listeners learned the tips of being an effective listener. In this step, we gave a list of essential elements of active listening as a guide to our students to get them to understand how effective listening occurs. These elements include not only the speech but also eye contact, body language, tone of voice and organization of ideas which convey meaning through effective communication.

Understanding and remembering: These stages are essential for meaningful communication and we combined these two steps in a way which can best serve our purposes. In this process, we implemented an activity which both requires the students to understand and remember while interacting with their peers. The activity is a class memory quiz.

Evaluating and responding: At these stages, students are expected to analyse what they have heard and learn to get ready to respond. For these two stages, we implemented two activities to promote their listening skills and become interactive listeners. These activities are group story-telling and whole class discussion.

Research methodology

We carried out this research in our own classrooms, each with 20 pre-intermediate undergraduate students. They had been studying English for 6 months when we started the research. First, we had informal interviews with the students before conducting action research in our classes to be able to identify the issues and develop ways to conduct our research by engaging them in the research process actively too. We made use of learning log entries as another data source to be able to get students' personal experiences and reflections. And finally, the teacher journals which we kept in the process, especially after each implementation, helped us to conduct this study. The students were informed about the study and asked to participate voluntarily and we got their consent before carrying out the research. Their names were kept anonymous. While analysing data, we negotiated continuously over the emerging findings from students' logs and over in-

terpreting our own reflections. We had several face-to-face talks and wrote each other emails to keep interacting in understanding, discussing and interpreting the ideas. Our main purpose was to carry out this study to create consciousness among our students. We wanted them to develop communicative and interactive skills. So, we tried to answer the following question in our study:

How can we help our students become effective listeners through peer learning in class sessions?

Activities

In carrying out the research, we selected effective listening activities concerning pair or group work and whole class discussions. We adapted these activities regarding the needs of our classes. We organized the order of the activities in a way that best serves our purposes. We also designed learning logs for students to write their reflections on their experiences with these implementations.

Class memory quiz

Students are generally asked to listen to audios or to their teacher talking. However, it can also be useful to lead them to listen to each other (Joyce, 2003). For that reason, we conducted an activity called ‘Class memory quiz’ to support the course content, and add some fun into listening and speaking activities. This activity took a class hour together with students’ reflections in learning logs which they were eager to fill in. To our surprise, they were eager to engage in activities.

In the first part of the activity, we asked one student to go to the front of the class one at a time and have the other students ask them any questions they like unless they are too personal. Each student had a go in terms of asking questions to their peers and answering their peers’ questions too. While students were asking and answering the questions, we took notes of what they said about themselves. In the second part of the activity, we explained to the students that we would hold a quiz about the first part of the activity. The theme of the questions varied from personal in-

formation to some philosophical questions such as ‘What makes you happy?’, ‘What is the meaning of life?’, and ‘Whose motto is ‘don’t give up?’’.

Group story telling

The second activity was group story telling. As Paris (2014) explains, a good listener should be able to view a discussion as a whole, not just its most immediate parts. Paris also argues that the group storytelling activity is a fun, potentially silly, but incredibly valuable exercise in active listening and comprehension. We conducted this as a whole-class activity, where one participant acted as a moderator delivering the first line of the story (once upon a time there was an English man) and writing the story as each student in the class contributed to the story by making up his/her own line using his creativity. Before the students made their own line, they had to repeat the previous lines of the other participants.

Ice breaker

We tried this activity to show students how important it is to listen to one another as a preparation for the next activity. We divided the group into two. We asked group A to go out of the class to create mystery. While group A was waiting outside the class, we asked the participants in group B to think of a topic to discuss with their pair waiting outside. Then, we went out to tell the participants to ignore their partners while they are trying to convey their message.

Whole class discussions

We carried out the whole-class discussion as a post activity after studying the manners in the course book. We selected some quotes related to good manners and bad manners on the internet and opened a discussion about these quotes. The discussion took a class hour.

These in-class activities that we used were very useful and engaging. We seemed to achieve our initial purpose. Now we will share with you the verbal and written data we generated while conducting these activities in our classroom to be able to understand how the students developed and what we can explore more from these.

Findings and discussions

First, we will discuss our reflections on the basis of our field notes in order to reveal more about the process of in-class activities and changes in our students.

Our reflections as teachers

Class memory quiz With the help of this activity; students aimed to concentrate more on what they were doing and improve their range of vocabulary, revise the grammar covered in previous class sessions and most important of all, they could remember more information as they were interested in getting to know one another better. To our surprise, some of the students who are normally quiet in class activities were more active than others.

Group story telling After setting out the rules of the activity, the participants did not like the idea of repeating the lines until they make up their own but soon they focused on what they were doing and started having fun while commenting on their friends' lines whether they are related to the story or not. While participants were repeating the lines of their story, they were all fluent and remembered all the lines. We also observed that while repeating the lines each participant had an eye contact with the owner of that a line of the story, which made them to remember the lines.

<i>Ice breaker</i>	One minute after the activity started, some of the students shouted out complaining that their partners were not listening to them. Until the participants in group B figured out the purpose of the activity, some of them tried to deliver their message and the others got offended and stopped talking.
<i>Whole class discussions</i>	Students were interested in the quotes that we presented to them. They exchanged ideas about good and bad manners. They revised some useful expressions when they agreed or disagreed with their friend's ideas. They learned to look at things from different perspectives. They improved their range of vocabulary while generating ideas.

Students' reflections

Now we will present the data analysis of students' reflections in the learning logs. These will help us explore more about the impact and support our own reflections.

Themes	Evidence
Engaging in learning	<p>Student 13: <i>We checked if we listened to each other or not. This was a good activity to improve our speaking skills.</i></p> <p>Student 22: <i>We asked questions in English. This was a both listening and speaking activity. We revised past tense. We should do such activities very often.</i></p> <p>Student 5: <i>We tried to use the tenses correctly.</i></p> <p>Student 32: <i>We spoke more fluently, learned new words, improved our English and kept the information in mind.</i></p> <p>Student 40: <i>I found the activity useful in terms of practicing English, understanding our friends' pronunciation and improving our memory.</i></p> <p>Student 19: <i>This activity exercised our brains and it improved our listening and speaking skills</i></p> <p>Student 40: <i>I also learned new grammar item and words from my friends.</i></p> <p>Student 37: <i>It was a beneficial activity which improved the mind and it taught me how to use linking words to make up a story</i></p>

Enjoying learning	<p>Student 35: <i>I both improved my English and had fun.</i></p> <p>Student 38: <i>This session was fun and interesting.</i></p> <p>Student 29: <i>I tried to participate in the activity as much as I could because it was interesting.</i></p> <p>Student 2: <i>Everybody in the class focused on the activity without being distracted during the whole class hour for the first time and it was an enjoyable activity while learning new words.</i></p> <p>Student 26: <i>It was an enjoyable activity while making up a story, keeping the information in our memory and choosing the tenses.</i></p>
Gaining new perspectives	<p>Student 35: <i>I learned different points of view.</i></p> <p>Student 25: <i>We learned to look at things from different perspectives.</i></p> <p>Student 37: <i>I learned new ideas.</i></p>
Learning to interact and listen	<p>Student 35: <i>We got to know each other better. Therefore, I believe that our communication will increase in a positive way.</i></p> <p>Student 7: <i>We got to know each other better</i></p> <p>Student 33: <i>I found this activity beneficial in terms of focusing, following and understanding what is said, using the time efficiently and participating in the activity.</i></p> <p>Student 30: <i>We learned to share ideas openly in a discussion.</i></p>
Feeling better	<p>Student 2: <i>It was a useful activity. This extra activity motivated and relaxed us.</i></p> <p>Student 4: <i>It was a good activity for instant thinking and short term memory and gaining these skills will be helpful in speaking exams.</i></p> <p>Student 19: <i>This activity exercised our brains. I learned to control my excitement from my friends.</i></p> <p>Student 13: <i>We tried to think creatively. We listened to the story carefully to keep everything in mind. More students participated in the activity and we tested our memory.</i></p> <p>Students 18: <i>It was useful in terms of understanding what you have listened, learning new words. Such activities should be done more often.</i></p>

We identified five central themes out of all the data collected from the students. The students mentioned many issues that developed or even changed. The emerging themes created a good mind map including critical elements in learning and development such as engagement, enjoyment, perspective-gaining, interaction, and psychological benefits. We identified many benefits as reported by students and as we also observed. There were also sub-benefits under these themes as shown in the following list:

- Engaging in learning (listening, vocabulary, grammar, speaking)
- Enjoying learning (interest, fun, joy)
- Gaining new perspectives (openness to views)
- Learning to interact and listen (attention, familiarity, interaction)
- Deriving psychological benefits (motivation, interest, excitement, relaxation)

Reflections and looking into the future

Regarding these activities we have adapted to fit our class sessions, we conclude that all these implementations have had positive impacts on our students. We realize that we were able to create awareness of effective learning through peer listening and have a direct impact on the students' understanding of the role of listening to one another attentively. For that reason, we should include more effective listening tasks in our lesson plans to be able to help our students develop effective listening skills through peer learning. Taking all these points into consideration, we believe we should implement these kinds of activities at an earlier period of the learning process in terms of raising awareness among students. In this way, they may become better communicators both in class and in daily life.

As teacher researchers, this study has contributed to our professional development. We have also developed new viewpoints through working with dilemmas which are sometimes per-

ceived merely as obstacles in teaching and learning. In addition to this, such research has assisted us to identify the weak points of our teaching practices and lead us to develop various ways to strengthen them. And it has also enlightened us by keeping us on the track continuously.

We made the following decisions in regard to our practices in the future:

- Pay more attention to interaction opportunities that students can develop
- Add fun elements to promote interaction
- Create activities that connect students for collaboration and

We hope to think more about what emerged from what students said and continue to implement our decisions to make our classroom a place where students interact and support one another.

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12 *The impact of cooperative learning on students' attitudes towards listening skills*

Merve Sofu

Main focus

Why are my students demotivated in listening classes? Why is their classroom participation so low during listening classes? How can I make my students more motivated and willing in listening activities? Which method should I use to create a student-friendly listening class? Is it possible to get pleasure and give pleasure at the same time in a listening class? For a long time, I have been trying to understand potential answers to these questions. With these questions in my mind, I started to conduct this study.

Although my students seemed aware of the importance of listening skill in English, almost all of them appeared unwilling, sad and demotivated in listening lessons; therefore, I wanted to increase their motivation when they listen to something in a foreign language. With this concern in mind, and based on the results of two open-ended questions– “What do you think about the listening activities we have done in our listening classes? How do you feel during listening activities?” I decided to use ‘cooperative learning’ (Wichadee, 2005) to help my students overcome their fears, hesitation and to make them feel more motivated. In order to achieve my aim, I asked the following research question:

- How does using a “Cooperative Learning Method” affect their perceptions?
- How does using a “Cooperative Learning” technique affect my students’ attitudes towards listening and make them feel more motivated in listening classes?
- What are their attitudes towards “Cooperative Learning”?
- How have the CL activities affected my students?

Background

Listening is a kind of skill that a person will use throughout their entire life and it is also one of the basics for communication. Although most of the students are aware of the importance of listening in language learning, they do not seem to try to overcome their fears or prejudices about listening. When learners communicate while cooperating, they may feel more comfortable. As Johnson & Johnson (1999) state 'cooperative learning' (CL) involves "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning". By using CL, students will share the burden with their friends and at the same time, they will enhance their own learning. According to Sharan (1980), CL includes five criteria that define true CL groups: *positive interdependence, individual accountability, having interpersonal and small group skills, promoting interaction and group processing*. By cooperative learning,

- they will achieve the goal working together (positive interdependence)
- they will be responsible for achieving their common goal (individual accountability).
- they will learn how to work in a team (interpersonal and small group skills)
- they will interact with each other face-to-face in order to accomplish the tasks and through this way their communication skills will improve (promoting interaction and group processing).

Research methodology

Participants of this study were one of my classes at Preparatory School (YADYO) of Cukurova University. My class consisted of 18 (M= 10, F= 8) students, whose age range was between 18-23. These students had 24 hours of English lessons every week and 8 hours of it with me. In these eight hours, I carried out both syl-

labus activities and the cooperative learning method in my listening classes.

Data collection tools

- In order to support my personal and informal observations, I asked two-open-ended questions - What do you think about the listening activities that we have done in our class? How do you feel during listening activities? These elicited students' opinions about listening skills and the activities that were given.
- I administered an attitude scale which investigates students' attitudes toward the importance of listening, enjoying listening (Tubail, 2015) and cooperative learning (Wichadee, 2005)
- After the attitude scale was applied, I conducted a semi-structured interview with 13 volunteer students.

Data analysis

In the analysis of the quantitative data gathered from the attitude scales, the frequency of each item was calculated for pre- and post- classroom activities. In order to analyse the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interview with volunteer students, I categorized the impact areas by analysing the transcribed data inductively (see table 4).

Implementation

As I observed my students' behaviour in listening classes, I thought that working in groups and being a part of a team makes them feel more motivated and relaxed. With these ideas in my mind, I started to work on the activities that we need to keep up with the teaching order and syllabi of the School of Foreign Languages in Çukurova University. The activities of our course book

are inefficient and we need to be rigid about the time limit for each unit; therefore, I had to adapt all the materials in line with the principles of cooperative learning. And then I implemented the following action plan weekly with my class.

	Pre-Listening	While-listening	Post-listening
Practice 1 Learning a new language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draw mind-map charts in groups - Discuss in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A gap-filling activity - Listen and share your answers - Answer all the questions individually - Cooperate on the activity and vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch a video - Discuss the content - Share ideas
Practice 2 Manners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch a video - Discuss the content in groups - Make a whole class discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A true/false activity - Cooperate with your group members for the activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play "Running dictation" game
Practice 3 Famous referees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyse pictures - Discuss and share with their classmates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Respond to a multiple choice activity - In the 1st listening, do the activity with their team members - In the 2nd listening, check it on their own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put the lyrics of "We're the Champions" by Queen in an order.

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|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Practice 4
Social media</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at some pie charts of social media use in different countries. - Compare the countries with each other and with Turkey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Match the speakers with their sentences. - Cooperate on the activity to find the sentences of the speakers' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch a video - After watching it, create a slogan with their group members. - Vote the slogans. |
| <p>Practice 5
Judging by appearance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at a photo series called "Judging America" - After looking at them, they discuss. - In groups of four, present your ideas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answer comprehension questions. - Catch the key words for the questions. - Combine their answers with their group members. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watch a short movie - In the half of the movie, write the rest of the story in the movie with their group members. |
| <p>Practice 6
Odd inventions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at a series of photos about the odd inventions - Dream an object that they needed - Wrote the features of their products and drew a picture of it. - Share it with their classmates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Filling the blanks activity - Share the things they understood with their group members. complete the activity on their own - Check each other's work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play "Running dictation" game. |
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Findings and discussion:

Research question 1. How does using a “Cooperative Learning Method” affect their perceptions?

Based on my observations, almost all of my students seem aware of the importance of listening skills. According to the frequency analysis of the attitude scale, as can be seen in *Table 1* below, the majority of the students are aware of the importance of listening based on the results for items 5 and 6. In these items, approximately two-thirds reported positive perceptions regarding more listening lessons and the importance of listening. After cooperative learning, their perception on this issue has been affected in a positive way. For these items, an overwhelming majority highlighted a positive change in their perceptions. These results reveal that cooperative learning fosters the awareness of the importance of listening skill in my students.

Table 1: Perceptions towards the importance of listening

Questionnaire items	Pre-test (f)						Post-test (f)					
	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean scores	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean scores
1. I think listening helps in developing the ability of right thinking.	5	7	5	1	-	3,9	10	6	1	-	1	4.3

2. I can acquire much cognition and experiences without listening.	-	2	5	4	7	2.1	2	-	4	6	6	2.2
3. I wish we could lessen some listening topics from the syllabus.	1	6	4	3	4	2.8	2	-	1	4	11	1.7
4. I think listening extra texts is time wasting.	1	-	3	6	8	1.8	1	2	-	5	10	1.8
5. I wish we could increase listening classes in the school schedule.	4	7	3	3	1	3.5	13	3	-	1	1	4.4
6. I think listening is important to every student.	11	3	1	1	2	4.1	16	1	-	1	-	4.7

In item 1, the students show that they link listening skill to developing the ability to listen. The contribution of listening to their metacognition is also implied in line with the increasing scores. Similarly, items 2, 3 and 4 include negative questions regarding the value of listening, listening topics and extra texts respectively. The students rate these items low, meaning that they want to have more topics in the syllabus and listen to extra texts. They also report that listening could promote their thinking as is clear from the score on item 2. They imply that they find listening materials more valuable compared to the pre-test scores.

Research question 2. How does using “Cooperative Learning” technique affect my students’ attitudes towards listening?

After implementing a “Cooperative Learning” method with my listening class, I observed that the participation in listening tasks increased and my students seemed to become more active learners of English. In addition to this, pre- and post-test results on the attitude scale indicate a positive change in terms of attitudes towards listening after the six-week period of my implementation of a “Cooperative Learning” method. As can be seen in *Table 2*, after working cooperatively, a majority of the students never want to miss listening classes (Item 6). Likewise, for items 2 and 4 in the post test, again a majority indicate preference for listening activities and enjoyment. This outcome stresses the change in students’ feelings towards attending listening classes. In addition, almost all of my students gave positive feedback on the usage of the cooperative learning method in listening classes in our semi-structured interview. Both the attitude scale and the semi-structured interview revealed that my students’ feelings and attitudes towards listening changed in a very positive way. They stated that they all found it enjoyable and felt not only more self-confident but also more motivated.

Table 2: Attitudes towards listening

Statements	Pre-test					Post-test				
	SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. I feel bored in English listening classes.	6	3	3	6	-	1	1	4	7	5
2. I prefer listening classes to other classes.	1	1	7	3	6	7	5	2	3	1
3. Listening comprehension is one of the problems I face in learning English.	7	6	2	3	-	7	4	3	2	2
4. I enjoy English listening classes.	2	4	6	2	4	8	5	2	2	1
5. I exert effort in guessing the meaning of difficult words through the text.	6	11	1	-	-	2	8	2	3	3
6. I feel happy when we miss a listening class.	1	3	3	3	8	1	2	3	2	10
7. I feel annoyed when doing any listening tasks.	2	4	2	3	7	2	2	3	6	5

Research question 3. What are their attitudes towards “Cooperative Learning”?

As for the data from the last part of the attitude scale, it was revealed that my students found the “Cooperative Learning” method not only useful but also enjoyable. As shown in *Table 3*, fifteen out of eighteen students think that by the help of cooperative learning they learn new things easily (item 1). Moreover, except for one student, all the students find our listening lessons more interesting with this method (item 8). As can be understood from items 7 and 9, by using this method my students have become more active and have good relationships with their friends in listening classes. The students’ positive feelings show that working together as a team creates a comfortable, student-friendly and non-stressful environment for study. This study has some positive aspects in common

with the research done by Charatdao (2010). The findings revealed that the participants were happy to work with the group, and this resulted from their friendship, intimacy from frequent social interaction and group respect for each member's opinion.

Table 3: Attitudes towards cooperative learning

Questionnaire items	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. This approach helps me to learn new things easily.	15	2	-	1	-
2. This approach helps me to acquire knowledge through working in a team.	11	6	1	-	-
3. This approach makes me understand the working process.	8	6	4	-	-
4. This approach enables me to participate in sharing information, making decisions, and solving problems.	11	7	-	-	-
5. This approach helps everyone reach the goal equally.	8	5	3	2	-
6. This approach trains me how to be a good leader and a good follower.	7	6	4	1	-
7. This approach creates a good relationship among group members.	13	3	2	-	-
8. The lessons become more interesting with this approach.	17	1	-	-	-
9. I feel actively involved in all activities through this approach.	14	4	-	-	-
10. I feel intellectually challenged through this approach.	3	2	6	2	5

Research question 4: How have the CL activities affected my students?

To answer this question, I analysed the transcribed data from semi-structured interviews by inducing major areas of impact. In the interview, I asked the volunteer students the following three questions and when necessary, I asked clarification and probing questions to get further information:

1. *Compare the listening activities with CL to those we normally do in our listening classes.*
2. *How do you feel when you work in groups and cooperate with your friends?*
3. *How do you think the CL method has affected you during this six-week process?*

Students' reflections

The students reported verbally that they benefited from active engagement in listening activities. The followings are some relevant positive extracts from students' responses:

Student A: "I made use of this method in that I feel better and more confident"

Student B: "When I realize that my friends and I have almost the same mistakes and same problems, I feel more self-confident. I am not the troubled one!"

Student C: "Group-work activities increased our motivation and we started to listen more willingly and carefully"

Student D: "This method contributed to a lot of different things: by means of knowledge, fun, knowing each other better"

Student E: "With this method, I learnt to share what I've already known"

Student F: "Working cooperatively made things easier! I feel comfortable in listening classes"

Student G: "After this study, I learnt to work as a team and be a piece of a big puzzle"

After probing into the responses of the students to the semi-structured interview, three themes emerged: positive impact of CL on motivation, on listening ability and on learning to learn. These themes are highlighted in Table 4.

Table 4: The themes revealed by students' responses to the interview questions

Impact on motivation	Impact on listening ability	Impact on learning to learn
Confident in listening	Understand what I listen better	Work as a team
Active while listening		Be focused on the target material
Relaxed in listening activities		Learn to share knowledge
Willing to do listening		Develop a sense of responsibility
Want to learn more		
Motivated to listen		

As can be seen in the table above, students' comments on the CL method mostly related to some affective attributes and meta-cognitive skills. Since the aim of this study is making a change in their feelings, students' comments on the interview questions correspond with the aim of this study. As for the impact of CL on listening ability, it can be easily seen that students mostly focused on their changing feelings towards listening and some important skills they need both for their university education and their job. Thus, only two students stated that the CL method helped them to understand what they listen better.

The qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interview confirmed the data obtained from the attitude scale towards the CL method (see Table 3). In this scale, except for one undecided student, 17 students agree with Item 2 which emphasizes acquiring knowledge through group work; in relation to this, one of my students pointed out that "*Working cooperatively made things easier!*" Moreover, items 8 and 9 are related to being an active participant of listening classes owing to the CL-based lessons. Concerning these two items, one of my students stated that "Group-

work activities increased our motivation and we started to listen more willingly and carefully.” As can be clearly understood, students’ responses to interview questions coincide with the results of the attitude scale towards the CL method.

Reflections and looking into the future

Impact on my teaching of listening

In my study, after using the “Cooperative Learning” method in my listening class, I realized that my students became more active learners of English. In addition to this, our class dynamics improved, which made them more interested during our listening lessons. This study also enabled me to recognize students’ need for freedom in class. In the cooperative learning method, the teacher’s role is like both an observer and a motivator. In other words, s/he observes the students, if they need any help, s/he shows the way to find a solution to their problem. Before this study, I wanted my students to understand anything they listen to and if they couldn’t manage it, I behaved impatiently. One of the things I learnt from this study is to be patient while teaching.

Impact on my students

After this study, I observed that my students became more willing and enthusiastic about my listening classes. In addition, they were less anxious but more curious about the following lessons. Even when they saw me in the corridors of our school, they were asking about the upcoming lessons’ tasks or activities. Moreover, they developed an awareness of the importance of listening skills themselves and this made them try to be more successful in listening. By using the websites, I gave them beforehand, they started to do out of class activities to improve their listening skills.

Impact on me as a teacher

When I joined this year's "Teacher Research Group", I had no idea about the procedures, the relationship between group members and also the outcomes of the studies but this study was really rewarding for me. Easy-going and helpful group members in our school, supporting and constructive feedback from the reviewing committee gave me the courage to do more for my students and made me feel more energetic about my job. Thanks to this study, both my students and I learnt a lot of new things and had great fun during our classes. Thus, this made me more motivated and enthusiastic not only as a teacher but also as a teacher-researcher!

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