

EMPOWERING TEACHER- RESEARCHERS, EMPOWERING LEARNERS

Edited by
Gary Barkhuizen, Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş and Mark Wyatt



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IATEFL Research Special Interest Group



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Edited by Gary Barkhuizen, Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş and Mark Wyatt

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Introduction

*Gary Barkhuizen, Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş
and Mark Wyatt*

The current volume is the fourth in a series that has built on the teacher-research initiatives introduced in Turkey from around 2011. These initiatives resulted from a major shift in orientation in the concept of teacher professional development. It involved seeing teachers as agents of creativity and change in the classroom rather than as the recipients of received knowledge handed down by external ‘experts’. The idea was promoted that teachers could become researchers of their own classrooms and practices and it is clear from the chapters in this volume that teachers in Turkey are increasingly enthusiastic about this idea. Over the last two decades the concept of research by teachers has developed rapidly in the field of English language teaching. Burns (1999, pp. 14-17) outlined a number of benefits mentioned by teachers who carry out research, including closer engagement with their own classroom practice, the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers, empowerment and personal growth as a teacher, increased self-awareness, and greater understanding of curriculum or institutional change. Teachers who do research also refer to the deeper understanding they gain about their students, their greater appreciation of the relationship between theory and practice, their insights into language learning and more critical reflection on the impact of their practices in the classroom. Research by teachers puts students and student learning at the heart of what goes on in the classroom. It provides a way for teachers to develop a new mind-set about how to confront the inevitable but exciting challenges that motivate good teaching and to sustain their efforts in the classroom through their own investigations.

Accordingly, teacher-research is increasingly being spread through inter-connecting networks bringing like-minded teacher-researchers and teacher educators together. Burns, et al. (2017) and Smith (2018) provide useful summaries of various activities, under the slogan ‘research *by* teachers *for* teachers

and their learners', that have been happening in different national contexts. And amongst these efforts worldwide to bring teacher-researchers together, raise the profile of teacher-research, and increase the perceived value and legitimacy of such activity, the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group (ReSIG) conference in Istanbul, now in its third year at Bahçeşehir University and its fourth year in Turkey, holds a special place. The origins of this conference, from about 2011, as noted above, have been discussed at length elsewhere (Smith, 2014; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016). From the beginning, teacher-researchers working on foundation English programmes at the university, and being mentored, initiated classroom studies focused on issues or puzzles they identified in their contexts and then engaged in some form of practitioner research. This was typically action research at the outset, but sometimes later exploratory practice. They tended to work collaboratively on their research studies throughout the academic year and then present their findings at the annual conference in the summer. This is a pattern that has proved popular, and such teacher-research activity has spread from one university in Izmir to others throughout Turkey. In the process, this has created a need, too, for teacher-research-mentoring (Dikilitaş & Wyatt, 2017). The ReSIG conference in Istanbul has then been a focal point to allow a sharing of teacher-research and teacher-research-mentoring experience.

The 2017 conference, which was innovative in including presentations from pre-service as well as in-service teachers, once again achieved these broad aims. Teachers shared their research findings and also shared stories of the research process; what they did, who they did it with, the challenges they encountered, and the successes they achieved. And they did so with passion and a growing self-confidence as researchers. Short presentations and plenty of conversation filled the days as teachers learned from each other and made plans for future research. The conference venue and programme offered space and time for interaction in a relaxed, anxiety-free atmosphere. As can be seen in the chapters of this volume, a wide range of topics was covered, evidence of the teaching and research interests of the participants.

After attending the conference, sharing their engagement in the research process and their findings in the form of story, some participants were suitably encouraged to write up their research to submit as contributions to this book. Writing up teacher-research is a process complementary to teacher development; it offers opportunities to make further sense of the data gathered

and discussed and allows teacher-researchers to develop a clearer research perspective (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2016). In the guidelines provided to potential contributors to this volume, the need to reflect was highlighted. We did differentiate between pre-service and in-service teachers in producing these guidelines and also had separate guidelines for teacher-research-mentors. One aspect of the 2017 conference we really admired was the enthusiasm and creativity of many of the presentations by pre-service teachers. Our guidelines for this group emphasized that we were looking for short reflective texts with visual support that captured some of the energy of the conference presentations. Sadly, though, our guidelines were insufficiently followed, which suggests they were not explicit enough. As a consequence, the work of the pre-service teachers is under-represented in this volume, something we hope to rectify for next year's edition.

The organization of this volume

The chapters produced by teacher-researchers and teacher-research-mentors are organized in the following way. After this introduction, the initial chapters are by experienced mentors reporting and reflecting on their research mentoring of in-service and pre-service teacher-researchers. The focus then shifts to teacher development through team teaching and observation, before there is a focus on psychological and reflective aspects of teaching and learning. There follow chapters on utilizing technology to support language learning, and then chapters specifically focused on the development of vocabulary and listening skills. We now say a little more about each chapter.

Chapter 2 by Cemile Doğan describes how she developed skills as a mentor while mentoring three students studying to become English teachers, through exploratory practice. In her frank account, what becomes clear is that mentoring too is a learning process that can provide a strong sense of achievement and pride for the mentor. In contrast, Seden Eraldemir Tuyan (Chapter 3) was a more experienced mentor who had been responsible for a three-year program of action research at her university. Her focus was on assessing the impact and sustainability of the program. Following the use of a survey, she found motivation to be one of the key factors in ensuring the impact of action research over time. She notes that a combination of individual motivation, contextual factors and a sense of empowerment contributes to its sustainability.

Anıl Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez (Chapter 4) discusses how she implemented an inquiry-based approach to her students' practicum experiences. Using guided observation tasks and then the action research steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, she found that this approach to mentoring not only deepened her students' experiences, but also enabled her to learn more about mentoring. She points to the importance of personal/professional awareness and development and an open attitude when making adaptations in the mentoring process. Şehnaz Şahinkarakaş and Fatma Toköz Göktepe (Chapter 5) mentored their students using a collaborative practicum model that incorporated the processes of action research. Their approach was based on their observations that students were being given insufficient guidance during the practicum and were also experiencing different approaches in the way they were assessed. The model they developed aimed to mentor students so that the expectations of the practicum became clearer and also provided them with research skills into their own practices. The mentors' own reflections echo the point made in the previous three chapters that mentoring is itself a learning process.

Chapter 6 by Özge Coşkun Aysal and Didem Özdiñ Seçer explores the potential benefits of team teaching, not only in developing learners' participation, interaction and production, but also in their own professional development. At the end, they reflect critically on the processes of teaching together and highlight the motivation they have developed. As another teacher development research initiative, Chapter 7 by Ahmet Cihat Kapçık investigates the influence of a structured peer observation model in supporting peer learning, as a way of enabling professional development. Kapçık also reflects on the mutuality and collegiality that peer observation brings and the inclusiveness and engagement that it encourages in the teachers involved.

The next two chapters both report on studies that took their inspiration from teachers' observations of their learners. Noticing uninterested faces, 'offline' stances, and demotivated language learning behaviours amongst their university foundation students led Seden Eraldemir Tüyan and Beyza Kabadayı (Chapter 8) to research this issue further and then cultivate mindfulness activities in their classes. This was with the goal of stimulating greater enjoyment of language learning and a greater fulfilment of learner potential. Also centered on observation, Cemile Buğra's concern (Chapter 9) was that her learners did not appear to be very self-reflective, which, she felt, was likely

hampering them in developing as autonomous learners. She sought to raise self-awareness and then developed activities designed to help the learners take greater control of their own learning.

The focus of the volume then shifts to the classroom anxiety that can affect both teachers (particularly pre-service teachers) and learners needing to speak in class. In Chapter 10, Özden Uçar reports on trying to overcome hesitation and uneasiness while teaching English on the practicum. She reports that peer observations, self-reflective notes and video recordings of her teaching helped her identify key issues, which she was then able to address. In Chapter 11, Ferah Şenaydın, an in-service teacher, while also focusing on anxiety, is concerned with that in her learners. After exploring the problem in depth, she seeks to address it by encouraging her students to use an online platform for communication to provide them with a 'tech-based anxiety-free zone'.

The value of online environments in supporting learning is considered further in Chapter 12. Berrin Cefa Sarı investigates how and whether face-to-face and online office hours contribute to the quality of constructive feedback offered to students. Cefa Sarı argues that online office hour practice has benefits for both students and teachers. She also reflects on the professional benefits that she herself has reaped from conducting this study.

Chapter 13 also focuses on the use of technology, this time to retain new vocabulary. Sezer Alper Zereyalp investigated how an online application and website called Quizlet attracted the interest of learners, led to an increase in motivation, and thus enabled more efficient vocabulary learning. Questionnaires and interviews were used to capture student perceptions of their vocabulary learning, both before and after using Quizlet. Because of his belief in the central importance of vocabulary knowledge for successful language learning, Chris Banister (Chapter 14) conducted an Exploratory Practice in which business English students at university selected vocabulary to peer-teach, thereby placing themselves in the position of teacher. He was interested in why the students chose the particular vocabulary items they did and discovered that they considered whether the vocabulary would be new or interesting to their fellow students, would be useful, and would be transferable to other contexts. Aliye Evin Yörüdü and Ece Selva Küçükoğlu's partial replication study (Chapter 15) investigated the initial learning and later retention of new vocabulary incidentally acquired while performing three different tasks. The experimental study led to a number of useful recommendations, including that classroom

practitioners should recycle vocabulary frequently via tasks with high involvement load.

In the final study, reported in Chapter 16, Neslihan Gündoğdu implemented a number of interventions, based on relevant literature, to help students improve their listening skills. The interventions, which included listening to authentic materials on YouTube videos, films and websites, did indeed lead to improvement. In addition, the activities worked towards developing positive bonds between herself and her students and among the students as well. They did not find the extra activities to be a burden. Instead they appreciated the positive change to the classroom routine.

Conclusions

The journey ahead

As noted above, the research reported on here addresses diverse and important themes, including evidence of the *learning* through teacher-research-mentoring (Dikilitaş & Wyatt, 2017). That is so crucial as teacher-research networks spread. Other areas of focus include the affective dimension of teaching and learning that is so important to consider in the learning and teaching process but is nevertheless sometimes surprisingly neglected. There is also a focus in these studies on harnessing technology. The research designs employed in these chapters also demonstrate increasing maturity, with a focus on gaining a deep understanding evident in several studies before subsequent action takes place. We conclude this introduction by drawing particular attention to two themes that strike us as important for the future.

Further developing sustainability in teacher-research

Over two decades ago, van Lier (1994, p 33), discussing action research carried out by teachers argued that if it “is going to make us even more exhausted than we already are, then it will not be a popular or successful activity...It has to enrich our professional life”. We would argue that what makes teacher-research difficult to sustain is when teachers must conduct it in isolation with little or no support, or as a mandated addition to their already heavy teaching loads. In contrast, a major theme that stands out strongly in these chapters is collaboration.

Collaboration emerges in various forms: at the national level, through the strong relationships and networks that have developed among academics,

mentors and teachers across an increasing number of institutions in Turkey; at the institutional level between teacher educator mentors and pre-service and in-service teachers; at the program level where teachers may work in partnership with others; and at the individual level where teachers get the chance to share their research. The various collaborations illustrated in the chapters, as well as the previous publications in this series, underscore that sustainability in teacher research is created through organic, rather than linear processes. Combinations of factors interact ecologically to create dynamic and evolving processes, including positive organisational conditions for conducting research, guidance and support from mentors and critical friends, opportunities to publish and present, and feedback and recognition from others (see also Edwards & Burns, 2017). These factors become the catalyst for deeper learning that is linked through further research, practical action, exploration and reflection.

Developing teacher-researcher identities

This volume demonstrates quite clearly the developing research knowledge and skills of the contributing teacher researchers. The chapters also show three significant interrelationships. The first is between research and teaching practice, and therefore research and language learning. All the studies are about what happens in language classrooms and aim to improve conditions for teaching and learning. The second is between research and professional development. At the start of this chapter we highlighted recent ideas about professional development, which emphasise seeing teachers as agents of creativity and change in the classroom rather than as the recipients of received knowledge handed down by external ‘experts’. By doing research, teachers take charge of their own professional development, which in turn shapes how they go about doing their teaching – and this is the third important interrelationship.

Central to this three-way interconnection among *research*, *classroom practice*, and *professional development* is teacher *identity* – who we are as teachers. Language teacher identity is a complex concept and involves negotiating our working lives with other people and objects in different spaces and at different times (see Barkhuizen, 2017). Because of this, our teacher identities change, and we have multiple identities; for instance, instructor, assessor, mentor, and leader. This book has provided numerous examples of these identities in action, but most important the studies have foregrounded the *researcher* identity that is an integral part of our professional selves. The willingness to present at

the 2017 ReSIG Istanbul conference and then to write a report for publication illustrates how important the teacher contributors believe research is to who they are and the work they do. Their researcher identities will develop over time as they continue to engage in research and advance their research knowledge and skills.

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Transforming mentoring challenges into opportunities through exploratory practice

Cemile DOĞAN

Konya Necmettin Erbakan University

Mentoring is defined by Murray and Owen (1991, p.xiv) as ‘a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a less skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the less experienced person grow and develop specific competencies’. In this definition, there is an emphasis on a master-apprentice relationship. Current perspectives on mentoring, however, have broadened their scope, new roles have been added to the process and the relationship adopted is seen as a much more interactive approach. In addition, individual and social differences among participants have been taken into consideration. In one of his interviews, Paolo Freire (1996) discusses how both sides gain from the experience of mentoring. He states that ‘teachers must become learners and learners must become teachers’ and ‘in this dialectical relationship teaching and learning become knowing and reknowing. The learners gradually know what they did not yet know, and the educators reknow what they knew before’. Therefore, the roles of learner and teacher are interconnected. In this chapter, I will share my reflections on my mentoring experience over the last three years which began with an action research program and continued with an Exploratory Practice (EP) study with ELT fourth grade students in a school practicum course.

Background

The current EP mentoring story was inspired by a presentation at an ELT conference. I met Dr. Kenan Dikilitaş at a conference in Ankara, Turkey. I participated in his session on teacher research and took notes. I was impressed by his ability to cooperate with people and bring his colleagues together around the mission of a long-term teacher research study in his institution. During that two-day conference, I convinced myself that I could conduct a similar study in my context. What impelled me towards such an idea was the lack of long term, institutionalized ELT professional development activities in my

city. From the beginning, I was well-aware that creating a sustainable teacher research environment requires an individual, organizational and social effort, a process-oriented approach, meticulously set 'goals which are open to development, deeper understanding and knowledge transformation in new ways' (Dikilitaş, 2016). All these seemed demanding at first; however, my propensity for learning in a social setting motivated me towards conducting a long-term teacher development program. Soon after his session, I had contact with Dr. Dikilitaş and we exchanged opinions on the preliminary guidelines of an action research study. Openheartedly, he agreed to extend help if need be. I came together with 10 English instructors working at different institutions and we carried out an action research program for four months under the guidance of the work of several scholars of teacher research (Atay, 2006; Bailey & Nunan, 2001; Borg, 2015; Burns, 2010; Burns & Edwards, 2014; Cochran-Smith, & Lytle, 1993; Doğan & Kan, 2006; Kırkgöz, 2013; Smith, 2013). The outcomes were gratifying (see Dogan, 2016 for details). Afterwards, I started to follow teacher research mentors; namely, Drs Allwright, Atay, Burns, Dikilitaş, Hanks, Kırkgöz, Smith, Dar and Wyatt systematically. Seven of my action research group members decided to present their studies (See Table 1 below) at the IATEFL Research SIG conference in Izmir.

Table 1. Participants and Research Areas of Konya Team

| Participants | Research Areas |
|--|---|
| Cemile Doğan (Necmettin Erbakan University) | An endeavor to put a brick in the wall |
| Gökhan Hiniz (Karatay University) | The influence of negative transfer from mother tongue on students' speaking skills and using feedback to minimize negative transfer |
| Mehtap Yorgancı (Karatay University) | Raising students' awareness on mispronunciation of silent letters |
| Nida Gürbüz (Karatay University) | An action research to improve students' essay writing through collaborative evaluation |
| Onur Karagül & Ömer Turel (Karatay University) | Searching ways to improve speaking skills of repeat classes |
| Şengün Baysal (Selçuk University) | How can action research enhance students' use of tenses through songs? |
| Y. Selim Şişman (Necmettin Erbakan University) | Using smartphone applications to improve speaking skills in EFL classrooms |

A group of mentors came together at the end of the conference and shared their reflections on their experience. The first round of this mentoring experience had a snowball effect. From that time onwards, I have created a small circle, a ring to intersect with other teacher research circles like the rings in a chain. Since that time, my action research group members have been in different teacher research circles. This network provides me with tangible feedback on my work.

A year later, another IATEFL Research SIG conference (2016) was held, hosted by Istanbul Bahçeşehir University. I was one of the presenters and during the conference I started thinking about conducting an EP study which is sometimes seen as a more practical way of conducting small scale research. I decided to conduct EP with a new type of target audience; the prospective teachers in our faculty. Initially, I made time to read about EP (Allwright, 2005; Hanks, 2015; Dar & Gieve, 2013) and find out more about it. I also wanted to understand whether it was doable in my context with fourth grade students since I believed it would act as a valuable tool for these fresh teachers and ‘infect’ them with the teacher research ‘virus’ from the very beginning (Burns, 2010). The School Practicum course, which students (mentees) join for two semesters at the end of their teacher training in order to observe (during the first semester) and do practice teaching (with a minimum of six teaching hours in the second semester), ideally suited my aim.

The mentoring process

Coming together

What brought the mentees and the mentor together for the first time in this new EP study was an ELT conference held in my institution five months after the Istanbul conference. I organized a workshop session and many ELT students participated. During the session, I was impressed with the attentiveness of three students especially. A continuous flow of inner talk along the lines of ‘they are sparkling with excitement to learn more, why not study with them?’ echoed in my mind. I was not their lecturer, so I did not know their names. Fortunately, they requested my friendship through social media within a week after the workshop. The mentoring process started with the first scheduled meeting in my office. After introducing ourselves, I asked their opinions about conducting a small-scale study during their practicum in their schools. They stated that they were eager to participate even though the word ‘research’

frightened them. I made my role as a mentor clear and assured them I would be facilitating them. After some introductory information on EP, we had a long talk about their practicum schools; the physical setting, the classrooms, the students and their teachers. I stated that I was curious about any kind of specific issues/problems that attracted their attention. The very first thing that two of them (Damla and Selma) reported was how they appreciated the teacher they were observing. They had noticed the positive way she treated her students, colleagues and the administrative staff. On the other hand, the other student (Şeyda) was dissatisfied with the school where she was practice teaching. While listening to each other, they expressed their astonishment at their reverse experiences and seemed puzzled about how these experiences could be so different from one another. I asked them to be more attentive observers during the following week and to keep journals. The first meeting underpinned our consequent sessions.

I based my mentoring on Allwright and Hanks' (2009, p. 5-6) five propositions about learners, which are highlighted in the sections below. In the meetings, which were held every Friday, and were all verbally recorded, I played an integral part as a mentor with this small team of students. The discussion of our learning experiences is described in the following sections and is based on these recordings.

Learners are unique individuals

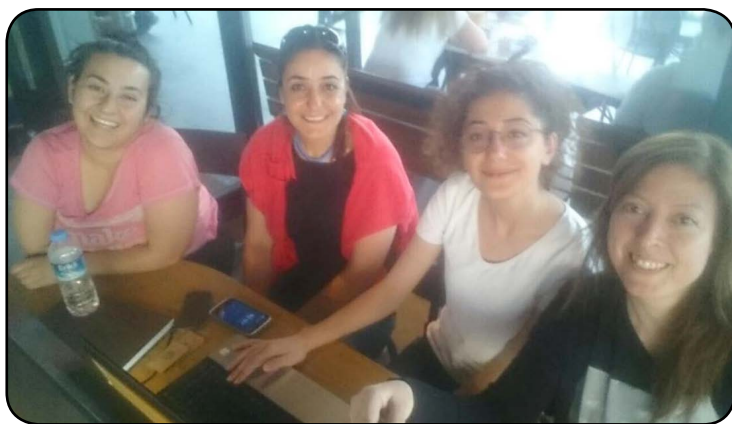
Over the course of time, the group members found that every individual in the group was unique in their characteristics, learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. To illustrate, Selma listened to some team members more closely than the others. She acted as if she was the leader of the team from time to time. She was both respectful and respected and took control of the discussion when necessary. Damla was also an attentive listener, and she talked the least during the discussions. As her friends and the classroom teacher reported, her teacher talking time in the actual classroom was limited, too. However, she used her body language effectively to create spontaneous activities during her classroom instruction and used her handicraft skills to prepare lesson materials. She took responsibility for recording our sessions for later use which helped us generate ideas for the coming meeting. Şeyda represented the 'voice of reason' in the team and warned us when the discussion went off topic. As another of the learners in the team, I also discovered my own characteristics. I liked thinking in steps and I felt safe when I followed 'an introduction, a body part and a conclusion' format. I also found out that I was sensitive to the needs of others. Therefore, reorienting the route of this collaborative team study according to continuous changing needs was my strength.

Learners are social beings

To engage my team members in framing their thinking and making them feel capable to conduct an EP study, I did some library research and selected two studies (Allwright, 2003; Ashour, 2008) to act as a guide.

Sometimes, during the study we met more than once a week as our sessions created a social group where members learned from each other through discussion. Coming together as members of a team meant that the students went beyond individual learning and began to learn as peers. The group acted together in a positive sense as it created a democratic and respectful community atmosphere from the first gathering onwards. Feeling safe and valued, the students behaved in a complementary way, filling gaps in each other's understanding, negotiating meaning and helping each other develop.

To keep in close communication, we started a WhatsApp group called 'research women' which helped us to agree on our next meeting agenda. Also, to provide a more informal social atmosphere we sometimes met outside the university at a café. Since they were in their last faculty year and were about to take country-wide national exams to become teachers officially, this approach helped to reduce stress and anxiety.



The EP team (Damla, Cemile, Şeyda and Selma) at a café

Learners are capable of taking learning seriously

In the planning stage of the EP, we brainstormed a list of issues from which the students could make a selection. Damla and Selma decided to work together and made a preliminary plan and shared their tasks. Şeyda's decision about the

puzzle she wanted to work on took a longer time. This was because she felt that her raw observation data were inadequate. Therefore, she meticulously used different strategies to reach her intended goal. As a mentor, I kept notes during our meetings, added to my notes from the voice recordings and sorted out the similarities and differences between my notes and the recordings. Every member in the team took this learning opportunity very seriously and worked hard not only on their individual tasks but also on each other's work.

Learners can take independent decisions

During long brainstorming sessions, the students took independent decisions on what to work on and how to do it. They reflected weekly upon their observations and decided on their own puzzles to explore. In addition to their weekly reflections, with a little guidance from me, they took independent decisions in and outside the classroom about what they could do next. When they felt that they were stuck and had difficulty in working out where to take their research, I provided them with alternatives to choose from. Afterwards, we brainstormed what could be done to follow their new directions and plans. Given their commitment to their research, I realized I could sometimes leave the group to work alone in my office while I left the recorder playing. When I returned and listened to the recordings, I realized that their discussions were fruitful and did not always need control and direction from me.

Learners can develop as practitioners of learning

My team frequently stated that both individually and collaboratively they grew as practitioners of learning. In the quote below Şeyda expresses how she developed her understanding of the classroom from her perspective by taking team members' reflections into consideration.

I felt as if I was going to play blind man's buff at first and it made me feel uncomfortable. I could not see where I was and how I was going to catch the unseen. First, we divided the readings into stages and then we shared what we noted in the journals. Even the simple question 'What happened at school today?' directed our talk and patterns started to emerge. The readings became more meaningful. I became more selective while listening to my friends' reflections. While listening to them I made decisions at the same time. Over the course of time, rather than focusing on the unseen and vague feelings, I learned to make best use of what I have and build on it by asking help from the sources and people around. I was improving and wishing to learn more...



The EP team after their session at the Istanbul IATEFL Research SIG Conference (2017)

Reflections and looking into the future

I continue putting my effort to replace the idea of research which is unattainable, away from teachers' reality, with the idea that research which may be practical, small scale and contextualized to meet teachers' needs while helping them grow professionally. EP enables teachers to explore their immediate context while acting as a lead-in to the world of teacher research with minimum disruption. Bearing this ease in mind, my mentoring story basically aimed to introduce EP to pre-service ELT students to promote the idea of sustainability in teacher research from the early onset of their language teaching career. During the study, the students continuously stated that conducting an EP study during the school practicum course made them comprehend better and feel more secure about the responsibilities of their job before they started their profession. The feedback I received from them and my personal records tell me that I should study with more students each year. As the mentor of the study, I felt proud of my mentees' success in refining their thinking and attitude towards teaching and I was energized by the production of a three-month enterprise.

In this project, my aim was to move away from presenting teachers with ideas about research that may be unattainable, towards research that could

match the reality of teachers' classroom experiences. I introduced the students I worked with to research which was practical, small scale and contextualized and which would meet their needs while helping them to grow professionally. I believed that EP would enable these pre-service ELT student teachers to explore their immediate contexts, and at the same time would provide them with a lead-in to the world of teacher research. Bearing this in mind, my way of mentoring also aimed to promote the idea of the sustainability of teacher research from the early onset of their language teaching careers. During the study, the students continuously stated that conducting an EP study during the school practicum course enabled them to understand their roles as teachers better and to feel more secure about their teaching responsibilities before beginning their profession. The feedback I received from them and my personal records tell me that it would be valuable to conduct studies with more students each year. Finally, as the mentor in the study, I was energized by the three-month process of conducting this project and felt proud of my mentees' success in refining their thinking and attitudes towards their future teaching.

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*On the way to achieve
sustainability: An evaluative
look at a three-year action
research program in an ELT
context*

Chapter

3

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This study aims to evaluate a three-year action research program organised within the Staff Development Unit (SDU) as a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activity. The study used the comments made by seven instructor-mentees as well as my own reflections as the mentor. These comments were collected by means of a survey (see Appendix I) given to the team who were conducting research at the end of the third year of the program (each action research cycle lasted for one year, so there were two earlier cohorts). The aim was to assess the sustainability of the program. The teacher-researchers were asked to evaluate their gains specifically in terms of the personal and professional changes they experienced while/after conducting action research projects in their classrooms. As the mentor of the program, my enquiry was directed toward a twofold aim: to examine Action Research (AR) for its benefits and explore the success of the AR program in terms of its sustained impact.

In their recent study, Edwards & Burns (2016) argue that “a balance of bottom-up individual teacher motivation and top-down institutional support is crucial in ensuring the sustainability of the impact of AR over time” (p. 14). I will evaluate the extent to which my personal experience as the mentor, and my mentees’ reflections verify their conclusion. However, I should acknowledge the limitations of this study for its being insider research; it is possible that the social desirability response bias might have had some effect on the responses I elicited from my mentees regarding the support they gained from me as their mentor.

Mentoring background

My mentoring story began at the 2014 IATEFL ReSIG Conference in İzmir, when we - as the Çukurova team- were invited to be a part of a project by Kenan Dikilitaş, who was very motivated and resourceful about spreading his

ideas related to the creation of different instructor-researcher teams across Turkey. With his guidance, our own research project started as a Continuous Professional Development activity (CPD) in the context of the School of Foreign Languages (YADYO), Çukurova University, under my leadership at the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year (see Dikilitaş & Wyatt (2017) for the details of my teacher mentoring story). The program continued on a voluntary basis for the next two years with the participating ELT instructors. We have had three productive years so far, growing and developing as a professional learning community. Throughout the three years of my research mentoring experience overall, twenty-five ELT instructors have developed action research projects related to their classroom practice, either individually or in collaboration with a colleague. During this three-year process, while developing as a research mentor, I did my best to support the participating instructors' engagement in doing action research in their own classrooms, while they gained expertise and knowledge about their students' learning.



Members of the YADYO research group, 2017

The mentoring process

Sustaining the impact of the AR program

The use of AR as part of CPD in the ELT context has increased recently. One of the best recent examples is a British Council project in Chile (Smith, Connelly & Rebolledo, 2014). This project encouraged teacher-research within

an in-service CPD intervention on a voluntary basis and targeted teachers with busy schedules in large classes and many other difficult circumstances. It achieved successful outcomes.

The immediate impact of AR research on teachers has been explored in the ELT context and profound impacts on teachers' development have been reported, including increased awareness and reflectivity, empowerment, beneficial collaboration with colleagues, deeper knowledge and personal theories about teaching (see Atay 2008; Wyatt 2011). When discussing teacher research, Allwright (1997, p.369) indicates: "without sustainability nothing of value is going to be happening in the long term". However, not much is known about teachers' perceptions of the sustained impact of AR programs as part of CPD over time. Exceptionally, in their study, Edwards and Burns (2016) explore ELT teachers' perceptions regarding their participation in an AR program in Australia and the factors that helped to sustain the impact in these teachers' contexts over the one to four years following their participation in the AR program. Four themes were reported; increased confidence about their teaching, feeling more connected to their students, being more engaged with and in research, and feeling more recognized. In addition to these themes, the main factors that helped to sustain the impact in these instructors' contexts were teachers' individual motivation and institutional support.

Following Edwards and Burns' (2016) research, the present study searched for the ongoing sustained impact and the main factors that helped sustain the impact of the AR program offered by the SDU in the YADYO context, as perceived by the third-year instructor-mentees.

Enhancing action research benefits

During my three-year mentoring experience, I have always aimed to help enhance the benefits of the AR program for the instructor-mentees. To maximize this aim, in line with the roles (see Eraldemir Tuyan, 2017) I took, I mainly;

- tried to provide psychological support to the ELT instructors during their often 'emotionally-charged' process, and was always there caring, listening, empathizing, encouraging;
- shared practical knowledge of language learning and teaching, and of how to conduct research as well as how to manage a research project;
- tried to create a community of critical friends focused on research for CPD and shared valuable resources (like books, articles); I created a re-

search culture within the school and linked it to wider ones;

- brought the instructor-researchers to the IATEFL ReSIG conference, the first year to İzmir and the second and the third year to İstanbul where they met a wider community with similar interests, and helped them publish their reports that grew out of their action research presentations;
- was supportive of the instructor-researchers as a friend but also encouraged them to have a critical look at their practices (see also Dikilitaş & Wyatt 2017).

Encouraging sustained impact

Also during my three-year mentoring experience, I aimed for the sustained impact of the program on instructors'

- inquiry processes and reflective habits in their classrooms
- improved pedagogical practices resulting in their students' increased motivation and learning
- feelings of empowerment to grow as professionals
- capacity to become agents of change in their classrooms
- good work habits and immunisation from burn-out

Research methodology

The seven instructor-mentees of the third-year team, whose experience in conducting AR studies in their classrooms varied, two participants with one-year's, three participants with two-years' and two participants with three-years' experience, participated in the study. The participants completed a survey, which was not anonymous, evaluating the YADYO AR Program and the mentor. Among the questions to evaluate the AR program, the survey included two specific questions to probe the perceptions of the participants regarding the sustained impacts and the factors that helped sustain those impacts in depth (see Appendix 1). The data analysis process involved developing categories through rounds of coding of the open-ended survey responses, then grouping the categories into themes and sub-themes.

Research findings

The emerging themes and sub-themes through the analysis of the survey data on the sustained impact of the AR program on instructors and the factors

that helped to sustain this are provided with specific quotes from the different participants in the following two sections:

Table 1: Main themes and sub-themes for sustained impact of AR

| Main Themes | Sub-themes |
|--|--|
| 1. Instructors experienced professional growth (CPD) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Raised self-efficacy as an instructor* Gained awareness in teaching process* Raised motivation for teaching* Felt enjoyment of teaching* Felt protected against burn-out* Gained reflective and critical skills |
| 2. Instructors realised the importance of their roles in the lives of their students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Felt able to understand students' perspectives on language learning* Felt responsible for guiding the students |
| 3. Instructors started to develop interest in conducting research | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Increased motivation in investing in theoretical knowledge* Raised self-efficacy in conducting research |
| 4. Instructors felt the importance of collaboration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">* Realised the positive outcomes of collaborating with students* Realised the positive outcomes of collaborating with colleagues |

Table 1 shows the main themes and sub-themes. These themes suggest that the impact of the AR program was varied and covered important areas of development. Qualitative comments provide insights into the impact of participating in AR over time. For example:

With three years' experience, I could approach the problems more boldly. If I sense a problem in my classes, I officially/unofficially try to address that problem in an analytical way. In that sense, I feel more confident to conduct the process on my own. I could sense and approach a problem from different aspects (Instructor 7, 3rd year).

As this is my second action research project, I feel that I know how to carry out the research based on my experiences of the first action research (Instructor 3, 2nd year).

As can be seen in Table 1, the first impact perceived to be sustained by the instructor-mentees was about “the feeling of professional growth”. This positive feeling was revealed by the participants in many ways. Most of the participants said that they gained awareness of their teaching process and their motivation for and enjoyment of teaching increased. They also mentioned that the feeling of growing professionally protected them from burn-out while helping them to build up their reflective and critical skills as instructors:

Teaching the academic skills course and reflecting on the classes spent with the students allowed me access to a more critical world and I have found the chance to create sustainable awareness; in other words, I have not only helped students but also myself as well (Instructor 1, 1st year).

Doing research is a challenging activity which keeps you on the move professionally (Instructor 3, 2nd year).

Teaching is a tricky profession in the sense that you can easily fall prey to a monotonous cycle. This, in the end, may lead to burnout. That’s what happens to me! Being a part of this group keeps my research spirit up (Instructor 4, 2nd year).

The end-of-year discussions is what keeps me going. Students who welcomed the change and improved themselves are a great motivation to me. It is even invaluable with students who were aware of the changes in themselves and were able to make comparisons in this regard (Instructor 7, 3rd year).

Another impact which was perceived by the instructors as due to their participation to the AR program was the realisation of the importance of their roles in the lives of their students. Some instructors commented on their feeling of responsibility for guiding the students and some mentioned that they felt able to understand students’ perspectives for better language teaching during the AR process:

I see myself as a guide of my students. To be a good and skilful guide, you need to be knowledgeable and experienced. AR provides you with new experiences and adventures (Instructor 5, 3rd year).

Everyone cannot learn at the same moment. So, as I try various teaching techniques while doing my AR; the students have more opportunities to find their own moment of understanding and learning due to my trials (Instructor 6, 2nd year).

The third sustained impact was related to the participants' growing interest in conducting research. This was evident not only in the words of the experienced participants. A new participant (Instructor 2) reported gaining interest in reading about the theoretical aspects of the challenges he encountered in his classroom.

Finally, all seven participants found that AR led to collaboration with colleagues as well as students and enjoyed the outcomes of this empowering approach as a sustained impact.

We have had a good collaboration in terms of giving feedback to each other and supporting each other in the group (Instructor 1, 1st year)

[...], when it is implementation time, the class becomes a team. My students interact with me and with each other to be a part of my study; they are curious about the results and strongly motivated to succeed in learning English (Instructor 6, 2nd year).

Working collaboratively with other colleagues and students has led me achieve more and helped me see my challenges closely (Instructor 2, 1st year).

Having an overall look at the themes and sub-themes shown in the Table 1, this study has shown that the sustainability of the impact of AR research as perceived by the third-year AR team is related to (1) the ELT instructors' professional gains in terms of their teaching motivation, efficacy, confidence about their teaching with and for their students, (2) working collaboratively within a group of critical friends and with their students, (3) enjoyment and contentment of acquiring the habit of critical reflection in their classrooms related to their own teaching and their students' learning, and (4) feeling their power as a guide to create change and get positive outcomes in their classrooms.

Regarding the factors that helped sustain the impacts of the AR program offered by SDU, the study reveals that the ELT instructors consider the mentor's support, encouragement and critical point of view as the most influential factor:

[...], as such activities bring extra burden for the teacher-researcher, sometimes you need somebody to push and motivate you (Instructor 1, 1st year).

Observing generous and meticulous care of the mentor and the experiences she shared with me is immeasurably precious. Besides she has never let my inner motivation fade away. She listened to my concerns and supported me to explore and interpret the challenges wisely (Instructor 2, 1st year).

Additionally, positive feedback from the students, working in a group and instructors' individual motivation towards professional development were the other necessary factors for sustaining the impacts of an AR program as part of CPD.

Overall, this study reveals similar results to Edwards and Burns' research (2016), in terms of the sustained impact of AR as a CPD activity, except for one theme. Namely, the participants of this study did not mention "feeling more recognised" as a sustained impact of an AR program for CPD. This might be because of the lack of financial and administrative support as well as encouragement for the instructors who take part in staff development activities on a voluntary basis.

Looking to the future

The evaluations I gathered for the purpose of this study are the perceptions of the third-year AR team. Nevertheless, as was concluded in Edward and Burns' (2016) research, teachers' individual motivation is one of the key factors in ensuring the sustainability of the impact of AR over time. Therefore, nurturing and enhancing the motivation of individual instructors who have taken part in the AR program is a requirement. Another requirement is that teachers should be encouraged to continue taking part in AR programs and keep doing AR in their classrooms to improve their teaching, professional knowledge and reflection habits. The sustainability of the impact of an AR program seems to lie at the intersection of the individual, context and the empowerment provided to the teachers. In this respect, as the study reveals, the mentor of an AR program also has an important role to play. For my part, as the mentor of the YADYO AR group, I need to retain key values to facilitate improving my own and others' practice, providing opportunities to reflect and develop, and encouraging collaboration to advance the sustainability of AR over time.

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Appendix 1

An extract of the survey for the evaluation of the YADYO action research program and the mentor

Dear Colleague,

As a volunteer participant of the Instructor Research Group at YADYO, Çukurova University in 2016-2017 academic year, you have been conducting your own action research study in your own class for almost a year. Accordingly, this survey aims to elicit detailed information about the processes you have gone through both as a member of this group and as an instructor-researcher in your own classroom. I would like you to reflect on your experiences concerning your involvement. Your contribution is invaluable. Thank you ☺

1. What do you perceive to be the sustained impact of your participation in YADYO TR group? (Please consider your experience in conducting action research studies as a member of this group)
2. What factors have helped to sustain the impact of your action research experience in your context?

☺ Please do not hesitate to add extra comments and/or suggestions if you have any...

A retrospective reflection of an EFL teacher educator on mentoring an inquiry-based practicum experience

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Mentoring background

The practicum plays an essential role in teachers' professional learning processes by integrating theoretical concepts with fieldwork teaching practices for those learning to teach. By integrating practical teaching applications with the theoretical underpinnings of the fields of study, practicum experiences provide a number of professional opportunities for pre-service teachers (PTs) to experience the teaching context (e.g., Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). As PTs conduct classroom observations in their fieldwork, they also have the chance to contact other stakeholders (i.e., students, cooperating teachers, administrators) in the teaching context. Their direct contact with the students and cooperating teachers (CTs) provides an opportunity for PTs to examine the natural teaching environment that they will experience in their future professional lives (e.g., Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006).

As main stakeholders, CTs have received a high degree of attention related to the mentoring practices they provide for PTs throughout the practicum experience in all fields of teacher education (e.g., Hobson et al, 2009; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Descriptive and exploratory studies have been conducted to examine the professional learning processes (e.g., Zeichner, 1992) regarding the triad relationship among PTs, CTs and the university supervisors. Thus, it can be claimed that practicum and mentoring practices are to have a unique professional relationship in terms of providing collaborative self-development practices that have long been addressed from the stakeholders' point of view (e.g., Kemmis et al, 2014). However, the university supervisors' perspectives, as mentors, on the professional learning processes and their self-evaluations during the practicum have been neglected (Borko & Mayfield,

1995) and need to be explored (Baum et al, 2011) in the teacher education literature.

The current EFL teacher education curriculum in Turkey has been centrally developed by the Council of Higher Education (CHE, 2007). The existing program for English Language Teaching (ELT) offers a number of field-related courses (e.g., ELT Methodology), in addition to educational courses (e.g., Introduction to Educational Psychology). Moreover, two field-experience courses, School Experience and Practicum, are consecutively offered in the last academic year of the EFL teacher education programs. In the field-experience courses, PTs conduct in-class observations in addition to implementing the lesson plans they have prepared with the guidance of the cooperating teachers (CTs) at the cooperating schools.

Throughout the practicum course, PTs attend the course in two contexts each week: one is at the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) schools for four to six hours per week for observation and to conduct teaching; the other context is a two-hour seminar offered by the university supervisors. The seminar course provides a platform to gather PTs together to reflect on their in-class experiences throughout the semester and provide the opportunity to share their professional experiences in the cooperating schools both with the peers and the university supervisors. Throughout the practicum, PTs are assigned to prepare LPs and materials and incorporate the necessary assessment tools into their teaching practices. In the weekly meetings with the university supervisors and peers, PTs share and receive feedback on their plans, materials, and teaching practices. Apart from the general application guidelines and roles of the stakeholders provided by the CHE (1997), there are no specific regulations offered by the CHE (1997) in terms of the course content and implementation of the field experience courses. Thus, as has also been reported in the current literature on EFL practicum studies in Turkey (Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez, 2012), it is reasonable to acknowledge that the US's applications and practices to evaluate PTs' teaching experiences throughout the field-based courses depend on the priorities defined by the university supervisors.

Since, both as a teacher educator and a university supervisor, I had the opportunity to plan and guide the practicum process according to the needs of the PTs in the practicum course that I offer, I asked PTs (n=33) at the end of the 2015-2016 fall semester about their expectations from the practicum for the following semester. Since it was to be their last chance to experience a

field-related course, their priorities and expectations were important to consider. To gather a comprehensive understanding of the PTs' needs and expectations, I distributed an open-ended survey with the following questions:

1. What are your expectations from the practicum course?
2. What are your priorities in the practicum course?
3. In terms of the professional learning process, what do you think you will find out through the process?

According to the findings based on content analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014), the main concerns reported by the PTs were how to teach English most efficiently, how to control the class effectively, and whether PTs would be successful in maintaining their professional image in the class. Considering the three themes that emerged from the preliminary expectations from the practicum, I was worried, as a teacher educator, about discovering ways to increase the PTs' professional awareness in terms of their professional openness and adjustability to current student-oriented in-class practices, in addition to developing close contact with the student engagement processes.

Thus, considering the current literature on integrating inquiry-based practices into teacher education programs and producing effective results (e.g., Nguyen, 2009; Çiftçi, Mede, & Atay, 2016), I decided to implement an inquiry-based practicum course for the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year in the EFL teacher education department where I work.

The mentoring process

Although ways of strengthening the practicum applications and the need to establish clinically rich teaching practice opportunities in addition to mentoring practices have been highlighted in teacher education studies (e.g., Burns, Jacobs, & Yendol-Hoppey, 2016), trying to bridge theory and practice has been a matter of discussion in the professional formation of language teachers (Wallace, 1996; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Farrell, 1998; Tsui, 2003). Hence, while planning the practicum course, I thought it would be reasonable to implement an inquiry-based practicum through which PTs would have the opportunity to experience, evaluate and reflect on the student-focused teaching practices throughout the practicum. Considering the fact that PTs did not have any in-class teaching experience, the observation tasks were important for guiding them in conducting an inquiry-based practicum. The PTs (n=10)

were given three pre-set professional in-class observation tasks (Dikilitaş, 2014), each of which was implemented over a three-week time period: the first week was for introducing the task for understanding and planning, the second week for observing and acting and the final week for reflecting on the process and evaluation. Although the observation tasks were initially developed for in-service teachers, they were appropriate for teachers with any level of professional experience.

The guided observation tasks (Dikilitaş, 2014) were organized to provide a hands-on experience for the students, rather than constructing the theoretical foundations of implementing research in the classrooms within the short amount of time dedicated for practicum. Thus, the reflection phase of the tasks was awareness-raising for the PTs.

PTs' reflections on the process include the following:

We always read articles in class but do not have much opportunity to practice teaching. I was surprised to see what I can use in my classes. (Asya, PT)

...[By looking at the] instant responses from the students ... I realized that my students were not into group work but were more fond of pair work... I had the chance to compare [referring to compared in-class practices]. (Dilek, PT)

...Before the course I had difficulty in writing reflections, but I have realized that in order to reflect on a teaching practice I have to consider it [the teaching experience] thoroughly, from the planning to implementation. (Kübra, PT)

Throughout the process, some PTs wanted to record their teaching practices and share them with their peers in the seminar class. I did not incorporate a video-recording requirement in the practicum in order to reduce feelings of anxiety for PTs. When the offer came from a group of PTs attending the same cooperating school, I asked them to gather the necessary permissions from the authorities to record the classroom context. In the meantime, I was the facilitator for maintaining the discussion context in the seminar course and the guide to discovering the most appropriate ways to reach the answers for which PTs were looking.

Thus, throughout the course, PTs were directly involved in constant in-class observations and monitoring the students' engagement and learning processes, in addition to adjusting the plans and reflecting on their teaching practices. Although most research-focused practicum courses require PTs to

establish the research context (e.g., Ulvik & Riese, 2016), in the current context of practicum, providing pre-set inquiry-based tasks for PTs to complete provided a smooth transition from not having any idea of how to implement an inquiry-based teaching practice to reflecting and commenting on the extent to which the activities were effective for that particular group of students. Thus, it would be reasonable to argue that the pre-set observation tasks provided a smooth transition context for the PTs, which was quite rewarding both for the university supervisors and for the PTs.

From the university supervisors' perspective, the process was more about increased professional awareness, the need to adjust the course content to the needs of the specific group of PTs, and the constant monitoring of the course and the mentoring process, in addition to reflecting on the process as a whole.

Developing as researchers and a research mentor

The inquiry-based practicum course was, primarily, designed as a five-stage teaching practice: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Burns, 2010). Thus, in order to maintain a comprehensive observation of the inquiry-based practicum process, I incorporated several reflection tools into the process from both the university supervisors' and PTs' perspectives.

From the university supervisors' perspective, throughout the inquiry-based practicum process, the instructor's notes on the preparation stage, in-class practices, and post-discussion reflections were noted and then analyzed through content analysis. The entire process of planning, implementing and reflecting on the inquiry-based practicum course provided the opportunity to reflect on, document and evaluate the stages, in addition to making the necessary adaptations and revisions throughout the process. Considering the course from the university supervisors' mentoring experience, the mentoring process of the inquiry-based practicum model that I implemented can be outlined in five phases.

In the first phase, the planning, I considered answers to PTs' questions regarding discovering the best way to teach English. Thus, guided observation tasks (Dikilitaş, 2014) with inquiry-based teaching practices implemented for teachers of all professional levels were provided. The course content and the weekly tasks mainly focused on comparing the most common ways of implementing teaching practices of English. Additionally, the tasks required PTs to conduct in-class observations by focusing on student participation and involvement. For instance, in a weekly task, PTs were asked to implement a

vocabulary teaching lesson based on word-by-word mechanical practices (e.g., bilingual dictionary exercise), and the following week, PTs were asked to conduct another vocabulary lesson based on individual strategies (e.g., guessing the meaning from the context). Throughout the task implementations, PTs were to conduct observations of student participation, assess the effectiveness of the teaching process by considering student involvement, and, finally, reflect on the process by keeping a reflective log on the effectiveness of the teaching practices in addition to potential future teaching applications.

While organizing the course, I was also reflecting on my priorities and evaluating the extent to which I was learning from the process. Thus, the second phase was the realization of my decision-making processes while mentoring. The main theme was monitoring the teaching practices (e.g., giving feedback, discussion on the PTs' reflections) and guiding the PTs throughout the process. Accordingly, the reflective logs I kept were very useful in monitoring the mentoring process throughout the course. The logs were the main data source for the current study to examine the professional awareness of an EFL teacher educator through mentoring practices based on an inquiry-based practicum. Thus, considering the components of the personal interpretive framework (Kelchtermans, 2009) from the professional self-continuum with a retrospective focus, the study was based on the normative understanding of task perception.

The third phase was monitoring. While developing the content and the timeline, in addition to the flow of the inquiry-based practicum course, I had a number of roles to consider. When the generic attributes (Orland-Barak, 2010) were considered, the mentoring process involved various approaches to mentoring. Hence, the mentoring roles in which I was involved were adapted and altered throughout the practicum in relation to the procedural progress of the course content. Considering the existing role definitions in the literature (e.g., Orland-Barak & Klein, 2005), I realized that my mentoring roles were cyclical in nature and continuously evolving.

The fourth phase involved critical friends (Samaras, 2010). During the planning and implementation process, having an expert opinion in addition to an objective evaluation (Loughran & Northfield, 1998) was very important. I had two friends, experts in the field of EFL teacher education whom I constantly consulted for critique and with whom I reflected on the course content and applications. Throughout the process, we had both online and face-to-face conversations on providing the necessary context for the PTs to benefit from the effective professional learning process throughout their practicum experience.

Looking to the future

As outlined in the chapter, incorporating inquiry-based practices into the practicum context played an important role in deepening the university supervisors' professional awareness and the adoption of the mentoring roles. Correspondingly, the mentoring process of the inquiry-based practicum experience provided a number of points to consider for future practices with regards to implementing professional learning opportunities into the courses that I offer.

After completing the course, I questioned the role of being the university supervisor and the mentor, acting as the evaluator of the process in addition to being a part of it, and how all those roles are incorporated and intertwined. As discussed in the literature, both roles could be integrated to carry out the mentoring process effectively (Ambrosetti, 2014). In relation, the consideration of the professional needs of the pre-service teachers to narrow the gap between theory and practice, in addition to the need to enhance the dialogue between the university supervisors and the PTs by decreasing the role of supervision and acting more like a mentor, also require attention.

Therefore, reflecting on the processes of professional gains through mentoring, I realized the importance of personal/professional awareness and development with regards to the necessary program adaptations. For research mentors, all these processes form a cycle, and the professional gains of planning, guiding, monitoring, evaluating, reflecting, and asking for opinions, in addition to reconsidering, could refer to all aspects of research integration into the teacher education programs.

Further studies on the role of teacher educators as research mentors need to address a longitudinal perspective of an inquiry-based practicum experience by considering all aspects of the field experience courses. As the role of providing supportive contexts for PTs has recently been highlighted in the literature (e.g., Leenknecht et al, 2017), ways of incorporating professionally-supportive practicum contexts need to be examined.

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“My Story in Practicum”: A project of student-teachers’ action research during practicum

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Background

This paper presents our journey in which we guided our student-teachers (senior students enrolled in a B.A. English language teaching program) to do their own action research during their practicum. Student-teachers in general go through some challenges in their teaching during the practicum (Farrell, 2007) and may suffer from a lack of support (Valencia et al, 2009). This was something we also observed in our students’ teaching experiences during practicum. No matter what they learned in their educational program, almost all of them were inclined to use a kind of grammar-translation method in their teaching and had many classroom management problems. Even more problematically, they were observed and assessed by only one supervisor from the university once or twice in a semester.

In short, the problems that were related to the practicum could be grouped under two main issues. The first was related to their teaching in the practicum. Students were left alone with the school mentor at the practicum school most of the time, so they mainly followed whatever the teacher asked them to do. Some were lucky enough to have a supportive, helpful, and innovative school mentor, but some had to work with more traditional and less collaborative ones. When we observed them, we realized by the end of the semester that there were some serious teaching problems; however, it was too late to provide them with instructive feedback. The second issue was the assessment system for the practicum period, which we believed was unfair. The assessment was done at the end of the semester by the school mentor and the university supervisor based on the scoring criteria designated by the university in line with the higher education institution standards. Although all the student-teachers were going through the same process, they were assessed by different school

mentors and supervisors. We realized that some school mentors focused more on the student-teachers' behaviours than on their teaching whereas some did just the opposite. The same problem was true for the supervisors as well. Basing their assessment only on one observation (and sometimes for only half of the class-time because of time limits), some supervisors were more generous than others. There were always some students complaining about this unfair assessment procedure.

Such problems made us look for ways to improve our students' practicum experiences. The idea came into our minds in 2015 when we attended the 'Teachers Research!' – IATEFL ReSIG Conference where Kenan Dikilitas and the enthusiasm of lots of other researchers and colleagues encouraged and inspired us to form an action research team at our institution. There we decided to launch the project of *My Story in Practicum (MySiP)* with our student-teachers, who would be supported to carry out action research to deal with an issue related to their practicum classes. The rest of this paper explains what we could and could not do during these two years in the project.

My story in practicum project (*MySiP*)

Like the other senior students in ELT departments in Turkey, our students go to practicum schools for two semesters. The first semester is devoted to classroom observation. They are given weekly tasks to focus on while observing and are expected to report these observations to us as their supervisors at the university. As an initial step to our project, we asked the students to be as reflective as possible while observing and writing their reports, and to identify some issues they might have while teaching. They shared their experiences and reflections on these issues with us at an allocated time one by one. This was a preparation stage for the action research they were going to conduct the following semester.

The project formally started in the second semester of the 2015-2016 academic year, when students had their first teaching experiences in the practicum schools. The students were reminded that they were to carry out their action research on the issue(s) they had identified in the first semester. Because students needed guidance and support, we added an *Action Research* course into the program this semester, where they learned the basics of action research and had the chance to examine some sample action research studies. We devel-

oped a collaborative model in which all the parties (action research mentors, university supervisors, school mentors, and student-teachers,) would work in collaboration with each other (See Figure 1). Within this model, the role of the action research mentors (AR mentor) is to train the student-teachers on how to conduct action research and to guide them within this process through continuous feedback and discussion sessions. University supervisors have the role of mentors but also the intermediary between the university and the practicum school. They visit the schools every week and observe the student-teachers while teaching. There they discuss the student-teachers' progress with the school mentors and give constructive feedback to the student-teachers on the way they teach. They are also in constant relation with the AR mentor(s). School mentors are the teachers who are assigned by the practicum school principals as the mentors of the student-teachers at school. They guide the student-teachers in all aspects of a school day, like teaching, developing and grading assessment tasks, managing the classroom, interacting with the students, and so on. The following sections deal with the process we went through within this model.

2015-2016 Academic year

In this project, we followed Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) cyclical process steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Planning step had actually started in the first semester when the student-teachers were asked to reflect on possible issues they might encounter while teaching or on some areas they wanted to explore. In the *Action Research* course in the second semester, the student-teachers were required to watch one of the video-recorded classes they had taught in their practicum class in their own time (at least two or three times) with their peer(s). They were asked to focus on their teaching practice and describe an issue and/or a problem they had experienced in their classroom. This led them to determine the area(s) of their teaching practice they would like to change or improve and prepare their action research plan. They presented this plan in the classroom to other peers and the AR mentor to get some feedback and suggestions for the research. Later on, the student-teacher, the AR mentor, and the supervisor had some meetings to fine-tune the action research cycles. Only then did the student-teachers start implementing their plans and collecting the data.

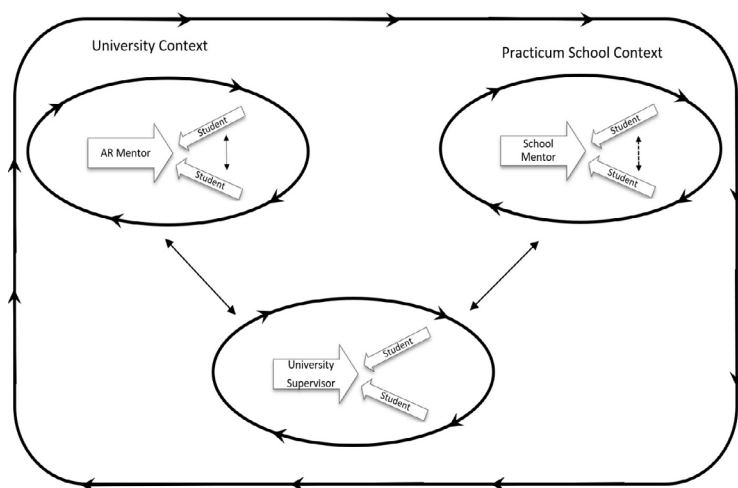


Figure 1. Collaborative Practicum Model

Within the process of data collection, the students received feedback from AR mentors. They were also expected to contact their supervisors at least once every two weeks in order to discuss the process they underwent. During these meetings, they shared retrospective experiences on their teaching practices and reflected back across this experience related to the issue they would like to change in their classroom. As AR mentors and supervisors, our role was to help them examine what the collected data told them from a critical point of view and find their own solutions to handling the issue they experienced in their practice teaching. We were like *critical friends* (Burns, 2010), as we provided them with an auxiliary perspective in a supportive way.

The students were required to write their action research reports by the end of the semester as an assignment for the *Action Research* course. We also organised a poster-presentation conference named '*My Story in Practicum (MySiP)*' at the university to publicise their studies. All the students and instructors in the department, the parents of the student-teachers, and the school mentors were invited to the conference. Thus, they were able to present their experiences and reflections throughout the process, which motivated them and the other students in the department. We had also encouraged them to share their experiences in the '*2016 Teachers Research Conference*' that took place in Istanbul. Because it would be highly difficult for most students to pay the conference fee, we got in touch with the conference organizers to consider this issue, and they were kind enough to offer a lower fee for our students. Thus,

ten of our students participated and presented their research in that conference. At the next conference in 2017, a lower fee was announced to all students by IATEFL, which showed that IATEFL is supportive not only to teacher-researchers but also student-researchers.

2016-2017 Academic year

We continued the same project the following year but with some modification based on our experiences in the previous year. The first modification was to increase the number of supervisors, because in the first year of the project we had found that dealing with the whole process as only two supervisors was quite exhausting. Each of us, as supervisors, had about 15 students to work with regularly, observe their teaching, and give feedback on it. There were times we needed to observe some students more often, but we were hampered by the limited time. Four other instructors voluntarily accepted to join the team: Two of them were experienced teachers working at our department for many years. They expressed their positive feelings about the *MySiP* project and stated that they would willingly join the team. The other two were the new research assistants at the department who had gone through a similar experience in the previous year when they were practicum students.

The second modification was the organisation of the student observations in the practicum schools. We had 32 students in total and three practicum schools. We organized the observations in such a way that every week two different supervisors visited the practicum school. Thus, each of the six supervisors had the chance to observe almost all the students, and each student was observed at least by four of the supervisors. This helped the students to receive feedback from different perspectives and led to more fair assessment.

Another modification was related to the poster-presentation conference at the end of the semester. We decided to invite a well-known scholar in the field to give a talk to the students before the poster presentations. Prof. Dr. Özden Ekmekçi kindly accepted our invitation and gave a valuable talk on the qualities of a good teacher. This obviously was another motivating factor for the students; not only the student-teachers but the other students in the department were also all very excited to have the chance to make conversation with and ask their questions to a well-known scholar. As in the previous year, we invited the school mentors in the practicum schools as well as parents and we ended up with a fruitful experience.

On the whole, it is possible to state that our project was successful and provided an example for other universities that want to improve the practicum process and enhance professional development of teacher candidates. Among many positive outcomes, which are discussed in the following section, this project led our students to broaden their horizons. We again encouraged them to present their research in the *Teachers Research-2017* conference in Istanbul and 12 student-teachers attended the conference. They had the chance to listen to many worldwide scholars there and even received feedback from some of them.

Reflections on the project

By the end of the academic year, we asked the students to fill in an open-ended exit survey so that we could get to know about and appreciate their feelings and experiences about doing action research in the practicum. According to the data we collected, we can state that they had started to raise more awareness about their selves as future teachers:

This project helped me to step back and see the bigger picture and realized how the practice is different from the theory.

It helped me explore who I am and what I want for my future students.

Consulting my mentors/supervisors and learning from their experiences made me see 'I am not alone' experiencing these conflicts and difficulties.

The students-teachers realized that what they learned at school did not always fit in the real classroom environment, and they had to develop their own way of considering the actual context. Such an awareness may help the student-teachers to realise that it is not always possible to directly transfer their knowledge, but that it is important to build initial foundations of a teacher identity through social practice (Gebhard, 2009).

The project also helped them understand the importance of being a teacher researcher:

At the very beginning when I learned we need to do action research in practicum, I said, 'Ugh, oh God, what's that? We do not need to do a research to teach something! This just gives extra burden in the last year!' But, now I understand how I was wrong.

Action research was really helpful to my teaching because it improved my own practices. We were not only a teacher but also a researcher.

By doing action research, I could see the changes in my teaching.

Action research helped me discover the potential problems that rose in a classroom and the ways to deal with them by following some steps.

Hopefully such an understanding will lead these student-teachers to keep doing their own research in the future and continuously develop themselves through collaboration with colleagues and their students.

Looking to the future

This study revealed that doing action research in the practicum gave an opportunity to student-teachers and mentors/supervisors to develop a sense of community and to understand each other by nurturing professional development in a supportive environment. By doing so, we could explore ways of addressing student-teachers' needs before and during the practicum. In the feedback sessions and informal conversations about their practicum, most of them explained that the ideal views they had before teaching were replaced by the reality of the actual classroom setting and carrying out an action research helped to bridge this gap. As one stated, teaching in the practicum was 'like travelling to a new country where they did not know how to survive'; however, action research and the mentor/supervisor support were like 'a caring mother who would give the required equipment to survive'. This metaphor reflects how they saw their practicum experience.

Mentoring involves providing emotional support and exchanging opinions (Stanulis & Russell, 2000). Thus, as university instructors and mentors, we should build mutual rapport with our student-teachers so that they can become more self-confident and facilitate critical reflection on their practices. During our project, we came across some concerned student-teachers who had difficulty understanding the reasons for doing action research and questioned the benefit of this process. However, at the end of the project, most of them came to express their gratitude and intention to keep it up in their classroom. In our view, ELT departments that wish to mentor their students should consider including action research or similar courses to support practicum experiences.

Having successfully completed the second year of the project, at least in our context, we would suggest that the mentor/supervisor and student-teachers need to have regular contact, enthusiasm and energy, and a sense of autonomy and belonging to assist each other constantly to improve this practicum process. As a result of this study, we now both view ourselves as teacher-researchers who are in search of new ways to make student-teachers' stories more remarkable and meaningful by strengthening the relationship between the two parties.

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Team teaching: A journey on a tandem

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Main focus

This paper introduces a team teaching experience as part of an in-house ‘Mentoring and Coaching’ course, focusing on how teachers can reflect on their professional and personal development. The purpose of our research was to examine the impact of team teaching, as an alternative approach, on learner participation, interaction and production. In a context where teachers come from diverse backgrounds with a variety of pre-service training, the ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to in-service training and development through workshops, seminars and short courses may be neither appropriate nor produce lasting change. Therefore, another motive for why we chose to team teach was to try out a new approach to contribute to our continuous professional development.

Background

This small-scale research was conducted at the Preparatory School of Izmir University of Economics through a series of interactive team teaching sessions in intermediate and upper intermediate level classes. The total number of student participants was 54, all of whom experienced team teaching with the same instructors.

Team-teaching can be defined as “simply team work between two qualified instructors who, together, make presentations to an audience” (Quinn & Kanter, 1984, p. 2). Buckley defines it as:

involving a group of instructors working purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively to help a group of students learn. As a team, the teachers work together

in setting goals for a course, designing a syllabus, preparing individual lesson plans, actually teaching students together, and evaluating the results. They share insights, arguing with one another and perhaps even challenging students to decide which approach is correct. (p. 4)

Villa, et al., (2008) suggest that “co-teaching involves the distribution of responsibility among people for planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students” (p. 50). It is a unique professional relationship in which “partners must establish trust, develop and work on communication, share chores, celebrate, work together creatively to overcome the inevitable challenges and problems, and anticipate conflict and handle it in a constructive way” (p. 5).

Villa, et al. (2008), has examined four approaches:

1. Supportive co-teaching: One instructor takes the lead and, the other is in a supportive role.
2. Parallel co-teaching: One main instructor and teaching aides to help inclusion of several heterogeneous groups.
3. Complimentary co-teaching: One main instructor and one who complements with supplemental notes and instruction.
4. Team teaching: Instructors co-teach alongside each other and share responsibility for planning, teaching and assessment.

After reviewing several styles of co-teaching, we both agreed on using Team Teaching for the purpose of this research.

Research methodology

As mentioned before, the research was conducted through a series of interactive team teaching sessions. Two teachers with a combined experience of 11+ years carried out the research. Four team teaching sessions were held in one intermediate and two upper intermediate level classes. The total number of the participants was 54. The data for the research were collected through quantitative and qualitative techniques. The qualitative data comprised video recordings of the sessions and whole class discussions. We used a Likert scale questionnaire to collect quantitative data.

Video recordings

All four of the team teaching sessions were video recorded. The purpose was to record every single piece of evidence which supports the effectiveness of team teaching on learner participation, interaction and production. The team members watched all the recordings after each session and gave immediate peer feedback which included personal observations, impressions, and feelings. This process involved self-reflection and self-examinations with regard to their team teaching performance.

Class discussions

At the end of each session, the student participants were asked to share their opinions and feelings orally about their perceptions of the team teaching they experienced. The following questions were asked to students so we could receive their immediate feedback:

- What was your impression of the team-taught lessons?
- In your opinion, did the teachers work in harmony? Why?/Why not? Please give some reasons or examples.
- How did having two teachers in class make you feel?
- Do you think having two teachers in class leads to better class management? Why?/Why not? Please give some reasons or examples.

Table 1 provides sample responses from the students.

Table 1

| COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM STUDENTS |
|---|
| “When two teachers were teaching, there was more control over the class.” |
| “It was good to observe different teaching styles.” |
| “Teachers were more interactive.” |
| “Teachers worked in harmony.” |
| “Lessons were lively and fun.” |
| “Teachers seemed confused.” |

Likert scale questionnaire

All students completed the Likert scale questionnaire aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of team teaching. The survey data consisted of 12 questions that asked the students to agree or disagree with the statements. Table 2 provides the given questionnaire and includes the frequencies and percentages of students' responses to team teaching.

Findings and discussion

The findings were divided into three parts. The video recordings provided valuable data for the co-teachers to observe their team work and to see its effects on student participation and interaction. Monitoring in class, which is done to ensure learners are on task and to provide them with feedback on what they are writing, can sometimes be difficult. These recordings also served as evidence for how monitoring became easier and more efficient through team teaching. The comments from the students in class discussions show that team teaching sessions served their purpose and the students both enjoyed the experience and benefited from it. The sixth comment in Table 1 was the only negative comment we received from one of the students after the first team teaching session, and when we watched the video recording of the relevant session, we realized the student was right. As neither of us had prior team teaching experience, this comment provided us with constructive feedback which enabled us to improve our behind-the-scenes work and actual co-teaching performance. The percentages we received from students' responses in the questionnaire showed us that the approach of the student participants to the team-teaching model was overall quite positive. As Table 2 shows, the majority of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statements in the questionnaire.

Table 2

| | | | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. I think it was good to have two teachers in the class. | D | A | SA | |
| | 7 | 32 | 15 | |
| | 13,0% | 59,3% | 27,8% | |
| 2. I felt comfortable asking both teachers for help. | D | A | SA | |
| | 2 | 29 | 23 | |
| | 3,7% | 53,7% | 42,6% | |
| 3. The teachers demonstrated teamwork. | D | A | SA | |
| | 3 | 35 | 16 | |
| | 5,6% | 64,8% | 29,6% | |
| 4. Having two teachers in class made it easier for me to follow the instructions. | D | A | SA | |
| | 10 | 25 | 19 | |
| | 18,5% | 46,3% | 35,2% | |
| 5. Both teachers interacted with me during class. | D | A | SA | |
| | 2 | 33 | 19 | |
| | 3,7% | 61,1% | 35,2% | |
| 6. Having two teachers in class made me feel more motivated. | D | A | SA | |
| | 4 | 33 | 17 | |
| | 7,4% | 61,1% | 31,5% | |
| 7. Participating in a class with 2 teachers helped me to work cooperatively with different people. | D | A | SA | |
| | 3 | 34 | 17 | |
| | 5,5% | 63,0% | 31,5% | |
| 8. They both helped and guided me through the activities. | D | A | SA | |
| | 2 | 28 | 24 | |
| | 3,7% | 51,9% | 44,4% | |
| 9. Both teachers provided me with support and encouragement. | A | SA | | |
| | 31 | 23 | | |
| | 57,4% | 42,6% | | |
| 10. It was quicker to get help. | A | SA | | |
| | 20 | 34 | | |
| | 37,0% | 63,0% | | |
| 11. I received more help in this class than in classes taught by just one teacher. | SD | D | A | SA |
| | 1 | 3 | 34 | 16 |
| | 1,9% | 5,6% | 63,0% | 29,6% |
| 12. I would like to have two teachers in my other classes in the future. | SD | D | A | SA |
| | 1 | 8 | 26 | 19 |
| | 1,9% | 14,8% | 48,1% | 35,2% |

SD.: strongly disagree, D.: disagree
SA: strongly agree A: agree,

Reflections and future implications

All these findings demonstrate that this research had various effects on both the students and the teachers. As for team members, team teaching combines teachers' strengths and remedies weaknesses. In class, teachers do not feel as if somebody else is stealing their thunder. On the contrary, they complement one another: "They have someone from whom they can draw inspiration and who can provide them with constructive feedback on their teaching" (Benoit, 2001). Team teaching also improves quality in planning and teaching, as Buckley (2000) suggests: "Lively planning sessions can not only improve their performance in the classroom but lead to new research and publication" (p. 80). While team teaching, teachers have the chance to observe any problems hindering learning in a non-threatening and supportive context because they can empathize with their students and they become one of them. Team teaching sessions also enable teachers to observe each other, and so immediate learning can take place in class. Teachers also feel safer as there is someone to turn to in class. More manageable and efficient monitoring appears to be another positive outcome of team teaching. In addition, although it was not the primary goal in this research, this experience turned out to be an opportunity which contributed to our continuous professional development. Buckley (2000) explains the effect:

Team members are not only interested in getting the students to learn more. They want to be stimulated themselves to do better teaching: to be more creative in their lectures, with better organization, clearer topic divisions, greater emphasis on the most important areas, and more imaginative use of audiovisuals, and to be more successful in getting students actively engaged in the learning process through questioning, group interaction, and interesting research projects. (p. 80)

Although time-consuming and labour-intensive, outcomes indicate success for students as well. Students can observe a greater variety of teaching styles as they witness two different minds, personalities and approaches, which in turn sparks interest, sustains attention and prevents boredom. Team teaching promotes student participation and interaction and therefore leads to better student performance. As there is more control over the students in class, students feel as if they have to produce more. Even the weaker students are involved

in the process. In this way, the quality of learning improves, too. In our team teaching sessions, we noticed that our students completed the writing tasks in a shorter time period than in solo teaching sessions. They also produced better organized paragraphs with the help of better and more effective monitoring by team teachers. Appendix 1 shows some sample paragraphs produced by the participants who were put into groups to write one paragraph of an essay.

This inspiring experience motivated us to think about broadening the scale of the research in the future by changing the variables such as the number of students, the classes that are team taught the team teachers, as well as the length of the research. A team teaching approach potentially brings into contact different personality traits. Therefore, when choosing a co-teaching partner, one should be aware of the differences between their personalities. The team teaching journey is like a journey on a tandem. Riding a single bike is a very enjoyable and rewarding experience, just as solo teaching is. However, a tandem bike brings two people together and leads the riders on a journey in which they share every single mile. Similarly, team teaching allows two teachers of different strengths and abilities to teach together pleasurably. After a few miles together, riders find themselves acting in harmony and moving smoothly. Likewise, after a couple of team teaching sessions, teachers develop a very special level of non-verbal communication as a couple because team teaching is a kind of a 'professional marriage' in which you blend and possibly compromise your personalities.

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Appendix 1

“The last effect of watching TV too much is psychological problems. Some children may be affected badly by cartoons on TV. For example, they can become aggressive and violent. Furthermore, if people watch too much TV, they will definitely lose their creativity.”

“To begin with, people watch too much TV and it leads to health problems such as obesity, lack of sleep and eye issues. If people watch too much TV, they may become ill due to lack of movement. People watch too much TV and they cannot understand how time passes. Therefore, they have health issues”

“The second negative effect of watching too much TV is social problems such as becoming unsocial and addicted. Many people prefer to sit in front of TV and they do not go out. That’s why they communicate less with other people and they do not have any friends. Also, if they watch too much TV, they gradually become addicted to TV. They always want to watch TV programmes. They do not do anything else.”

Examining the effect of structured peer observation on EFL teachers' perceptions, attitudes and feelings

Chapter

7

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Main focus

In this chapter I discuss the result of action research that investigated the impact of a structured peer observation model on high school EFL teachers' viewpoints, attitudes, and feelings. With this research I aimed to discover high school EFL teachers' perceptions of a proposed peer observation model. The underlying reason behind my preference for structured peer observation is to have an influence on the outlooks and attitudes of teachers towards observing fellow teachers, which would bring potential benefits such as instilling collegiality and altering perceptions of and stances towards peer learning. In addition, I intended to indicate the possibility of professional development at one's workplace without investing large amounts of money.

Background

In the setting investigated, EFL instructors are not efficiently supported in terms of professional development due to financial and temporal constraints. Specifically, the institution mostly declines requests for professional development (PD) opportunities because of the cost and lack of available time in the intense academic program of the school. However, it sometimes offers and provides some training in the preparatory period before the beginning of each academic year, which usually proves ineffective because of the top-down way of provision. Given the conditions in the setting, this research seemed to be a strong alternative for PD, as it barely costs a penny and was thus comfortably accepted by the administration.

Apart from the financial obstacle, peer observing has generally been associated with evaluation and supervision because of the way it has conventionally

been implemented in many other institutions in the region and the country. Therefore, I underline the voluntary and non-evaluative nature of this type of peer observation. In the light of these contextual issues, the following literature review sheds light on the studies that have so far been implemented.

In existing research, peer observation has mostly been evaluated as a positive experience (Richards & Lockhart, 1992; Fitzpatrick, 1995; Threadgold & Pai, 2000; Shortland, 2010). The data gleaned from these studies reveal that the participants gained new insights into their own teaching, specifically in teacher-student interaction, differentiated instruction, diverse teaching strategies, activity management, and classroom management. Among recent studies, Dos Santos (2016) conducted research in Hong Kong; the data, collected from qualitative interviews with six ESL teachers working at a language school revealed that peer observation can be a useful tool for continuous PD and for developing teaching strategies. However, studies demonstrating the negative perceptions of teachers on peer observation also abound (Cosh, 1999; Cakir, 2010; Sanif, 2015). In these studies, administered at a tertiary level, it was found that teachers feel anxious in the presence of a fellow teacher. When it comes to research in Turkey, the number of studies is limited (Kasapoğlu, 2002; Şen, 2008; Bozak, et al., 2011). Kasapoğlu (2002) conducted a case study by proposing a peer observation model for PD in Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages (AU-SFL) with the participation of two novice and two experienced teachers. The participants' responses indicated that all the participants thought that peer observation contributed to their PD to varying degrees by promoting collaboration. Şen (2008) conducted a study at a private Turkish university's preparatory school. She found that peer observation contributed to the reflective thinking abilities of six Turkish EFL teachers, as measured by observations, reflective essays and interviews. Bozak, et al., (2010) similarly investigated the perceptions and attitudes towards peer observation through their descriptive study at three Turkish state universities. The result of this study showed that peer observation is both regarded as a potentially effective PD tool but is also considered to yield negative outcomes due to both the lack of trust of the observer's competency and human nature of disliking criticism.

This research sought to explore peer observation through a study conducted at a private science high school. The particular emphasis was on a unique method of peer observation in which the observee negotiated the observation

criteria with the fellow observer for self-development reasons rather than on supervisory or administrative grounds. The current research was conducted using a qualitative research design and included reflective essays and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The study aimed to investigate the teachers' perceptions and feelings related to the use of the peer observation model. In line with this goal, the following research question was addressed: What are the perceptions and feelings of science high school EFL teachers in relation to the proposed peer observation model?

Research methodology

Setting

The study was conducted at the Foreign Languages Department of a private science high school in İstanbul. The setting was selected for reasons of convenience as the researcher is also employed there as the head of department. In this setting, PD opportunities for the teaching staff have rarely been provided to address the needs of the school and the teachers. The school currently does not use any peer observation model.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected on a voluntary basis. Four EFL teachers with varying years of teaching experiences were involved. Background information about the participants concerning general information and details about their PD experiences was obtained using a demographic survey (see Appendix A). A very brief biographical statement for each of the participants is as follows:

1. Elif, 34, is a BA holder in English Language Teaching, and has been teaching English since 2010.
2. Serap, 32, is a BA holder in English Language Teaching, and has been an active teacher for six years in total, including two years in her current institution.
3. Belma, 31, is also a BA holder in English Language Teaching, and has been teaching English since 2009.
4. Sevinç, 23, is a BA holder in American Language and Literature and has an MA in English Language Teaching.

Data collection tools

The data were collected from reflective essays and interviews (see Appendix B). Participants wrote their reflections as the observer and the observee after each observation. In total, each participant observed two teachers and was observed two times. The total number of reflective papers is 16. For triangulation purposes, the participants were also interviewed individually, during which they were asked about the details of the experience as recorded in their reflective journals.

Procedure

The study was carried out in the second semester of the 2016–2017 academic year and lasted eight weeks. In the first four weeks, input sessions were held on a weekly basis in the department hour on Mondays. In these 50-min-long sessions, the researcher (the head of department) covered the following topics by engaging the participants as well as the other department members in reflection on their own teaching: giving instructions, error correction, designing and managing pair/group activities, teacher talking time, pace, elicitation and giving feedback. The majority had the opportunity to refresh and revise their knowledge of these topics, while the input was new to some of the participants. As the topics were centered on the procedural language awareness of the teaching practitioners, the participants were considered to have varying degrees of awareness due to their teaching experience, and thus it was considered that each participant would become more aware of their implementations and catch a different way of dealing with these topics during peer observations. After input sessions were completed, the following procedure was repeated in week 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Pre-observation

At this stage, the observer and the observee came together to discuss the lesson and background information about the class to be observed. The observee selected a few specific points that she felt needed improvement, or she wanted an outsider's opinion on, such as giving instructions, error correction, and managing interaction, and then informed the class about the role of the observer in order to decrease any pressure on the students.

While observation

At this stage, the observer visited the class and sat at the back of the room and the observee delivered her lesson. The observer paid particular attention to

both the predetermined points as well as the overall delivery, and took some field notes including personal takeaways, commendations and recommendations.

Post observation

At this stage, the observer and the observee held a 10-15 min meeting to reflect on the observed lesson. The observer shared her notes with appraisals and suggestions, and the observee listened and reacted to the feedback with her own comments. This post-observation meeting took place on the observation day so that participants did not have difficulty recalling the lesson.

Data analysis

The researcher explored common themes in the participants' journals that they kept after each observation experience, and then prepared some interview questions related to these themes to gain a better understanding of them and to seek further insight. A thematic analysis of the interviews then followed.

Findings and discussion

Reflective Journals

Reflective journals that were kept following each observation by both observer and observee constituted one of the main sources of the data in that the participants' immediate reflections on the observation experience indicated their feelings to a great extent. The following reports the common key themes extracted from the eight observer journals and eight observee journals. These are representative of the journal reflections from all the participants.

Observer journals

Gaining new insights

It was a nice experience to see my colleagues have a different teaching style and routines. For example, I was inspired by Belma in that she started her lesson with an activity in which students were supposed to review the previous lesson. (Elif)

Developing collaboration among colleagues

Before the lesson I happened to be asking, consulting and collaborating with my colleagues so as to make better sense of the criteria selected by Serap. (Belma)

Evaluating students' behavior better

In this lesson I also observed students' behavior despite having some points to observe specifically. (Sevinç)

Observer journals

Building self-confidence

I noticed that in this last observation I did not feel as excited and nervous as before. In the first observations I must admit I felt nervous and could not help thinking about the risk of making a mistake. However, I later felt more comfortable and mentally ready for being observed. (Serap)

Usefulness of post-observation feedback

I had asked Sevinç to observe my error correction techniques, in which I feel the necessity of improvement. For this reason, I invited her to a grammar lesson so that I could use more techniques. I really found her feedback really useful. (Belma)

Interviews

To gain further insight into the impact of the study, the participants were interviewed individually in a quiet office of the school. The interviews consisting of seven questions were semi-structured in design and lasted 15-20 minutes each.

Input sessions were useful (Question 2)

In my opinion the input sessions were beneficial. The topics were so meaningful that I started applying them right after the sessions. (Sevinç)

Gaining new insights about English language teaching (Question 3)

I learned new techniques of giving feedback. For example, Belma grouped students into fours to check each other's answers in a grammar exercise. (Serap)

Developing critical thinking abilities (Question 3) _

As I felt accountable for providing efficient feedback with my colleague, I was alert at every moment of the lesson and observing with a critical eye so that she could make use of my observation. (Elif)

Building self-confidence (Question 4)

Thanks to this experience I started to feel more confident to invite colleagues to my lesson. (Serap)

Raising self-awareness (Question 4)

She told me that I was unnecessarily echoing the responses of the students, which had caused redundant speaking. I was not aware of it. (Sevinç)

Contribution to professional development (Question 5)

Because it is my first year in teaching, I benefitted a lot from the feedback of experienced colleagues. (Sevinç)

Developing positive attitudes (Question 5)

I had observed my colleagues a few times before, and I had not appreciated the system since it was mandated and forced in my previous workplace. (Belma)

Insufficient time for peer observation (Question 6)

With over 25 hours teaching a week I had trouble in managing this small peer observation study. For a formal model we need more time to implement. (Elif)

A comparative analysis of the findings obtained from the reflective journals and the interviews showed that teachers had common positive attitudes towards observing fellow teachers' lessons. The participants mostly agreed that peer observation, accompanied by in-service field-related workshops and feedback sessions, is a useful PD tool that offers opportunities to self-reflect and better one's teaching. Yet, the participant teachers also agreed that maintaining such a program had challenges, such as workload and the likelihood of the practice turning into a supervisory model. Overall, the findings revealed that peer observation is likely to be an effective instrument for the PD of English language teachers.

Discussion

Careful analysis of the findings indicate that the participants found peer observation beneficial for their PD and did not perceive any major negative effects of this experience, unlike the findings of some previous research (Cosh, 1999; Cakir, 2010; Sanif 2015), in which the participants had expressed their uneasi-

ness for peer observation. Furthermore, the findings of this study showed similarity to those of Kasapoğlu (2002), Şen (2008) and Bozak, et al. (2011) who concluded that peer observation contributed to the PD of the participants by encouraging reflective thinking and collegiality at a tertiary level.

Reflection

The results of the research have shown me that peer observation is surely an effective tool for PD at high school as long as it is conducted considering the mutual benefits of observers and observees. I have further understood that, unlike the common view, benefit from peer observations is two-way; that is, the observer also benefits from the observed lessons despite being in charge of providing feedback to the observee.

In addition to generating positive attitudes and feelings for the teachers, I have seen that peer observation could be a potential means to develop collegiality and prevent potential burnout by keeping teachers up-to-date through input sessions and keeping them accountable for providing constructive feedback. It further revealed that no matter what the level of the experience the teachers had, peer observation is a powerful tool. It offers every teacher benefits because of its inclusiveness and engagement of teachers. In the near future, I may attempt to do an extended study at high school and at lower levels lasting at least a year in which I analyze the efficacy of this PD tool through more comprehensive data.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Demographic Questions

1. Age: 20 - 30 31 - 40 41 - 50 50 - about

2. Gender: Male Female

3. Your functions at school/institution:

Teacher ()

Head of department or school ()

Mentor ()

Other? Please specify: _____

4. Teaching experience:

1-5 () 6-10 () 11-15 () 16-20 () 21-about ()

5. Highest relevant qualification to ELT (Tick ONE)

| Certificate | Diploma | Bachelor's | Master's | Doctorate | Other |
|-------------|---------|------------|----------|-----------|-------|
| | | | | | |

6. How would you describe your work as an English language teacher? (Tick ONE)

I teach English full-time

I teach English part-time

7. What professional development programs have you been involved in?

Peer coaching (___)

Mentoring (___)

Peer observation (___)

Team teaching (___)

Keeping journal (___)

Self-monitoring (___)

Other? Please specify:

8. What do you do to continue your professional development?

Attend workshops (___)

Attend courses (___)

Do action research (___)

Follows ELT Forums (___)

Attend ELT conferences (___)

Follow YouTube channels (___)

Do individual reading (___)

Other ? Please specify:

9. How often do you do the aforesaid PD tools?

Always (___) Generally (___) Rarely (___) Never (___)

Appendix B**Interview Questions**

1. Did you ever get involved in a peer observation program before?

2. Do you think that input sessions were beneficial for your teaching? If yes, in what way? If no, why?
3. What were your takeaways as an observer?
4. What were your takeaways as an observee?
5. Do you think that this peer observation program was useful? If yes, in what way? If no, why? Please elaborate.
6. What are your suggestions for a likely peer observation program?
7. Would you be interested in participating a possible peer observation program in the school?

Cultivating mindfulness in the EFL classroom: An exploratory study

Chapter

8

Seden ERALDEMİR TUYAN and Beyza KABADAYI

Çağ University and Çukurova University

Main focus

This joint action research study is a heartfelt endeavor to help nineteen A2 and seventeen B2 level students at YADYO, The School of Foreign Languages at Çukurova University, enjoy their EFL learning experience by becoming more goal-oriented, focused, independent and creative students aiming to achieve their full potential. Having observed some of our students' uninterested faces, 'offline' stances and demotivated language learning behaviors in our Academic Skills classes, we decided to reason out this puzzle.

On the surface, 90-minute-block classes seemed to stress them, despite our constant efforts to make the classes more entertaining by including audio-visual materials, games and extracurricular activities as short breaks. Those breaks were intended to present them an opportunity to relax during the classes; however, we felt that those were solutions which only provided short-term effects. As teachers who have invested a considerable effort into motivating students in previous years and have researched such issues as developing positive attitudes towards learning English (Eraldemir Tuyan, 2016), students' happiness (Eraldemir Tuyan & Altunkol, 2017), we looked for a deeper and relatively long-lasting approach to this situation. This time, we needed them to prolong their contribution to the classes and display some behavioral changes towards language learning resulting from the changes in their mindsets, not in the lesson plans.

After conducting informal interviews and whole class discussions with the students to confirm our concerns, we reviewed some literature and discovered that 'mindfulness' has an educational potential in addressing student motivation, engagement, creativity and to help learners become more self-directed. Therefore, we included some new tasks in our course content that would help our students understand the importance of mindful thinking in their language

learning experience. Our tool kit consisted of various activities such as breathing and stretching exercises, songs, films and other materials that would also back up their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Consequently, this report is about our experience gained through the exploratory process in our EFL academic skills classes with the intention of helping our students adopt a mindful look at their EFL journey and make the best of their learning. With this purpose in mind, we also share the feedback we received from the students and our own reflections regarding the interventions we made on the way.

Background

The present research is a product of the mutual concern of two teachers who believe that there is always more than one option to bring out the best in students. We drew this conclusion after having observed our students and their near zero energy in the class. Their lack of concentration and demotivated learning behavior led us to question and revise our teaching patterns and come up with an alternative approach. Mindfulness, at that point, struck us with its humanist nature and its core principle, which to quote from Yeganeh and Kolb (2009), is “living intentionally”. Students’ uninterested faces and ‘offline’ stances during classes were preventing themselves as well as us from making the best of that moment. We wanted them to have a purpose in everything they did, which we believed in return would bring joy to their lives.

Numerous instructional strategies can be adopted to promote mindfulness in the classroom. Campbell (2009) integrated technology with mindfulness to make it more enjoyable for students and let students use technology mindfully. Brady (2008), on the other hand, organized cooperative learning, writing prompts and free writing in his class and claims that those strategies all facilitate the students’ learning. Besides, Langer (1997) argues many other factors can contribute to mindful learning such as “openness to novelty; alertness to distinction; sensitivity to different contexts; implicit awareness of multiple perspectives; and orientation in the present” (cited in Wang & Liu, 2016, p. 144). In this sense, our study resembles the study of Langer who focused on the indirect effect of mindfulness on language learning.

Mindfulness practices have become internationally popular in the past decade, but their roots reach back to the early teachings of the Buddha. In the West, mindfulness owes its popularity to Jon Kabat-Zinn who, in 1979, founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts to treat chronically ill people. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present

moment and non-judgmentally” (p.4). Two major practices of mindfulness are meditative and socio-cognitive, which refers to “cognitive categorization, context and situational awareness” (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009, p.14). In the learning context, Langer redefines mindfulness as follows:

When we are mindful, we implicitly or explicitly (1) view a situation from several perspectives, (2) see information presented in the situation as novel, (3) attend to the context in which we perceive the information, and eventually, (4) create new categories through which this information may be understood. (Langer, 1997, p.111)

Langer (1997) also argues that school systems with their emphasis on transferring knowledge and accumulating truths without encouraging students to find a meaning and value in what they do are examples of ‘mindless learning’ which is a term used to define “the antithesis of mindfulness”.

This could be considered as our starting point, the students’ mindless, ‘auto-pilot’ states (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009, p.14). For us, they were passive recipients without their full commitment to the class and their teachers, which we aimed to alter by encouraging them to become more focused, goal-oriented and creative through systematic mindfulness activities.

Mindful learning has been a focus of interest in ELT recently. For example, Wang & Liu (2016) investigated “how the use of mindfulness affected college English as a foreign language (EFL) students’ learning and how mindful learning strategies supported their learning of English” (p.142). This case study was similar to our study by integrating mindfulness practices into the EFL classroom culture with a view to raising the students’ awareness and increasing their motivation and engagement in the English language learning process.

Research focus

Our inquiry revolved around the following research questions:

1. Why do some of our students look ‘off-line’ while learning English in our classes (e.g. not performing to their full potential, staying focused, enjoying learning English)?
2. How can we help our students stay ‘on-line’ during the process of learning English?
3. How does implementing different mindfulness activities in our Academic Skills classes help our students improve their awareness in performing to their full potential as well as enjoy their language learning experience?

Research participants

This research was conducted at YADYO where, before they start their education in their departments (Engineering, Education, Economics, Management, etc.), students study English at different levels such as L1, L2, L3 during an academic year which lasts for eight months, divided into four two-month blocks. According to this system, L1 students start studying English from A1 level and complete their one-year preparatory EFL education by reaching the B2 level, according to CEFR. There are two different English courses offered at YADYO. Students study both 14 hours of main course and eight hours of Academic Skills starting from A1 level.

With a new regulation, at the beginning of the term, course hours at YADYO were set to be 90-minute block classes whereas previously they had 45-minute-classes. We wish to emphasize this detail as significant because it has led to the students being over-stressed in the course and developing some behavioral disorders resulting from boredom in the classrooms. We conducted our research in 90-minute block Academic Skills course with nineteen B1 and seventeen B2 level students in the third block. Our groups consisted of students whose ages varied between 17 and 19, and who were from various departments.

Data collection procedure

We used multiple data collection tools to support our exploration. As this research is a joint project, we negotiated periodically and informed each other of the process. For our classes, we used teacher journal entries of classroom observations every week to reflect upon our lessons and changes noted in students' behavior. From students, the data were collected through individual interviews and learning logs. Learning logs were systematically kept after each task. Lastly, we wanted students to fill out mindfulness learning reports to encourage them to reflect upon themselves.

Our intervention

Our intention to implement mindful activities in our classes was triggered by students' learning behaviors. However, instead of drawing their attention to this issue we called a problem, we wanted to introduce the mindfulness activities as supplementary to vivify classroom atmosphere. We set out by introducing the mindfulness concept and some activities that could help us during the process. Those activities, such as breathing and stretching exercises accompa-

nied by calming music and mental commuting, became our routine. Having routine activities served both us and our students as a tool to prepare ourselves mentally for the activities.

Then, for nine weeks, we focused on a different value/theme each week and explored how our students felt about these by presenting them in hypothetical situations. Each week was an exciting journey for us since it allowed us to touch upon delicate issues and also allowed students to reflect on how they would behave in that specific context. While reflecting on these issues, they shared their personal experiences. Social and emotional learning (SEL) titles were specifically utilized as we believed they would enhance students' capacities to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. The tasks were designed to encourage them to analyze their feelings and improve them if necessary. With each theme, we realized that they experienced discomforts that caused them not to enjoy the moment.

Table 1. Weekly themes & topics to promote mindfulness

| | Themes | Topics |
|--------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Week 1 | <i>Introducing the theme</i> | <i>Mindfulness Videos (e.g. mind the bump mindfulness vs mindlessness) & Articles (from http://www.Mindfulteachers.org), Breathing Exercises (e.g. 4-7-8 breathing exercise by GoZen (from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxbdx-SeOOo)</i> |
| Week 2 | <i>Caring and Empathy</i> | <i>Friendship</i> |
| Week 3 | <i>Fairness, Justice and Equality</i> | <i>Balancing their lives</i> |
| Week 4 | <i>Honesty</i> | <i>Sharing</i> |
| Week 5 | <i>Thankfulness</i> | <i>Appreciation</i> |
| Week 6 | <i>Patience</i> | <i>Attention, Focus</i> |
| Week 7 | <i>Perseverance</i> | <i>Accomplishment</i> |
| Week 8 | <i>Respect</i> | <i>Different Opinion, Change</i> |
| Week 9 | <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Dreams & Goals</i> |

The discussions took place in the form of round tables. We particularly made use of two wonderful books to prepare our tasks and to achieve our purpose (*Roundtable Discussion Questions for Personal and Interpersonal Growth*, by Dianne Draz, 1991 and *Higher Level Thinking Questions- Developing Character* by Miguel Kagan, 1999). After each task, we used learning logs, and during the process, conducted informal interviews with the students regarding the effects of these discussions on their mindsets. Before we completed the project, a final mindfulness learning report was filled out by the stu-



Students engaging in mindfulness activities

dents. Our ultimate goal was to help them feel more valued and at peace with themselves, which in return, we believed would have a positive impact on how they perceive the world around them.

Findings and discussion

Our study was initiated by a strong desire to use mindfulness techniques to keep the students in the moment and help them feel at peace, so that their attitudes towards English learning could improve. Our borrowing of themes from SEL programs denotes that we put equal importance to the emotional aspects of learning as we did the academic part. Our findings from the logs, interviews and The Mindfulness Learning Report (Appendix I), which we gathered from our students in the final step of our intervention at the end of the term, indicated a positive change over time in the attitudes and beliefs of the students towards language learning. For some themes, lack of negative comments was also a source of comfort for us.

All told, we kept this study going by answering the questions in our minds related to our learners' perceived needs and weaknesses; this reflects the exploratory nature of our study. Yet, having completed the study, as our minds became clearer with regard to our concerns, we felt the need to organize our findings in the form of answers to our research questions. These findings follow below.

Research question 1

1. *Why do some of our students look 'off-line' while learning English in our classes (e.g. not performing to their full potential, staying focused, enjoying learning English)?*

Based on the informal interviews conducted and whole class discussions where we addressed this issue, the reasons for them being offline related to their lack of concentration. It seems their minds were disturbed by many other things happening in their lives and they had a hard time to shut the door to these problems. Sample comments follow:

Student 1 (Class B): I was not successful enough to enter the university I wanted. I do not like my department.

Student 14 (Class B): I do not like this city.

Student 15 (Class B): I have some dormitory problems which affect me and my lessons. I cannot study.

Student 3 (Class A): I am the kind of person who gets bored easily and the course content is so boring. I cannot keep my focus.

Student 8 (Class A): My mom is ill in my hometown. I cannot stop thinking of her. Her health worries me.

Student 12 (Class A): I cannot pay for my expenses here. I need to find a part-time job.

The discussions of themes and values also answered our question. The students were unable to attach any meaning to what they were doing because their minds were caught up somewhere else. These 'lost' moments interfered with their concentration during courses. Roundtable discussions also revealed some undesirable self-truths about our students and how they felt about themselves. Hypothetical situations and discussions of values encouraged them to reflect upon themselves, and they were not happy to possess characteristics which hindered them from committing themselves to what they were doing.

Research question 2

How can we help our students stay 'on-line' during the process of learning English?

As a routine activity, 'Mental commuting' was adopted to let them both feel the problem and learn to keep it away from their minds. In the process, they were allowed to think about an issue for a limited time. They started to think about a problem that disturbed them when they heard the ring. Then again with the ring, they had to come back to this moment. Through this exercise, we wanted to show them that we could develop a welcoming attitude toward

obstacles and not let our worries ruin our moment. This nine-week process was supported with movies and songs with peace, joy, calm, equanimity plots, and then with follow-up discussions. As mentioned before, each week, there was a different theme/value activated in students and we openly discussed these in roundtable sessions. An environment where students felt safe to share their experiences and look for answers for some of their problems was our intention.

Research question 3

How does implementing different mindfulness activities in our Academic Skills classes help our students improve their awareness in performing to their full potential as well as enjoy their language learning experience?

Roundtable discussions where students discussed different values and themes each week were designed to broaden their viewpoints. Psychological benefits of mindfulness activities were introduced initially, and we expected them to make use of mindfulness practices to realize their true power and transfer these ideas into something practical such as academic success.

The results of The Mindfulness Learning Report drew us a clear picture of the areas where students were able to implement these ideas. Tables 2 and 3 allow us to compare positive and negative feedback from students.

Table 2. Students' negative/neutral feedback, The Mindfulness Learning Report

| Comments | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| <i>I like every moment when we don't have a lesson (Academic Skills). I especially like it when we talk about real life. You are my source of motivation.</i> | 1 |
| <i>The breathing exercise wasn't useful at all.</i> | 3 |







Table 3. Students' positive feedback, The Mindfulness Learning Report

| Comments | Frequency |
|---|-----------|
| <i>I didn't get bored during the lessons.</i> | 7 |
| <i>Speaking circles, pair shares, talking about ourselves were extremely useful for improving our speaking skills.</i> | 3 |
| <i>Breathing exercises and other exercises helped me improve myself personally. Everyone should know about mindfulness. These activities also helped me to feel more self-confident to use English.</i> | 1 |
| <i>I loved the videos about mindfulness. They had positive messages.</i> | 1 |
| <i>Breathing exercises helped me to calm myself in some situations.</i> | 1 |
| <i>I'll remember to feel the water when I wash my hands. ☺</i> | 2 |
| <i>"Psycho-Circles" It was helpful to talk about something we haven't thought before.</i> | 1 |
| <i>Mental commuting! It was nice to give a break from time to time.</i> | 1 |
| <i>These activities motivate us to learn English.</i> | 2 |

In Table 3 (above), students state how they benefited from mindfulness practices. One of our biggest concerns about 90-minute-block classes was that it would burden students and lead to boredom. Seven students having the same problem and overcoming it through mindfulness practices justified our concern.

Table 4 shows more detailed outcomes of these practices where students were supposed to express their preference choosing one of the faces.

Table 4: Results of the Mindfulness Learning Report of Class A and B

| CLASS A (LEVEL 1) | | | | CLASS B (LEVEL 2) | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 students (%) | | | | 14 students (%) | | |
| Doing my best on : |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Getting concentrated | 54 | 33 | 13 | 50 | 50 | |
| Reaching a more peaceful state of mind | 54 | 46 | | 50 | 50 | |
| Calming myself | 40 | 54 | 6 | 85 | 15 | |
| Focusing more on the content of the lessons | 40 | 54 | 6 | 29 | 71 | |
| Completing work to the best of my ability | 54 | 46 | 6 | 29 | 71 | |
| Always getting prepared for the class | 14 | 46 | 40 | | 79 | 21 |
| Respecting others and myself | 67 | 43 | | 71 | 21 | 7 |
| Listening to peers | 54 | 46 | 6 | 35 | 50 | 15 |
| Listening to teachers | 53 | 27 | 20 | 42 | 58 | |
| Showing respect for the opinions of others | 60 | 40 | | 79 | 14 | 7 |
| Appreciating what I have | 67 | 43 | | 64 | 36 | |
| Confiding in myself | 54 | 46 | 6 | 71 | 29 | |
| Keeping happy | 54 | 46 | | 29 | 64 | 7 |
| Persevering in the face of difficulty | 40 | 54 | 6 | 50 | 50 | |
| Accepting full responsibility for all my actions | 54 | 46 | | 71 | 29 | |
| Showing concern and empathy for others | 40 | 60 | | 58 | 42 | |
| Setting manageable goals | 40 | 40 | 20 | 29 | 71 | |
| Achieving my goals | 40 | 40 | 20 | 21 | 79 | |
| Balancing my life | 40 | 40 | 20 | 29 | 64 | 7 |
| Managing my anxiety while speaking in English in class | 27 | 60 | 13 | 14 | 71 | 14 |

For us, this is a hopeful table. We are more content with the low number of sad faces than we are with the high numbers. We believe that practice makes perfect and this was just the beginning. Sad faces do not mean nothing changed in that area. They mean “through more exercises, you can expect changes”.

We could witness some high scores in specific themes such as *Respect*, *Thankfulness*, *Responsibility*, and *Perseverance*. These were some of the themes we addressed during our classes.

It is promising to see these relatively high numbers as we believe that our roundtable discussions and situational activities raised their awareness of these issues. In the long term, as Brady (2004) concluded in his study, these behavioral improvements will lead them to become aware of the negative thoughts and feelings and develop ways to replace them with positive ones, which in turn benefits both students and teachers in terms of language learning and teaching.

Reflections and looking into the future

One of the reasons for our joint effort to promote mindfulness in our classes is to touch upon the human side of students. We are well aware that we bring our individual differences, values and perceptions into the classroom and sometimes it would be necessary to revisit these values and differences to be able to develop a more positive attitude. When we realized that our students had difficulty in performing at their full potential, we looked for an alternative method to address their human side instead of their academic side. With mindfulness, we believed that we found the right tool. The techniques used in this doctrine do not cure problems superficially; mindfulness alters the perceptions of people so that they could develop a new and fresh approach which would lead to success and peace in turn. Our results confirmed our ideas that once you can guide people in the right path, they are more likely to find their ways on their own. Positive behavioral changes in our students are products of their academic and philosophical approaches interacting at some level.

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Appendix 1

Dear Student,

Part A- Please evaluate yourself while answering the following questions.

Mindfulness Learning Report

| Doing My Best On: |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Getting concentrated | | | |
| Reaching a more peaceful state of mind | | | |
| Calming myself down | | | |
| Focusing more on the content of the lessons | | | |
| Completing work to the best of my ability | | | |
| Always getting prepared for classes | | | |
| Respecting others and myself | | | |
| Listening to peers | | | |
| Listening to teachers | | | |
| Showing respect for the opinions of others | | | |
| Appreciating what I have | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| Confiding in myself | | | |
| Keeping happy | | | |
| Persevering in the face of difficulty | | | |
| Accepting full responsibility for all my actions | | | |
| Showing concern and empathy for others | | | |
| Setting manageable goals | | | |
| Achieving my goals | | | |
| Balancing my life | | | |
| Managing my anxiety while speaking in English in class | | | |

Part B- Please answer the following questions openly.

1. What is something we did/had this year that you think you will remember for the rest of your life? Why?
2. Considering your answers to the questions in Part A, please describe the role of your teacher in your learning and improvements.
3. Considering your answers to the questions in Part A, please describe the role of the extra classroom activities in your learning and improvements such as speaking circles, songs, films, short videos on emotions and mindfulness themes, breathing and stretching exercises or anything we did or talked about related to themes of mindfulness? Which ones were your favourites and why? Clarify your answer.

Thank you 😊

A Journey into the exploration of the self through developing self-reflective skills in an EFL context

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Main focus

This study aims to help students become more reflective learners and gain self-reflective skills through interventions which were developed in response to their individual needs. At the beginning of the year, when I first met my students, I thought that we met for a reason. I was there not only to teach my students but also to help them as much as I could whenever they needed help. After observing my students for some time I realized that they had difficulty in analysing their strengths and weaknesses. At that point, I decided to carry out research to find out what was missing and to come up with some solutions. As I was intending to take action regarding the needs of my students, I did not make an action plan beforehand; I just made use of some reflection sheets and I developed some interventions to help my students. So, it was an exploratory journey both for me and my students. Making a plan is safe but changing your plan for your students' needs is better. Therefore, I preferred to be open to any new ideas coming up and I was ready to tolerate any ambiguities I would meet throughout the research. My students' reflections and feedback shaped my study. My students contributed to this study as both participants and language learners.

Problem identification

Although we teach learning strategies and different ways of learning to our students in both the orientation week and in the classes all the time, most students could have weaknesses in developing continuing autonomy and reflective skills. According to my personal experience, few of them know how to analyse their weaknesses and take actions to improve them. Even though some

know the strategies, they cannot put them into practice and when they fail for the first time, they do not try other alternatives but accept the failure because of lack of strategies and maybe lack of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2000). So, this makes me dissatisfied as a teacher and I wish to help my students become more reflective learners in terms of developing sustained autonomy.

Research questions

1. Why are my students unable to sustain their autonomy in learning EFL in my classes?
2. How can I help them develop self-reflective skills regarding their strengths and weaknesses as language learners?
3. How can my interventions affect my students' selves in the process?
4. To what extent does developing their self-reflective skills help the students become more autonomous and raise their self-awareness?

Background

Learners need to develop competences in various areas in the learning process. Especially, they need to develop an awareness of at least four significant areas of meta-cognition in order to make reasonable decisions about their learning (Ellis, 1999; Sinclair, 1999). These are discussed below.

Learner awareness

Autonomous learners need to set goals, self-monitor, and self-evaluate their learning processes (Zimmerman, 1990). This helps them become self-aware and decisive in their learning. Through developing reasoning, reflective thinking, and critical thinking skills, they can recognize their imperfections and determine their deficiencies. Enhancing consciousness about the self and approaching the self with curiosity helps learners to reshape their understanding and beliefs about the self.

Subject matter awareness of the target language

Students are more motivated when they are doers (Harmer, 2008), so we should give them some power to do and decide things if possible, helping them take responsibility for their learning. In that way, they have the opportunity to spend much more time on the content of learning. For example, a study by Sanchez-Elez, et al. (2013) found that students who used student-

generated questions often had higher marks, and students who were more involved in the learning process had better results on the exams or quizzes. According to the results of another study, comprehension of material, motivation, and positive attitudes increased when student-generated questions were used in the classroom (Yu & Chen, 2013).

Learning process awareness

Autonomous learning is about the personalization of learning, and self-assessment assists learners to monitor their individualised progress (Pucel & Copa, 1973). Therefore, it can be helpful to support learners in self-assessing, as transformative learning can result. Self-evaluation fosters meaning-making from experience.

Social awareness

Social awareness is a path to self-exploration, and learners gain a better understanding about their self and their learning by identifying differences between themselves and others. Social awareness can be raised through negotiation and discussion.

Research methodology

My main puzzle regarding my learners' inability to sustain their autonomy became evident at the end of the first block. In order to address this puzzling situation by helping them, I continued my explorations through various implementations such as introducing post-exam reflections and preparing quizzes, sentence completion activities and post discussions.

Setting and participants

This exploratory research was conducted at the School of Languages at Çukurova University with 20 intermediate undergraduates receiving 26 hours of English instruction a week. There were four blocks in the year, two for each term. At the end of each block, the achievement exams were held. And, at the end of the year, a proficiency exam was conducted.

Data collection I

Based on my journey, I designed a table which shows the process of my exploration clearly, including the interventions and target areas of awareness step by step. It can be seen below.

Table 1: Cycles of My Exploratory Action Research

| Cycles of My Exploratory Action Research | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Dates | Tools | Interventions | Target Areas of Awareness |
| Step 1 30.01.2017 | Self-reflection sheets completed by the students (Strengths and Weaknesses in General/ Language Learning) | Post discussions with audio recordings | Learner awareness Social awareness |
| Step 2 03.02.2017 | Post exam reflection sheets (Exam wrapper for Achievement 1 & 2) Learning logs | Quizzes prepared by the students | Learning process awareness Subject matter awareness |
| Step 3 31.03.2017 | Self/interest inventory (Sentence completion) | Post discussions with audio recordings | Learner awareness Social awareness |
| Step 4 07.04.2017 | Post exam reflection sheet (For Achievement 3) | Post Discussions with Audio recordings Vocabulary quizzes prepared by the students | Learning Process Awareness Subject matter awareness Social awareness |
| Step 5 20.04.2017 | Evaluation survey (End of the year reflection sheet) | Post discussions with audio recordings | Learner awareness Learning process awareness Social awareness |

Findings and discussion

Step 1: Results of self-reflection sheets (self-awareness worksheet)

To be sure about my concerns about my students after observing them for a time, I gave them self-reflection sheets including columns entitled 'My

strengths as a student', 'My weaknesses as a student', 'My strengths as a language learner', and 'My weaknesses as a language learner' (Appendix 1). I asked them to evaluate themselves. Some wrote really well. For example, one stated that he felt relaxed, while others indicated that it was entertaining to write about themselves. However, some wrote a little. For example, they noted that they did not know what to write and found it difficult; most specified that they had real difficulty in analysing their strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, others had so much difficulty in evaluating themselves that they gave me a blank paper. They told me that they had never thought about it before and they did not know how to evaluate themselves. So, I realized that only a few students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses and most of them were lost, confused, unsure, and unclear.

Step 2: results of post exam reflection for achievement 1&2 (exam wrapper)

Accordingly, I wanted to take action, and asked my students to self-assess through a post-exam reflection sheet, after Achievement 1 & 2.

At the end of the session, their reflections as follows:

- "I do not know how to study, how to find out the missing thing."
- "I am not able to make use of what I know."
- "I cannot study enough and regularly."

Connected with these points, I realized that most of them were not happy with their exam results. 15 were unhappy, while only 5 were happy. They were generally aware that they needed to do something or change something, but were unaware what to do, how to do it, and where to start. Therefore, I acted as a guide and I made some suggestions to help them.

Suggestion: student-made quizzes

I suggested they focus on the content of Achievement 3 and take notes at home to be able to create a discussion in the class to shed light on the important points. And I also wanted them to prepare quizzes from their notes to be given to the class. Student-made quizzes are a good way to engage students in the active learning process. This strategy helps promote involvement by creating discussions over what relevant materials should or should not be on an exam (Sanchez-Elez et al., 2013). Some students volunteered to prepare quizzes and did so individually and brought their quizzes to me for editing. I

checked and made some corrections and I combined all the quizzes into one and gave it to the students to be answered in the class. They got excited to solve the questions, as they were prepared by their classmates, and they did not want to make any mistakes in the quiz. And they also analysed the questions from different perspectives. They reported that some questions could be harder or easier or some changes could be made to improve the questions. We discussed all together, focusing on the content, and the questions and answers. Sometimes they checked their books and notes to remember some points, sometimes they revised the parts they missed or felt weak in. All students were attentive, and they told me that they learned to think critically. Some of the students had felt inadequate when they made mistakes on questions prepared by their classmates, so realized that they had to study more.

Results from learning logs about the intervention

At the end of the session I gave them learning logs to help them reflect on the student-made quizzes. And the emerging themes can be seen (in Figure 1) below:

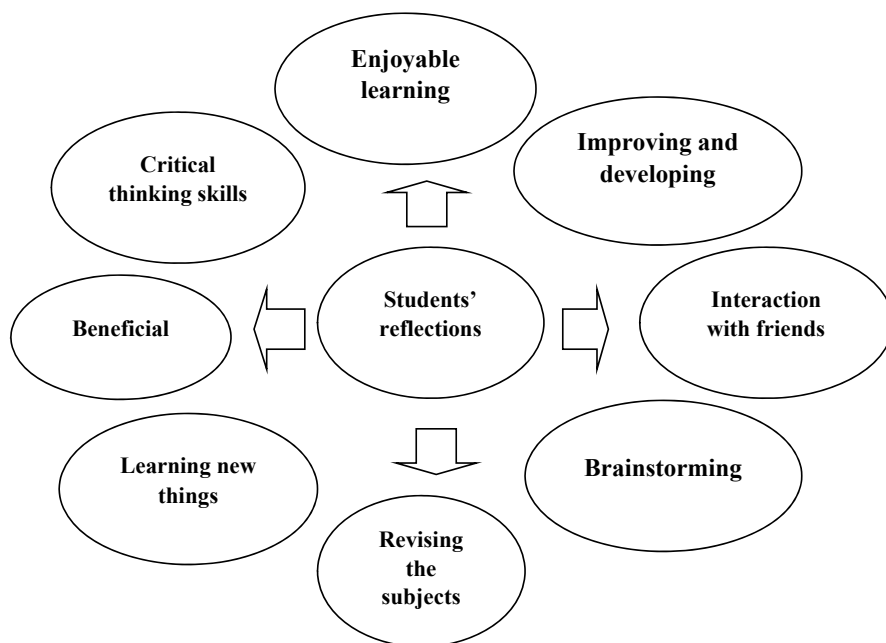


Figure 1: Results from Learning Logs about the Intervention

Step 3: self inventory papers (sentence completion activities)

After we worked on their weaknesses in the examinations, I wanted to focus on their self-awareness as students and language learners. Therefore, I gave them self-inventory papers which included sentence completion activities. After I gathered them, I prepared a power-point presentation to be used in the post-discussions. We discussed their opinions about themselves and their friends for an hour. From my point of view, it was a really useful session in terms of understanding the self and exploring the self through the eyes of others, as we talked about their personal ideas and the differences among the individuals. They had a chance to learn more about themselves and others. As for the students' reflections, some of them indicated that they had never reflected before. One claimed that sentence completion is easy, but thinking is hard. Most agreed on the effectiveness of self-evaluation. Furthermore, one suggested that teachers should give self-inventory papers to the students more often.

Step 4: results from post exam reflection sheets for achievement 3

This time, I prepared a more detailed post-exam reflection sheet in which they evaluated the before-during-after of the exam (Appendix 2). I wanted my students to self-assess through it. I asked them more detailed questions to let them reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in Achievement 3.

According to the results, 5 of them were unhappy, 5 of them were neutral, and 10 of them were happy with the results. So, the results showed that more students were happy with their exam results, and although some of them were unhappy or neutral, these indicated that they were more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They accepted that they had failed because of their weaknesses. And they also stated that they had not made an effort, although we had struggled to strengthen their weaknesses.

Suggestion: student-made vocabulary quizzes

After I checked post-exam reflection sheets, I realized that most students had problems with the vocabulary part of the exam. That is why I asked them to prepare vocabulary quizzes to be given to the class for Achievement 4. We did their quizzes in the class and worked on their weaknesses together.

Step 5: results from the evaluation survey (end of the year reflection sheet)

After each intervention, I tried to conduct post-discussions in the classroom to be able to shed light on strengths, weaknesses and individual differences in order to help them understand their selves and explore their self-identities through becoming more aware of all these elements which shape self-identity in the learning process. Developing self-reflective skills helped my students identify their strengths and weaknesses and keep track of their learning goals and purposes. And as their teacher, improving these self-reflective skills helped me to understand and learn more about my students and their selves. Furthermore, I was able to communicate more efficiently with my students and I could respond to their needs more consciously.

In the evaluation survey, there was a question about evaluating the whole process we went through, and some emerging themes are shown below (in Figure 2):

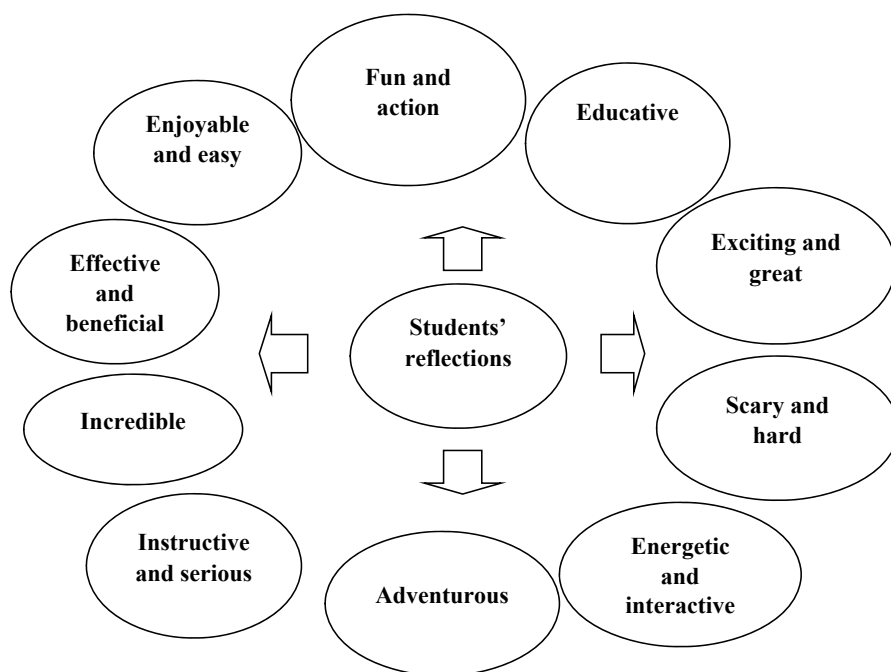


Figure 2: Results of Evaluation Survey (End of the year reflection sheet)

As I mentioned before, our interventions contributed to the process positively since they gave learners an opportunity to develop new perspectives.

Moreover, there was another question from the survey which asked for students' advice for themselves and prospective students. Some students suggested that they should study because they cannot do without repeating and revising; some suggested studying systematically; some advised that students should use their capacities and potential fully, and they should never limit themselves. Additionally, one student suggested not to give up the fight easily.

Reflections and looking into the future

Our mission as teachers is to remind our students of their own potential to elevate themselves, and we need to initiate transformative learning through developing self-reflective competencies. The learners do not give themselves enough credit for overcoming problems and issues to get better. So, we are the change agents who are responsible for growing healthy self-reflective minds. When they grow into individuals with reflective vision, we will have carried out our mission.

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Appendix 1

Self-Reflection Sheet

| My Strengths as a student | My weaknesses as a student |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | |
| My Strengths as a language learner | My weaknesses as a language learner |
| | |

Appendix 2

Post Exam Reflection

Before the exam

- What strategies/activities do you think are the most useful while preparing for the exam? Why?
- Were you able to predict the topics on the exam? If so, how did you identify them?
- Did you test yourself on your own (online tests/quizzes, unit tests etc.)?

During the exam

- Do you think you read the instructions and the questions carefully?
- What was the easiest part of the exam for you? (Grammar, Vocabulary, Writing, Reading etc.) Why?
- What was the most difficult part of the exam for you? (Grammar, Vocabulary, Writing, Reading etc.) Why?
- Did you change your answers in the exam? Why? When did you feel confident/unconfident while completing the tasks?
- Were you able to complete the exam on time? How did you manage the time?

After the exam

- When I first learned my results, I felt _____ because....
- Do you think your results are a good reflection of your effort?
- Do you have any other comments about any part of the exam?
- How can you improve in the areas you have weaknesses?

Plan for the next exam

I hope to receive a ____%. My actions to achieve my goals in the next exam are:

- For the next exam, I will....

Overcoming hesitation and uneasiness while teaching English during the practicum

Chapter 10

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Background

As teachers, our ability to manage our emotions has a profound effect on the atmosphere of the classroom. Both students and teacher need to feel comfortable in a classroom environment to obtain an effective learning/teaching experience. This is especially true in language classrooms, as both the teacher and the student may feel uncomfortable, nervous, hesitant, and inadequate. Anxiety when teaching in a foreign language may have a debilitating effect on the teaching performance and the students' performance as well. Therefore, hesitation and lack of self-confidence might affect the language teaching and learning process. Common indicators of teaching and speaking anxieties include speaking too slowly, overthinking, fear of giving wrong responses, and making mistakes. These anxieties affect the elements of an effective classroom setting which should be extinguished urgently (Horwitz, 1996; Ansari, 2015).

The purpose of this research is to improve myself and find out how to reduce unwanted negative feelings, such as anxieties or nervousness, and to inspire aspiring teachers to feel more comfortable in the classroom environment. During my practicum, I conducted an action research study with thirty-five 10th grade students in Tarsus Fatih Anatolian High School. After several lessons, I realized that I had some hesitations and needed to find the ways to deal with them. In developing this action research, I posed the question "*How can I overcome my hesitation and uneasiness while teaching?*"

Method

Participants and context

This action research was conducted in Tarsus Fatih Anatolian High School during my practicum classes. The classes consisted of thirty-five 10th grade students, aged 15-16 years old, with A2 language proficiency level. During the practicum, I struggled with teaching anxiety which affected my speaking ability and confidence and prompted me to research the subject. During my data gathering, I discovered this issue is probably common among many pre-service teachers during their practicum period. Some overcame the issue during their first lesson, while others after a while, but in some cases, it even began to worsen. I feel that I need to overcome this issue before I start teaching when I graduate from the university.

Data collection instruments

During the action research, I used structured peer observation, self-reflective notes, and video recording. I chose structured peer observation to gather post-lesson feedback regarding areas to improve. I took self-reflective notes after every lesson about my feelings during my teaching and asked my peers to video-record me while I taught. They recorded me every 15 minutes and this helped me to determine my strengths and weaknesses.

Data analysis

Based on the peer observations, video recordings, and self-reflective notes, I noted many aspects related to my anxiety in order to raise my awareness about how it affects my teaching and requires improvement. To do this, I analysed the results qualitatively using Burns' (2010) possible steps, working out categories for coding. By following those steps, I gathered all the data together, read them over several times, gave a label to the main ideas, and grouped the ideas together. Then, I sub-categorized each group and made a note on each of the category lists where the sub-categories fit in. After analysing structured peer observation, self-reflective notes and video recordings qualitatively, I listed the most common areas to improve that I faced weekly. Starting a lesson was the hardest part for me. Because of my lack of self-confidence, I started the lesson with a nervous face and I could not focus on what students were doing while I was trying to introduce the topic. In the while stage, most of the

time I forgot how I had decided to do activities, what should I say first. In that stage, my voice was like almost whispering because of my hesitation. In the post stage, all I wanted was to finish the lesson as soon as possible because my anxiety became more acute. My heartbeat was extremely fast, and my hands were shaking. Most of the time I ended the lesson very early and I forgot to give feedback to students. Even if I could remember to give feedback, I would not do that as it should be because I did not focus on my students while I was teaching.

Findings

Firstly, the cause of my hesitation and anxiety problem was a lack of self-confidence which adversely affected my teaching performance. I needed to identify methods to reduce my anxiety level.

Table 1. Problems faced and possible solutions during the hesitation stages

| | AREAS TO IMPROVE | SOLUTION |
|----------------|---|---|
| PRE-TEACHING | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of self-confidence• Being nervous while speaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sticking to the lesson plan• Practicing before the lesson |
| WHILE TEACHING | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soft voice• Hesitation• Fear of making mistakes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More micro-teaching• Effective material Preparation |
| POST TEACHING | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hesitation while giving feedback• Time management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trying to comprehend students' needs• Using a watch for timing |

I avoided speaking because I knew that I would be more anxious. To remedy this, I practiced while I was at home. I pretended that my room was the classroom and I talked to the walls and myself in front of a mirror. Every day before each lesson, I did this routine and, gradually, I started overcoming my speaking anxiety. Each time I perceived that I made a mistake, my voice softened, and I hesitated. I thought that I could not speak English fluently, but my peers observed and commented that I spoke English fluently; this boosted my self-confidence.

As I mentioned earlier, I also took notes before each lesson. All these micro-teaching tactics acclimated me to the teaching environment and enabled me to feel more comfortable and self-confident while I was in the presence of real students. Giving feedback to the students also was a big issue of mine and I overcame this by getting used to the teaching environment.

My reflections

Initially, I struggled with speaking anxiety and lack of self-confidence during my classroom practicum. When I first stepped into the classroom, I felt overwhelmed by my anxiety and self-doubts. I knew that something needed to be done about it and it needed to be done quickly, or else, I could risk losing my teaching career. Consequently, I made it a goal to discover “How can I overcome my hesitation and uneasiness while teaching?”

At first, I needed to know exactly what was causing the issues of my hesitation and uneasiness. To do so, I started gathering data on areas in which I made mistakes or when I felt uneasy and anxious. I gathered information, by watching the videos I recorded of my lessons, and I asked my peers about their opinion of my teaching performance. After watching the recordings, I realized that when I felt the students did not understand the lesson I was teaching, I felt anxious and I took it personally for not explaining things properly to the students in English.

Secondly, I learned there’s nothing that time cannot heal. Over time, I gradually realized that as I got to know the students better, my hesitations were slowly fading away. This was my first teaching experience, and I was overwhelmed by the fear of failing because I was being observed. Also, it was my first time being in a classroom full of students as their teacher. As time progressed, I started becoming more and more comfortable with the students and the classroom. The feeling of comfort with the students gradually reduced my stress level and made me have more confidence in myself.

Thirdly, I practiced at home before each lesson, by simulating teaching the classroom to reduce uneasiness. This approach was very helpful; before every lesson I taught, I gave a lesson to an empty room pretending the classroom was filled with students. That approach also helped me overcome my fear of lack of competency. Gradually, I felt that I was ready for every possible situation in the classroom. Also, I took notes when I was getting prepared for the lesson

and brought those notes to the classroom. Whenever I felt anxious and uneasy, I looked at my notes and calmed myself down.

Finally, when I asked my peers about my performance, they told me that my English was fluent. I thought that my English was not good enough and I was not fluent enough to do the lesson in English. After asking my peers for their feedback, I found out a lot of my worries were unnecessary, and my worries caused me to feel bad about something that I am good at.

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Overcoming communication barriers through a tech-based anxiety free zone

Chapter

11

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Introduction

Both as a student myself once and a teacher at present, I have always felt that speaking is the most challenging skill to develop in an EFL class, not that speaking requires more hours of study than other skills. After all, we start speaking as early as one year old, and by analogy I would argue that learning how to speak a foreign language should not be that hard. However, speaking a foreign language involves a complex process where not only linguistic but also cognitive, affective and social factors come into play. It is this multifaceted nature of speaking that makes it hard to develop, and which has always led me to try out new techniques in my classes.

It was after two PhD-level ELT courses I took at Bahçeşehir University that I became particularly interested in the cognitive aspects of speaking as a language skill. The courses, *Neurolinguistics and Cognition* and *Technology and Learning* were such great inspiration to me that every time I went to teach my speaking class, I found myself thinking of the cognitive aspects of my students' performance. My students had The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 level English, with a limited competency to express themselves in non-routine situations. The problem was that I had started teaching this speaking class half way through the academic year in place of a missing instructor and I had only 4 months of teaching ahead of me. When I entered the class, I realised that my students felt anxious about participating in oral activities. They were eager to learn new things and follow the class actively, except when they were required to speak. Considering the limited time I had, I felt that I had to employ a practical and effective methodology to engage my students as soon as possible, and this is how this action research emerged.

In this context, my action research focused on these questions:

1. What are the possible causes of speaking anxiety in an EFL class?
2. Can use of an online platform help to mitigate speaking anxiety?
3. Can writing practice impact students' speaking performance?

Foreign language speaking anxiety

There has been a large body of research over the past 40 years showing the impact of affective factors on second language acquisition and that anxiety particularly is a key factor influencing a learner's oral performance (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005; Horwitz, et al., 1986, Woodrow, 2006).

In simple terms, foreign language anxiety can be defined as "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language" (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 27). A learner's negative emotions are very likely to prevent him or her from acquiring the language as his/her high affective filter will "screen out input, making it unavailable for acquisition" (Krashen, 1982, p.62). Conversely, when the learner is motivated, his/her affective filter is low, thus influencing language acquisition positively (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 28), especially the development of speaking competency as it requires the learner to produce instantly.

Research has also shown that anxiety may either be related to one's personality traits or derive from particular contextual situations. Individuals with perfectionist characteristics (Price, 1991) or those having low self-esteem may feel stressed about their performance as they constantly compare themselves with others. Or in the case of situational anxiety, the environment that a learner is exposed to may cause him or her to feel tense and nervous (Chamot, 2005).

The impact of anxiety on language learning has been one of the most widely researched topics in language teaching, particularly in relation to the development of oral skills. While there has been noteworthy effort in research to define the reasons behind students' speaking reticence, factors like employment of communication strategy training, creating anxiety-free classrooms, consideration of affective factors as well as learner styles, have been suggested to increase oral production in a number of studies. As Chaudron (2001) claims, while the structure of classroom organisation impacts students' learning to a great extent, variety in the form of teacher-student interaction, group work activities, and the development of learner autonomy can all positively affect the quantity and quality of learners' L2 production.

Context

This study took place in the English preparatory school of a state university over an 8-week period. Students were given 24-hours of English language instruction weekly, and their programme included the following courses: speaking/listening (4 hours), reading (8 hours), writing (6 hours), and grammar (6 hours). I carried out this action research in one of my speaking-listening courses with the participation of 21 prep-school students (15 female, 6 male).

Data collection

In this study, I employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools to find answers to the above-mentioned research questions. In the first phase of the study, I administered Horwitz’s Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, et al., 1986) and collected my students’ written feedback to define the reasons for their speaking reticence. During the intervention phase of the study, I gathered the students’ social media messaging texts, voice and video recordings, and interviews, which I analysed qualitatively to obtain an understanding of when and how they participate in conversations and what works best to increase their productive language skills.

Phase I: Understanding the puzzle

To identify my students’ general anxiety level, initially I employed the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale, which consists of 33 items measuring anxiety on a 5-point Likert Scale. The results of the questionnaire revealed a moderate score of anxiety among my students, with an average of 3.11 out of 5 Test value.

Table I: Pre-test scores demonstrating anxiety level of the students

| n | Anxiety Test Scores | | |
|----|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Mean | Highest Score | Lowest Score |
| 21 | 3.1 | 4.03 | 2.48 |

The students’ responses to the items related particularly to speaking scored high anxiety ratings: e.g. “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language” (item 31); “ I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class” (item 9). To this end, in order to gain insights into the reasons why students refrain from speaking in class, I also collected reflection essays from them on the basis of 10-open ended ques-

tions regarding their attitudes towards speaking and analyzed their answers qualitatively through open and selective coding processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The initial written feedback I collected from students aimed to identify why they refrain from speaking in the class. Through a qualitative coding process, I obtained the following categories as top reasons for speaking reticence:

| Students' Comments | Themes (reasons) |
|--|---|
| I am not comfortable / everybody is looking at me /I feel shy | • stress and anxiety |
| I cannot articulate the sounds properly/ I find some words hard to say | • fear of making mistakes (pronunciation and grammar) |
| I think of grammar too much | • low level vocabulary |
| I cannot find words quickly/ I do not know enough words | • lack of self-confidence |
| I am not sure if I can/ there are better students in the class | |

Even though our speaking course programme included interactive oral communicative activities, my students were still not comfortable enough to become engaged in speaking activities in class and often said that they needed extra practice. However, since our classroom hours were set in the timetable and it was thus not possible to increase the allocated time, we had to develop a solution to take the learning outside the classroom.

Phase II: Developing a strategy for action

To find a solution to our puzzle, I reviewed the students' initial feedback notes once more. All the reasons my students expressed were in line with relevant research findings (Frantzen & Magnan, 2005; Horwitz, et al., 1986). It was at this point that I thought of including technology (use of social media and digital software) in my programme to increase my students' practice hours, either in written or oral language production. Apart from the homework assignments, I encouraged my students to exchange messages and voice recordings in English in our social media group. My goal was to make communication in English a part of students' daily lives and to foster fluency in their speaking. I assumed that writing messages in this chat group would increase their English

usage, which may in turn impact their actual classroom speaking positively. In this online platform, I also assigned non-formal group activities to build strong group dynamics among my students and thus decrease their foreign language speaking anxiety.

Findings and discussion

Phase III: Creation of anxiety free zone for speaking

By the end of the term, I administered Horwitz’s Foreign Language Anxiety Scale once more to see if there was any change in my students’ anxiety levels. The results show a decrease in the students’ anxiety level by 0.2 on average (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of pre- and post- anxiety test scores

| n | Mean Anxiety Test Scores | |
|----|--------------------------|-----------|
| | Pre-test | Post-test |
| 21 | 3.1 | 2.9 |

The qualitative findings I obtained during my research were in line with the decrease in these anxiety scores. The qualitative analysis of the online voice recordings or text messages and my notes from the interviews revealed a number of observable changes in my students’ productive skills. To begin with, the social media group established in the study allowed us to create a relaxed space for communication both in and outside the classroom. While the students were able to upload all their classroom task recordings in this online group, they also shared their comments and videos, which I felt contributed to their communication skills in terms of building content knowledge and boosting fluency. As a teacher, I tried to appear on the stage only when I felt the group was too silent and needed a prompt, or sometimes I asked some enthusiastic students to lead the group discussions. As Figure 1 demonstrates below, the students contributed to talk more when there was an authentic reason to do so.

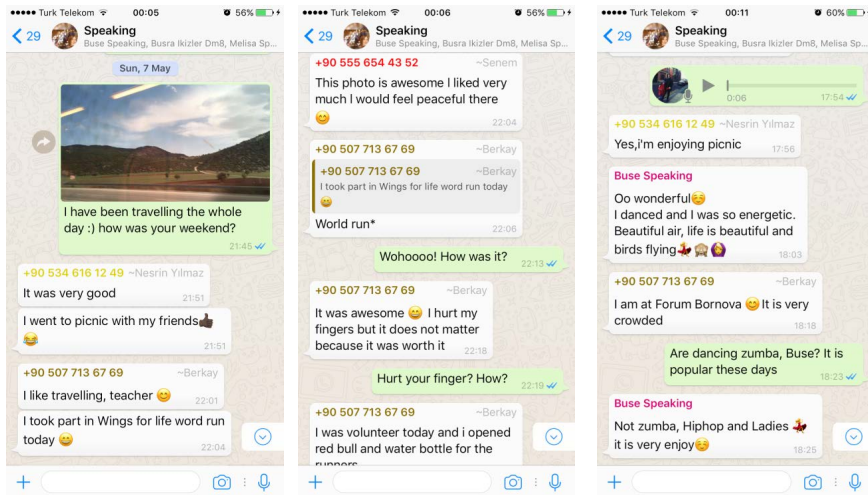


Figure 1: A teacher-initiated talk that has become an interactive tool for communication in English

By sharing a simple picture, I was able to catch my students' attention and involve them in a dialogue more easily than I was in the class. Social media messaging provided a natural topic to talk about later in the class. For example, during the class hour following this online conversation, Berkay seemed to have more things to say about the "World Run" event when I introduced the topic to the class. Another student even shared a video about it with her classmates in English. The conversation about "dancing zumba" which Buse initiated became a reason for the class members to meet and watch a dance show together after class, which I think helped to build a warm atmosphere in the class. These dialogues helped our group members to get to know each other better and build stronger connections between them.

Our online group functioned in an anxiety free zone where students were able to contribute to group talk more freely. It was an effective way of engaging students more with speaking activities, particularly those who lack self-confidence and motivation, like one of the female students in the group named Kubra. Although Kubra explicitly stated her lack of motivation for speaking during class activities in one of our interviews, I observed that she soon began to initiate conversations herself, even once suggesting a lengthy project proposal. Similar attitudes were also seen in some other participants, like Senem, who actually had high exam grades but did not speak very much in the class. Conversely, Senem was very active in our online group, and sometimes initiated arguments herself, which can be seen in Figure 2 below. Kubra invites

her classmates to a volunteering project in her city, and Senem introduces an argument with a photo featuring a dog.

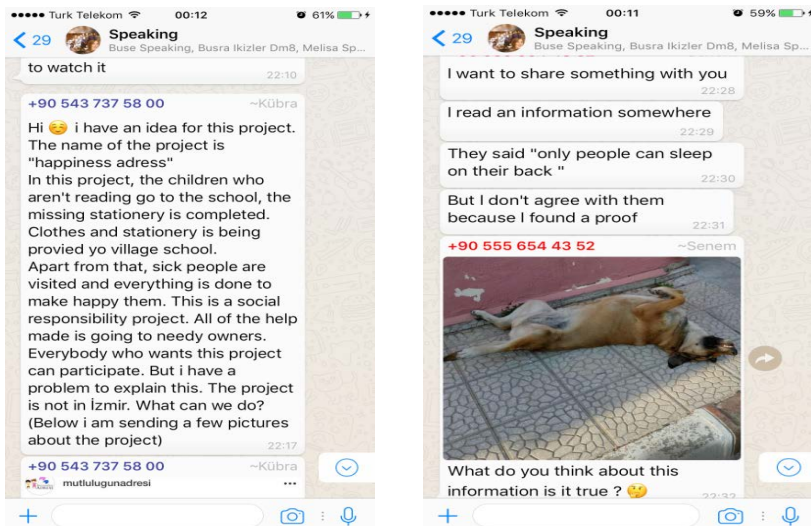


Figure 2: Student-initiated talk

Being a very quiet student, Kubra's project offer in English was a big surprise to me indeed. During our second interview, I noticed a dramatic change in her attitude towards using English. When she was reflecting on her individual learning process, she expressed how her attitude had positively changed since we formed our social media group:

Before, I did not want to speak in the class. I would come to the class, sit and then leave. I would never join the class activities. I would not even want to learn anything. I would stubbornly tell my friends that I would not learn anything. All I needed was to pass the exams. But for the last one month, I have been watching two films a day in English and I try to understand some things. Now I even try to watch them without subtitles.

In Senem's case, the problem with her involvement in communication was related to her perfectionist character. In our last interview, she mentioned that this personality trait was a factor negatively affecting her social media participation:

Our Whatsapp group is so beneficial for me really. Before I had to record my voice or shoot a video again and again several times. Then I would erase it

automatically and when I uploaded them on the group, I could never listen or watch them. They sounded terrible. It cannot be me, I would say. But now little by little, I started to listen to myself on Whatsapp. That's really good.

Regularly uploading recordings on Whatsapp obviously helped Senem to overcome her fear of speaking. While she was initially afraid of hearing her own voice, she felt much more relaxed about it later on.

In addition, the online social platform enabled both the students and me to track development of their oral performance. For individual tasks, I asked them to send me their recordings separately, which I used as a stimulated recall tool to reveal their thought processes at the time of speaking. In addition, voice recordings served as evidence of the students' production. Their speech would not disappear in thin air, but being recorded, it would become something concrete that could be shared, stored or replayed again and again. The accumulation of recordings helped some students to grow in self-confidence about speaking as well. As Nesrin, one of the hardworking students said, "I did not know I could produce this much talk in English". The voice recordings raised students' awareness about their own strengths and helped them to notice their habits and attitudes that specifically caused speaking reticence in the class.

All in all, use of an online platform allowed anxiety-free space for students to communicate outside the class. Participation in the online group messaging had a positive effect on their motivation to use the target language, and especially messaging in place of voice recording became a good alternative for those who had little confidence in speaking. The online platform helped us to create strong group dynamics and thus provided a base for further talk during class hours. I also realized that too much teacher talking time, which in our case meant lengthy teacher messaging, could upset the balance of group dynamics, and as such it should be kept at optimal levels. In addition, students became engaged in communication more when there was an authentic reason to do so, which reminded me of the value of authenticity. What's more, the voice recordings uploaded on the group helped both me and my students to track their oral skills development. We could use these recordings for suggesting strategies for further development of the students' speaking skills.

The aim of this study was to increase my students' participation in speaking activities. However, there were still a few students who did not show much

interest in oral practice despite being actively involved in written practice. I concluded that personality traits might have an impact on the degree of students' speaking class participation, which should be taken into consideration when assessing a student's oral performance.

Reflection

By carrying out this action research project, I was able to better understand my students' needs regarding development of communicative skills and to develop a solution. This not only increased my confidence about my decisions for classroom instruction, but also made me feel academically satisfied as I needed to explore academic articles relevant to our puzzle. The process was systematic and by keeping track of the decisions and actions I took, I had a chance to observe my practical skills in managing a learning process. So it was not only my class who benefitted from the experience but I too participated in a learning journey.

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An office hour practice on an online platform

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Main focus

Students visit their teachers at scheduled times, which are called office hours. Having office hours is a standard practice in many universities, enabling students to visit their instructors to ask questions. It is unclear to what extent, though, office hours benefit low proficiency students, and this study reports on a practical intervention to provide such students with an alternative, an online office hour. The study aimed to discover constructive outcomes of a six-week-long, online office hour intervention in comparison with one-hour-long, face-to-face office hour practices. The study observed the use of an online platform to see whether it improved the quality of an office hour both from the teacher's and the student's perspectives.

The students involved in the research belonged to a repeat class, consisting of those who had failed to pass elementary levels in their first terms. As an experienced English language teacher, I was aware that these repeat class students seemed to be unmotivated students and were in need of monitoring and motivation. Data collected from initial focus group interviews with the students showed that it was not motivation or discipline that the students needed. On the contrary, the main issue to emerge was their need for quality feedback from their teachers. Based on these initial data collected from interviews, I altered the office hour curriculum I had prepared for six weeks and re-designed the content and the delivery of the materials. In the beginning, the focus had been only on making the students do extra study under my guidance. After the interviews with students, the focus became explaining each and every question given on the extra study materials in an online office hour environment so as to give enough feedback to the students.

Background

Blending face-to-face interaction with online activities has become a reality in language education. It is even predicted to be the 'new traditional model' of our era (Ross & Gage, 2006). However, it is always noted that blending needs to be organized to achieve an optimum blend of the delivery (Sharma, 2010). As Bugon (2016) discusses, listening to the students' views about their needs before deciding on the right blend is one way. In our teaching, we still apply traditional methods and consequently students still have autonomy-related problems such as low levels of engagement, lack of motivation, and passiveness (Patil, 2008; Meddings & Thornbury, 2011).

In 2017, besides being the curriculum unit member, I was also the reading and writing teacher of a repeat class, and I was concerned about passive and unmotivated students. The idea of trying a new platform to blend both traditional materials with technology and to change the delivery of the office hour materials encouraged me to attempt to overcome my concerns. I therefore designed a six-week long office-hour practice on an online platform using as many student response systems (i.e., platforms that enable students to respond to instructions given by a teacher) as possible.

Research methodology

Research questions

The focus of my research revolved around the following questions:

1. How do online office hour practices enhance student participation?
2. To what extent do online office hour practices enhance student autonomy?
3. To what extent do online office hour practices improve teacher-student interaction?

Setting and participants

This action research took place in the Department of Foreign Languages (DFL) of TOBB University of Economy and Technology (TOBB ETU), a private non-profit foundation university. It has three academic terms, each of which has thirteen weeks. The research coincided with the second trimester of the academic year. As was previously mentioned, the target group belonged to a repeat class, meaning they failed to finish the foundation module A, so

needed to take the module again.

Each instructor at DFL has to stay an hour in their offices on a pre-defined day at the beginning of the trimester. However, it is in-house culture at DFL that these hours are conducted as if it was an extra class hour, but held in offices. It is also common to not have any visits by repeat students throughout the thirteen-week-long term.

To avoid no-visits and to assure the continuity of the office hour I designed, I wanted to work only with the volunteer students. After getting to know the students, in the second week of the term, I announced my aim to have a new approach to office hours, and explained what I expected from them:

- to enroll in an online class platform for free
- complete the tasks I would provide for them including speaking, reading, writing and listening activities
- to meet the deadlines I set
- to attend the interviews to be conducted

I also explained my objectives:

- to increase the length of the office hour
- to monitor students closely to provide more discipline
- to motivate them to work on extra materials such as worksheets
- to motivate them to study more

Six students from a sixteen-student class volunteered to participate.

Data collection tools

For data collection, as it was about a teacher in action, I preferred face-to-face interaction. This would provide me with a deeper understanding. Thus, the research was conducted using a qualitative approach. Focus group interviews were my primary source; however, journal entries were also used. Focus group interviews were recorded with the consent of the volunteers.

I prepared open-ended questions and I conducted the focus group interviews in a comfortable atmosphere after a brief introduction, with the aim of obtaining quality data (Krueger, 2002). The interviews were carried out twice: once at the beginning and once at the end of the programme. This was one of the limitations in the use of methods for data collection.

The first focus group interview questions are discussed under the subsection of Pre-Study Findings. In the final focus group interview the following questions were directed to the students:

- How did you benefit from this online office hour practice? Did this on-

line platform we have tried increase your participation and involvement in the office hour? Could you specify your positive and negative experiences of the office hour?

- How would you compare the face-to-face office hour and this practice?
- What were the challenges of such practice in terms of feedback, self-study and extra study, and teacher-student interaction?
- What were the main beneficial outcomes of such practice in terms of feedback, self-study and extra study, and teacher-student interaction?

The focus group interviews were transcribed. Analysis of the interviews paid particular attention to similar words that are used by the participants, the context, internal consistency, frequency of the topics and trying to find big ideas behind the specificities (Krueger, 2002). The students were asked to write a reflection about the process and these reflections were also analyzed in terms of their content.

The pre-study findings

This part is the turning point of my action research, since because of these findings I was able to design an online office-hour to meet the needs of the students. This data collection stage functioned as a needs analysis for the programme.

Based on my teaching experience I was reasonably sure about the students' needs. However, as a part of the research I wanted to confirm my understanding as well as more accurately determine the needs of the students for this online office-hour. The questions asked in the first focus group discussion were as follows:

- What were the positive and negative factors that affected your English learning process?
- Could you talk about your online learning experience?
 - How do you think online resources and applications affect your learning?
 - What are the positive sides of these online applications and platforms?
 - What are the negative sides of these online applications and platforms?

- What kind of online learning platform would benefit you most?
- Did you use the extra materials in the previous terms? Are you doing them now?
 - If you had a chance to have these extra study materials on an online platform, do you think it would benefit you?
- Do you attend your teachers' office hours regularly? Why?

After the first focus group interview analysis, the results were quite startling for me. The students, whom I labeled as low-achievers due to their lack of motivation, interest towards English and self-discipline, were highly aware of their study habits. They reported that they did all their online homework the previous term as well as consulted the extra materials provided by their teachers. Their main problem they wanted solved was not having their work monitored and not being given feedback on what they produce. That led them to being lost in the long term as they were unaware of their errors or their inappropriate approaches to study. All six students agreed that office hour practices were not useful for them. There were two reasons for this: one is that the teachers were always constrained by having too many students in this one-hour process and were seemingly in a rush if the question looked too easy. The second one is that the students were unable to ask for assistance in the correct subject. They were already unaware of the subjects they did not understand; thus, they were unable to benefit from this very limited hour. In the end, they – all six students – stopped visiting their teachers in their offices.

Action plan implementation

In the light of the information gathered, the design of the office-hour was re-shaped. For six weeks, the students were on the same platform - *Schoology* was used. All the extra materials that were supposed to be photocopied weekly were placed on this platform weekly. I re-organized all the related answer keys and explained the reason for the answer. For each week, I opened a discussion board on the platform about the theme of the weekly programme. Every week, we were to log on at the pre-set time and discuss the questions. The students were supposed to comment on the target questions related to the theme and respond to each other at the given time using the target vocabulary of the week. I monitored this activity and contributed to enrich the discussion. I collected their writing on this platform, and with the direct messaging system of the platform, I gave feedback. Using student response systems was a common practice in my teach-

ing approach. However, it was sometimes too overwhelming for students to log in to a new website each time and try a new platform. To overcome this distraction, I embedded the link of the application I would like my students to use into material in the platform (Schoology). The only move they were responsible for was to click the link without being aware of the name, website or requirements of the application. For instance, to enable students to practise speaking before their speaking quiz, I created a VoiceThread page or memory list before their vocabulary quiz. As these applications were also in the platform as regular extra material, the students clicked the link in the platform as regular extra study. The findings of the post focus group interview are shared and discussed in the following section.

Findings and discussion

Research question 1: How do online office hour practices enhance student participation?

All students found the practice beneficial for their studies. They had the opportunity to receive regular feedback on their learning process. Being aware of that, they felt the necessity to engage with the extra materials provided to them. Four of the students indicated that they sometimes did some activities even though they felt bored or exhausted. They did them because they did not want to miss the opportunity to be given feedback on the target material. Three of the students used the platform habitually. They checked if there were any comments either from me or their friends even when they were on a public bus, for example.

Research question 2: To what extent do online office hour practices enhance student autonomy?

Five of the students reflected on autonomy in a positive way. They said that by this new online practice, feelings of being lost in their studies vanished. Instead, feelings of self-control took over. They knew what they were doing and what the probable outcomes of the action would be. When they returned home or at the weekend they were able to decide themselves what to study. Four of them felt that even the quality of their questions they directed to me had improved.

Two of them mentioned they sometimes wanted to have paper copies of

the materials to study and write on, and so they printed out some materials I provided for them. Those students also asked their other teachers for materials on the grammar they found difficult. That was a new practice they developed. They were able to individualize their needs. Those students were beginning to alternate passive learning processes with active learning, in which their autonomy played a significant role.

The reflections of the students showed that their interest in English increased. They started to read some English sources. By doing research and reading more in the target language, they wanted to improve the quality of their discussion skills on the platform.

Research question 3: To what extent do online office hour practices improve teacher-student interaction?

Teacher-student interaction was the most appreciated outcome of the practice. Although I did not provide students feedback each and every time, they were aware that there was someone monitoring them. This provided them with guidance and a feeling of trust in me, as three of them explained. Based on the answer keys with detailed explanations I provided for them, they were able to realize whether they were making the same error again and again. As the explanations on the answer key repeat themselves for similar errors, they also noticed it was the same error on a different question. After the third week, they were self-monitoring themselves as to whether they were repeating their errors or had improved. Five of them particularly stated that I was a true guide to them in terms of feedback.

From the reflections they wrote and the answers they provided in the focus group interview, it was clear that these students were proud of being a part of this project and they felt valued. Having a teacher who was trying to understand and propose solutions to observed problems inspired them to learn more.

Reflections and looking to the future

Concluding this action research, which primarily aimed at providing my repeat class students with a more effective office hour, and taking the advantage of technology to achieve this, I feel that my continuous professional development has been fostered through this action research in many ways.

Provided they are used diligently, using online platforms for an office-hour course design not only saves time and energy but also provides the teacher and the students with full documentation of the process. By doing so, monitoring

students becomes easier and less threatening from a student perspective. At the same time, as they also stated in the interview, they feel more confident to step forward.

However, the basic conclusion I reach is not only about the practice but about my own development. The years we spend teaching should not prevent us from listening to our students; we may know the subject better but sometimes they know what they need better than we do.

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Enhancing vocabulary retention through technology for digital natives

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Main Focus

Technology, at present, has a vital role in our and our students' lives. We, as language teachers, are trying to teach a generation of students who are very different from us in many respects. They are far more computer-based, multi-tasking, and vulnerable to distractions. Most of them have a natural resistance to traditional teaching methods and traditional teacher figures.

Our challenge is to combine the best of change knowledge with the best technology and pedagogy. If we can do so, progress in educational transformation will accelerate dramatically because of the synergizing influence among these three forces. Pedagogy, technology and change knowledge operating in concert will become a powerhouse of learning. Once this happens, technology, we can be sure, will play more than its share. It will become a dynamic player shaping the future (Fullan, 2013, p.71).

It is being too optimistic to expect to teach the students of today effectively with obsolete teaching methods. If they do not believe in us as teachers or in our teaching methods, we will not have the slightest chance to teach them even a single word. Today's learners may be defined as "Digital Natives". Digital native is a term created by Mark Prensky (2001) and it is used to describe the generation of people who were born into technology and who grew up in the digital age. Digital natives are comfortable with technology and computers at an early age and consider technology to be an integral and necessary part of their lives. Having in mind that to be able to teach my students I had to find something promising and challenging to draw their attention and sustain it, I came up with the idea of using the online application Quizlet, which I thought

would contribute to my students' vocabulary retention since I constantly come across the questions: 'How can we learn and retain vocabulary effectively?', 'What is the best way to learn new vocabulary?'.

Aim of the study

This study aims at finding out how we could help our students to retain new vocabulary through Quizlet, which is an online application and website designed to teach any subject. Quizlet has different activities such as "flashcards", "learn", "match", "test" and "live", through which students could practise all the words covered in classes. My aims in carrying out this study were:

- to offer a new tool to my students which would attract their attention as digital age students (digital natives)
- to motivate my students to learn vocabulary
- to observe how Quizlet would contribute to their vocabulary learning experience.
- to keep a record of vocabulary content covered in my classes.

Background

For many learners studying English as a foreign language, vocabulary learning is considered as boring, as they have to memorize unfamiliar words and spelling (Nguyen & Khuat, 2003). Like many learners, my students also believed that they could express themselves in English much better if they had a better vocabulary level. Most of them hold their vocabulary level responsible for their failure in English and they usually complain that they do not know how they can learn new vocabulary.

Wood (2001) investigated the use of learning games as a learning tool and concluded that game-like formats could be more effective at capturing learners' attention than traditional media such as textbooks. Furthermore, according to Schultz and Fisher (1988), game playing is a popular way to engage learners in language learning. Prensky (2001, p. 106) listed 12 elements as to why games engage people. To name a few, games motivate players (to achieve goals), gratify the ego (when winning), are fun (through enjoyment and pleasure) and spark the players' creativity (to solve the game).

An increasing tendency to make use of the Internet as a means of computer-assisted vocabulary acquisition has led to a shift of focus onto the de-

sign and implementation of online vocabulary-oriented learning management systems. Study of vocabulary, based on learner-made word lists supported by accompanying interactive vocabulary exercises, paves the way for appropriate conditions for learners to improve their language skills in the target language (Spiri, 2007).

Horst, et al. (2005) advocate building a set of online tools for vocabulary learning in an ESL course, encompassing concordance data, dictionary, cloze-builder, hypertext, and a database with interactive self-quizzing feature (all freely available at www.lex tutor.ca). It is assumed that the tools would aid retention by engaging learners in deep processing, offering them more to study than words and definitions only.

As Prensky (2001) reports: “Those of us who were not born into this world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and will always be, compared to them, ‘digital immigrants’” (p. 1-2). So, it is crucial that teachers understand and appreciate such a fundamental difference between themselves and today’s students and that their teaching practice reflects this awareness.

Research methodology

This study was conducted at Çukurova University School of Languages with 22 engineering students who had been taking compulsory English instruction for one year. Data for the present study were obtained through open-ended questions, questionnaires and informal interviews with students.

At the beginning of the teaching year, I observed my students and realized that they have problems with vocabulary learning. I gave them a questionnaire to learn how they usually learn new vocabulary. 38% of the students said they learn by films or TV series, 32% of them stated they learn by coursebooks, 17% of them said they learn by reading books, and 12% stated they learn by computer games. When I conducted informal interviews with students who said they learn new vocabulary through computer games, I realized that almost all of them believed that this was a very effective way to learn and retain vocabulary. I discussed the results with my students and we decided to use an online tool to facilitate vocabulary learning and retention. At this point, I introduced Quizlet to them and demonstrated how it works. They were very excited about the idea.

We began using the software as an English to Turkish dictionary. We added all the words we came across during the classes. I did not use the board often; when I needed to write a word, I typed it and its meaning into the application. I gave my students the link for their class page where they could simultaneously access all the words I added. Every week, we used the live game feature at least once, which created an unbelievable learning atmosphere and interaction in the classroom. I would pick any study set, then share the join code with the students. Students are automatically assigned teams. Teams sit together or in different places and start playing. Vocabulary items they are to answer are all from their study set. Teams race each other to win. The group who finishes first wins the game. Students can see the progress of all the groups on the board which makes the game more exciting. It was a significant achievement for the students to win this game. By doing this, we aimed at motivating the students to actively use our study set on Quizlet. At the end of the first two blocks, I attempted to discover how students felt about the application by asking them to fill in learning logs and questionnaires.

After the first two blocks, we decided to add new words with their English translations as a monolingual dictionary at the students' request. At the end of the teaching year, I conducted informal interviews with 10 students who were randomly selected. Data from interviews were analysed through content analysis. The results of the questionnaires were statistically analysed, and qualitative and quantitative findings were obtained.

Findings and discussion

The findings of this study clearly show that students' motivation to learn new vocabulary was triggered by the introduction of this application, and vocabulary learning started to be perceived as fun rather than a source of boredom as they were using their mobile phones and the Internet, which are, for most of our students, indispensable parts of their lives.

Analysis of questionnaires and interviews indicate 61% of students believes that Quizlet could help them learn and retain vocabulary if they were to use it regularly.

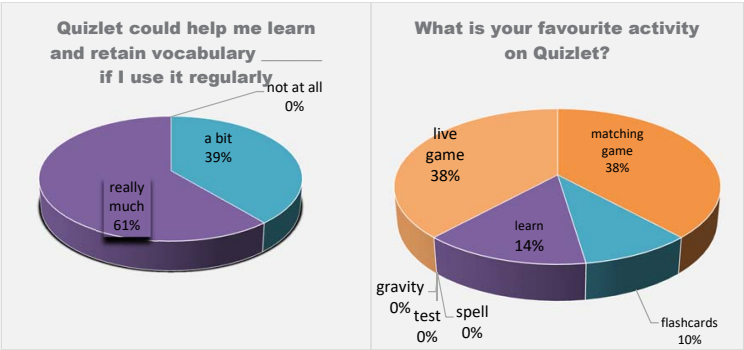


Table 1. Usefulness of Quizlet

Table 2. Favourite activity

The activities students liked most were live game and ‘matching game’ which was not surprising for me, as a prominent characteristic of digital natives is that they like game-like formats. Especially, the live game feature promotes interaction among students and creates curiosity in vocabulary content. Some students were studying the class vocabulary content for the sake of winning the live game and for not being humiliated by their friends. Repeating all the words in their study set every week helped them learn unconsciously.

Another finding was that students’ enthusiasm to use the application started to fade when we switched to an English to English basis, which may reflect that they were Level 1 students who did not feel secure when using the application on an English to English basis. Actually, it was the students who wanted to switch from the English to Turkish to the English to English dictionary. One explanation is that beginner level students prefer to learn every unknown word separately with their word to word translation, that is, using a list of words to memorize, whereas advanced students, although there are some exceptions, try to learn words in context (Ellis, 1994 p.553).

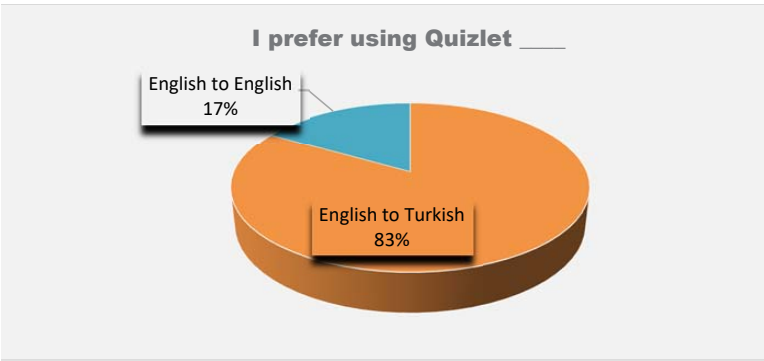


Table 3. Quizlet Language Preference

When asked, a big majority of the students said that they would prefer to use the application on an English to Turkish basis. Some students' interview transcripts are presented below.

It's quite different from other ordinary applications, it is an application which enables students to learn vocabulary through different activities such as flashcard, learn, spell, match, gravity or my favorite one "live" ... only disadvantage for me is that it doesn't have an interface in Turkish language

It is really nice application as it gives me chance to go over new vocabulary even when I am on the bus to school. I can create my own quizzes with my class vocabulary content. It helps me not only in classes but also in exams.

One of the students complained that the application does not have a Turkish interface although s/he favours the application whereas another student expresses her/his regret at having not used the application often enough.

I am very happy with this application. I use the app once or twice a week and try to learn the vocabulary content. As our teacher adds all the new word we come across to the app, there are mostly the words we need.

This application helped me a lot. It helped me learn key words covered in classes. I blame myself as I didn't allocate enough time to use this program. It could really have helped me more.

Some other students, as you can see above, explain what makes this online tool different from others, focusing on the ease of use and practicality, due to it containing vocabulary items they mostly need. One other important observation for me was that some students asked me whether I was working in the test office, the unit responsible for preparing all exams. When I asked why he thought so, he told me he did the vocabulary part of the "Achievement Test" easily because most of the items were on their Quizlet study set. He therefore thought I might be a member of the team who prepared the questions. I explained to him that I have no connection with that team and he did well because he studied our class study set. What we did worked since it offered students the class vocabulary content in an organized way. With repetition and practice, they retained the target vocabulary.

Reflections and looking into the future

After using the application for a while, my students started to ask me to add words that they thought were important to the application, which was a sign for me that we were on the right track. Sometimes they even warned their friends by saying, “Do you not know this word? It is on our list on Quizlet.” What made me happy about the application was that I kept track of vocabulary covered in my classes during the year. I knew what we covered in our classes thanks to this application. Some of my students said they could not use the application often enough, although they thought that it could help them. This was because I did not force them to use the application by promising grades. I did not have a chance to directly include their performance on Quizlet in my grading. If it could be integrated into the teaching syllabus and students’ performance could be graded, students could make the most of it. As to further research, an experimental study with a control group and experimental group could give more significant findings on the effectiveness of Quizlet or similar vocabulary learning applications on students’ vocabulary learning and retention.

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Exploring teacher and learner perceptions of the value of peer-teaching vocabulary: Convergences and divergences

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Main focus

Many higher education courses, including those in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), incorporate learner-led components, learner-generated materials and peer-teaching. Such approaches are underpinned by the common-sense notion that this is empowering for learners and can consequently boost engagement levels. Whilst this provides learners with opportunities to bring topics, materials and language selections into the classroom, the way that such approaches play out in classroom reality may be problematic. The classroom research in this chapter explores learners' rationales when empowered to choose vocabulary to peer-teach.

I start by providing my teacher-researcher's perspective and background to the research. I then draw on relevant literature, outline the research methodology and present my findings alongside a brief discussion. Finally, I reflect upon the research process itself.

Background

I teach on business English modules at a UK university. These modules aim to develop learners' business English skills and knowledge while they are undertaking their business degree studies. Peer-teaching constitutes an important part of the module as part of a component known as the 'Weekly Discussion Board'. Learners are tasked with the delivery of a short oral presentation to their peers about a current business news story (e.g. 'London's Housing in Crisis'). This provides them with the opportunity to bring topics of interest into classroom discourse and at the same time practise their business English. In-class discussion of the topic is extended via written contributions to an online

discussion board for the week following the class. As part of their presentation brief, learners should choose five items of vocabulary (words or phrases) to peer-teach, usually from articles in business magazines or business sections of UK broadsheets. On some occasions, I agreed that learners' lexical selections held value for their peers, but this was not always so, and this led me to question the possible reasons.

For me, vocabulary knowledge is of central importance in successful language learning. This conviction is intertwined within my *constructed teacher identity*, that is, my identity shaped "across space and time... in relationship to the world" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 30). I have always been fascinated by the rich diversity of the English lexicon and as a teacher I embraced the Lexical Approach. This interest was consolidated by my postgraduate research examining teachers' practices, beliefs and attitudes with reference to a popular list of academic English vocabulary (Banister, 2016). My combined interest in and beliefs about the importance of the lexical dimension underlie this research into my learners' peer-teaching of vocabulary.

At the outset of this research process, I attempted to go beyond intuition and unpack what 'value' represented to me. I analysed vocabulary selections from recent cohorts, grouped them into 'valuable' and 'less valuable', then reflected on the differences. Some vocabulary such as 'inflation' or 'partnership' seemed to lack linguistic challenge for advanced level language learners who were also second year business students. However, I realised that learners' L1s would likely influence the size of the linguistic challenge presented by the lexis. Other vocabulary, often proper nouns or acronyms, seemed so specific as to preclude broader application. For example, 'the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)' might be central to studying sustainability, but lack wider usefulness and potentially be glossed by a business lecturer (my learners were concurrently studying their business modules alongside business English). Upon reflection, my notion of valuable vocabulary covered items which seemed more widely deployable (e.g. 'pledge', 'grapple with something') or which projected linguistic complexity and sophistication, often as part of a natural-sounding collocation (e.g. 'tax loophole', 'global governance'). Surprisingly, when I checked to see how some of the vocabulary I saw as valuable was classified on the *Academic Vocabulary List* (AVL) (Gardner & Davies, 2014), the majority, 11/15 items, were not in the top 3000 academic words.

In effect, when choosing vocabulary to peer-teach, learners are placed in the position of teachers. Teaching of vocabulary is often categorised into *deliberate* or *incidental* approaches (Nation & Meara, 2010). Teaching words with attention on the target item represents a deliberate approach (Nation & Meara, 2010). Deliberate instruction can be contrasted with an incidental approach whereby learners naturally acquire vocabulary through repeated exposure, such as during extensive reading (Nation & Meara, 2010). Ultimately, it is important to incorporate both strands into effective instruction, alongside a focus on fluency and through message-focussed output (Nation & Meara, 2010). Deliberate teaching can be facilitated by the use of frequency-based vocabulary lists such as Coxhead's (2000) *Academic Word List* and Gardner and Davies' (2014) *Academic Vocabulary List*. Such lists claim to focus learners' attention on the words worth knowing, and some like the AWL have been widely viewed as relevant and proved popular in time-pressured EAP contexts (Banister, 2016). However, in my experience, learners are often unaware of these lists and do not use them independently.

Research methodology

This research adopts the principles of Exploratory Practice (EP), a form of practitioner-research that encourages teachers and learners to co-create understanding and enhance classroom quality of life. EP promotes scholarly inquiry via exploration of teaching and learning 'puzzles', counter-intuitive classroom phenomena (Allwright, 2005). Through the development of Potentially Exploitable Pedagogic Activities (PEPAs), which integrate teaching, learning and research, EP lends the practitioner-research endeavour an inclusivity and sustainability (Allwright & Hanks, 2009) and, as such, EP is positioned at the confluence of teaching, learning and research. Having experienced at first hand the way that EP has been shown to positively impact the professional identity of the teacher-researcher (Slimani-Rolls & Kiely, in press) and teachers' self-efficacy (Wyatt & Dikilitas, 2015), I adopted its principles to shed light on my learners' choices when peer-teaching vocabulary. Thus, my puzzle emerged:

Why do my business English learners select particular vocabulary items and not others to teach their peers?

The research participants were exchange students at a UK university studying business English as part of their study period abroad on an undergraduate business programme. Participants, in their early 20s, were from various L1 backgrounds; especially French and Spanish predominated. Two cohorts participated (autumn 2016, spring 2017).

To gain insights into learners' selection rationales, it made sense to ask them directly. The small class sizes made open-ended survey questions feasible. Three questions (below) about the peer-teaching process were embedded into a pre-existing review activity, constituting a short qualitative survey and a PEPA with which to explore my puzzle.

1. Why did you choose this particular vocabulary rather than other items to teach to your peers?
2. Did you use any tools (online dictionaries, websites, etc.) or rely on your own judgement when selecting this vocabulary?
3. Upon reflection, do you still think the key vocabulary you taught was useful or not? Which? Why/not?

The first question aimed to unpack learner rationales, the second asked how they reached decisions, and the third question gauged confidence levels when looking back on their lexical selections. In addition to learners' written responses to these questions and other learner-generated artefacts, I completed a reflective journal every week in which I noted ad-hoc classroom discussion and observations, adding to the dataset. Further puzzle exploration was incorporated into regular classroom activities to ensure that research did not overburden participants outside class. At the data analysis stage, learners' written responses and my reflective journal were manually coded using content analysis to identify and unpack common themes.

In line with the principles of informed consent, information forms were distributed, introducing learners to EP and my puzzle. At the reporting stage, anonymity was maintained by referring to participants by student number and cohort, e.g. S1 2016 = Student/student group 1 from autumn 2016. As with any qualitative research utilising open-ended questions in a small group setting, anonymity is often a myth. Therefore, I gave verbal reassurances to learners and leveraged the developing atmosphere of trust to reiterate that all comments would be taken on board positively as an opportunity to develop the module.

Understanding and discussion

There were four responses in autumn 2016 and three in spring 2017, constituting the dataset. These were analysed to illuminate my puzzle.

Convergences and divergences with regard to teacher and learner perspectives on 'value'

In Q1 learners were asked for their rationale in choosing vocabulary to peer-teach. Most learner responses revealed more than one single reason. Responses coalesced around three central areas of perceived value:

1. **Novelty** (of the lexical item for peers): learners believed the vocabulary would be new or interesting for their peers. *"We have assumed the rest of the class is not familiar with such...vocabulary"* (S2 2016). *"They look [like] sophisticated synonyms to some easy vocabulary we would usually select instead"* (S3 2017).
2. **Necessity** (for comprehension of the business news story): *"For them to better understand our research."* (S4 2016)
3. **Transferability**: *"I thought that words like blueprint and bespoke were simple words that are often employed in many contexts"* (S3 2017)

Learners' responses converged with my own beliefs about choosing vocabulary for explicit instruction. Interest, need and potential for broader usage all aligned with my own rationale when selecting words to teach. However, lexis the students selected diverged from my expectations.

Borg (2003) notes that language teachers are influenced by their formal schooling and previous learning experiences. It might therefore be suggested that language learners positioned as teachers engage in a parallel process, using their own past experiences of vocabulary instruction to identify value. In the case of myself and my learners, it was in our enactment of these mutually identified rationales that we diverged. It could be argued that my constructed teacher identity, the facet of identity built over time and place (Barkhuizen, 2016) predisposes me to value general vocabulary which is widely deployable more highly than technical business words, which by their nature are more narrowly used. By contrast, my learners, understandably focusing on their business studies, tended to select these technical items to peer-teach, and this was the major area of divergence.

Learners' responses to other questions went further towards demystifying their thought processes and allowed previously submerged decision-making to resurface.

The pull of the familiar and 'instinct'

Responses to Q2, 'Did you use any tools (online dictionaries, websites etc.) or rely on your own judgement when selecting this vocabulary?' revealed that in most cases learners used their own judgement when selecting words (4/7 cases). Dictionaries were used in tandem with learners' own judgement in the majority of cases (3 monolingual, 2 bilingual). This exposed the reality that decision-making in this context rested largely on a 'learner's instinct', combined with dictionary usage. I introduced my learners to online resources like the *Word and Phrase* tool, a web resource to browse vocabulary along with definitions, collocations, synonyms and examples of real life use via concordance data with a Key Word in Context (KWIC) feature. However, when asked to select words to peer-teach, my learners experienced the pull of familiar resources, rejecting the less familiar *Word and Phrase*. Further discussion of this in class, revealed that their favoured online dictionaries offered a translation feature that the EAP word lists did not. There is a convergence between me and my learners here. Whilst I believe that tools like *Word and Phrase* and frequency-based lists are useful, when it comes to the crunch, often my 'teacher's instinct', with all its tacit assumptions about value, will take over and guide decision-making about which vocabulary should be taught.

Missed opportunities for deeper learning

Finally, when asked to reflect on their lexical selections (Q3), confidence in their selections appeared to be high with all 7 responses indicating partial or total confidence in choices made. Learners felt that some vocabulary had been put into productive use: "*Some of them became a part of our vocabulary base we can use e.g. in our writing exercise[s] (essays, reports, etc.)*" (S2 2016). One respondent noted that three out of five items chosen had been "*less useful because everybody already knew them*" (S1 2017). This idea that a word can be fully 'known' prompted further reflection. My initial journal entries revolved around the idea that some learners' selections lacked value, but perhaps I was intermittently guilty of this too, I was still, like the learner quoted above, judging selections on their novelty and failing to see the potential value in revisiting basic vocabulary items and encouraging depth alongside breadth of knowledge in vocabulary learning. As novelty is a very tangible concept, such an approach can generate learner resistance, but it allows a focus on what Nation and Meara (2010) refer to as the deeper and richer aspects of word knowledge, and ones with which teachers may be well-placed to help learners.

Reflections and looking into the future

Teacher-research can illuminate the teacher, their learners and aspects of their instructional setting. Exploring this puzzle has, to some extent, demystified my learners' rationales for peer-teaching vocabulary. This understanding will influence my pedagogy through the future guidance I give my learners about considering 'value' in the context of vocabulary selections to peer-teach. I will incorporate this understanding into classroom discussion and embed it in materials for future cohorts. In this way, learners who might perceive some vocabulary selections as 'basic' may be persuaded instead to view these lexical items as a real opportunity for deepening their word knowledge (by exploring collocations and associations, for instance). Above all, adoption of the EP principles for this research journey has further strengthened my belief in the value of gaining deeper access to my learners. By offering teachers a vantage point at the confluence of pedagogy, learning and research, EP can unpack important convergences and divergences, enhancing the overall learning experience for all classroom participants in the process.

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*Involvement load hypothesis as
an operationalizable construct:
An investigation into Turkish
EFL learners' incidental
vocabulary acquisition*

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Main focus

For L2 learners in a university context, it is a necessity to learn thousands of words to be able to operate in English; however, the amount of vocabulary to be acquired can seem daunting for university students at high levels (Tekmen & Daloğlu, 2006). This is especially true for students in an EFL context.

As teacher practitioners who understand this need but might not know how best to support the students, we have selected incidental vocabulary learning and task-induced involvement load hypothesis to gain insights into the ways the vocabulary course at a Turkish state university might foster vocabulary acquisition for intermediate and upper-intermediate learners in an EFL setting.

Background

What is incidental vocabulary learning?

Hulstijn (2003) defines incidental learning as the ‘picking up of words and structures, simply by engaging in a variety of communicative activities, in particular reading and listening activities, during which the learner’s attention is focused on the meaning rather than on the form of language’ (p. 349).

Many factors have been found to have an impact on the incidental acquisition of vocabulary. One critical factor is ‘engagement’ (Schmitt, 2010). A number of attempts have been made to define this notion of engagement more precisely. Craik and Lockhart’s (1972) ‘depth of processing hypothesis’ is the first of these attempts, laying the groundwork for the others. Their hypothesis addresses the relative depth and elaboration with which verbal input is processed and its impact on learning and retention. Since the terms depth and elaboration lacked operational definitions, Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) de-

veloped the 'Involvement Load Hypothesis', so that identifying criteria could be 'observed, manipulated, and measured' (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001, p. 543).

Task-induced involvement load hypothesis

According to this hypothesis, the elaboration with which words are processed is considered to be one key variable in word learning and retention and is assumed to be based on the relative involvement load. The involvement load hypothesis predicts that, independent of its internal composition, the higher the overall involvement index, the better vocabulary learning and retention (Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001).

To the best of our knowledge, there have only been three studies (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Keating, 2008; Kim, 2011) that have directly investigated the involvement load hypothesis. These studies produced mixed results. Therefore, the current research might serve to address a research gap in the literature.

Aims and research questions

As a partial replication of Kim's (2011) research conducted in an ESL environment, the present study is designed to test particular predictions of the involvement load hypothesis in an English as a foreign language (EFL) setting across different proficiency levels and task types. For the purposes of the current research, the first experiment in Kim (2011) is replicated to examine how different levels of task-induced involvement affect the *initial* learning and *retention* of target words by L2 learners with two different levels of proficiency in an EFL setting.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. Does the level of task-induced involvement affect the *initial* vocabulary learning of EFL learners from different proficiency levels when three tasks with different levels of involvement are administered?
2. Does the level of task-induced involvement affect the *retention* of new vocabulary words of EFL learners from different proficiency levels when three tasks with different levels of involvement are administered?

Research methodology

Participants

The population in this study was two groups of EFL students (N=106) from a Turkish state university intensive English program. These groups consisted of

students at the upper-intermediate (n=59) and the intermediate (n=47) levels, based on their scores on the university's in-house English placement test. Participants were aged between 18 and 21, and all had Turkish as their L1. All participants were informed about the broad aims of the project related to completing tasks in an L2 (English), but the details of the specific aims of the study were not given. Neither were they aware that vocabulary tests were to be administered after the tasks (owing to the incidental-learning nature of the study). For each proficiency level, participants were randomly assigned into one of three task type subgroups (Reading, Gap-fill, and Sentence Writing).

Materials

Three different tasks to operationalize different levels of task-induced involvement were used in the study:

- Task 1:* Reading with comprehension questions including graphic organizers ("Reading"; involvement index = 1), (see Appendix A)
- Task 2:* Reading with comprehension questions and gap-fill activity ("Gap-fill"; involvement index = 2), and (See Appendix B)
- Task 3:* A writing task ("Sentence Writing"; involvement index = 3) (see Appendix C).

For Reading and Gap-fill groups, as in Kim's (2011) study, the reading text "Coping with Procrastination" and a set of comprehension questions from the textbook *Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing* (Arlov, 2000) were used after consulting two current teachers of the two groups of students. The teachers assured the researchers that participants were familiar with the topic 'procrastination'; therefore, topic familiarity was controlled to prevent the introduction of another variable caused by different levels of topic familiarity.

Target vocabulary

Two current teachers of the two groups of students were consulted as to whether students might have been taught the target words prior to the study. The teachers informed the researchers that the target words would probably be unfamiliar to the participants. The target words consisted of five verbs, three adjectives, and two nouns: *assiduous*, *apprehensive*, *oration*, *vexed*, *spawn*, *envision*, *caveat*, *stymie*, *divulge*, and *abate*.

Vocabulary tests

Two vocabulary tests were administered for the purposes of the study: an immediate posttest and a delayed posttest. An immediate posttest was administered to measure participants' initial vocabulary learning right after the treatments. A delayed posttest was also administered to measure participants' retention of the words three weeks after the treatments. As with Hulstijn and Laufer's (2001) research, all the participants in the current study shared the same L1, Turkish. Therefore, following Hulstijn and Laufer, the researchers required the participants to produce L1 translations or English explanations of the ten target words to measure their vocabulary knowledge.

The tests were scored by the researchers and a colleague who is an EFL teacher practitioner and an ELT PhD student at an English medium university. A word that was not translated or was wrongly translated received a score of zero. A correct response received a full point. If the learner had a correct response but had also marked the target word as known prior to the experiment, the response was scored as zero. If a participant checked more than two words as previously known, the data collected from that student were eliminated from the analysis. Such pre-knowledge happened rarely, and most target words were unfamiliar to most students.

Analyses

The two research questions asked whether the level of task-induced involvement load affected (a) the *initial* vocabulary learning and (b) the *retention* of new vocabulary words of EFL students from different proficiency levels when three tasks with different levels of involvement were administered. Each research question examined one dependent variable: scores on the immediate and delayed posttests. Both research questions had the same independent variables: level of task-induced involvement and proficiency level. In order to test the two research questions, the data were analyzed using SPSS version 21.0. Since Shapiro Wilk tests showed that the data were *not* normally distributed, non-parametric tests were used for the statistical analysis of the data.

For the statistical comparisons of the effects of the three tasks on the immediate and delayed posttests scores of the students from two different proficiency levels, Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney tests were used. The comparisons of the effects of the three tasks on the immediate and delayed posttests scores of the students within each proficiency level were made by using Wilcoxon tests. The alpha level was set at .05.

Findings and discussion

The descriptive statistics for the immediate and delayed posttests of the 59 upper-intermediate and 47 intermediate proficiency level students and the comparisons of the effects of the three tasks on the immediate and delayed posttests scores of the students within each proficiency level are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of descriptive statistics for immediate and delayed posttests

| | | Immediate Median (min.:max.) | Delayed Median (min.:max.) | p values |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Upper Intermedi- ate (n=59) | Reading (n=17) | 3(0:6) | 1(0:3) | 0,002^a |
| | Gap-fill (n=19) | 6(1:9) | 1(0:4) | <0,001^a |
| | Sentence Writing (n=23) | 10(3:10) | 2(0:4) | <0,001^a |
| Intermedi- ate (n=47) | Reading (n=14) | 2,50(0:5) | 1(0:2) | 0,014^a |
| | Gap-fill (n=18) | 4(1:8) | 1(0:3) | <0,001^a |
| | Sentence Writing (n=15) | 9(4:10) | 2(0:6) | 0,001^a |

^a: Wilcoxon test, α=0.05

Table 1 indicates that the Sentence Writing group at both proficiency levels has the highest minimum and maximum scores in the immediate posttest. The Gap-fill group follows the Sentence Writing group, and the Reading group follows the Gap-fill group at both proficiency levels in the immediate posttest (Sentence Writing > Gap-fill > Reading). In line with the findings of Eck-erth and Tavakoli (2012), Hulstijn and Laufer’s (2001) first experiment, and Kim (2011), the results of the first research question with regard to students’ *initial* vocabulary acquisition provide full support for the involvement load

hypothesis, in that learners acquired words more effectively through tasks that induced a higher level of involvement.

However, such differences cannot be observed for either of the two different proficiency levels in the delayed posttest. When the immediate and delayed posttest scores are compared, Wilcoxon tests showed that there are significant differences between the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest scores of the students at each proficiency level for each task (see Table 1 for p -values of the comparisons between the scores of the immediate and delayed posttests). The delayed posttest scores fall drastically when compared to the immediate posttest scores.

Based on the significant differences found between the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest scores of the students at each proficiency level for each task, a further statistical analysis was carried out by calculating variations in the scores of the two tests within each proficiency level for each task.

Table 2: Variations calculated according to the scores of the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest in terms of the effect of the level of task-induced involvement within each proficiency level

| | | Variations | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | Median (min.:max.) | p values (General) | p values (Com- parisons) |
| Upper | Reading (n=17) | -2(-4:1) | | $P_{\text{Task1-Task2}} = 0,003^b$ |
| Interme- diate (n=59) | Gap-fill (n=19) | -4(-8:0) | <0,001 ^a | $P_{\text{Task1-Task3}} < 0,001^b$ |
| | Sentence Writ- ing (n=23) | -7(-9:-3) | | $P_{\text{Task2-Task3}} = 0,001^b$ |
| Interme- diate (n=47) | Reading (n=14) | -1(-4:1) | | $P_{\text{Task1-Task2}} = 0,014^b$ |
| | Gap-fill (n=18) | -3(-7:0) | <0,001 ^a | $P_{\text{Task1-Task3}} < 0,001^b$ |
| | Sentence Writ- ing (n=15) | -8(-10:-2) | | $P_{\text{Task2-Task3}} < 0,001^b$ |

^a: Kruskal Wallis test, ^b: Mann Whitney test, $\alpha=0.05$

As shown in Table 2, the variations in the scores of the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest were calculated in terms of the effect of the level of task-induced involvement within each proficiency level. According to the results of the Kruskal Wallis tests, when general p values are considered, significant differences are found between the scores of the immediate posttest and the

delayed posttest in terms of the level of task-induced involvement within each proficiency level (Upper Intermediate, $p < 0,001$; Intermediate, $p < 0,001$), the steepest drop being in the Sentence Writing group in each proficiency level. The task leading to the greatest gains in word learning immediately after treatment also suffered the greatest decrease in gains over the three-week period. The Mann Whitney comparisons revealed that there are significant differences between the immediate posttest scores and the delayed posttest scores of the students in each proficiency level when each task is compared with another (see Table 2 for p -values of each comparison).

In answering the second research question investigating the *retention* of new vocabulary knowledge, the current research did not support the involvement load hypothesis unlike the previous research mentioned above (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Kim, 2011). The findings of the present research indicated that the gains in the learners' incidental vocabulary knowledge on the immediate posttest were significantly lost between the immediate posttest and the delayed posttest for both proficiency levels for all three tasks with different involvement loads. The drastic fall in the incidental vocabulary gains of the students from the immediate posttest to delayed posttest might be explained by the longer time interval between the two tests when compared to the previous research.

Among the studies directly investigating the predictions made by the involvement load hypothesis (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012; Hulstijn & Laufer, 2001; Keating, 2008; Kim, 2011), there is one study whose findings are in line with the current research (Keating, 2008). Keating investigated the effects of three tasks with differing involvement loads on the passive and active vocabulary knowledge of beginning learners of L1 Spanish and administered the delayed posttest 2 weeks after the administration of the immediate posttest. The results of his study regarding learners' active vocabulary knowledge indicated that gains in active vocabulary knowledge did not hold over time for all tasks in the same vein with the findings of the present research. According to Keating, even though it may seem surprising that the effect of the most involving task would not be greater than that of the least involving task after just two weeks, it should be taken into consideration that the participants in his study, like the participants in the current research, were not exposed to the target words between testing intervals. Therefore, he adds that it is not surprising that there would be a decline in knowledge for the task that initially showed the greatest gains.

Reflections and looking into the future

The findings of the present study indicated that the task leading to the greatest gains in word learning immediately after treatment also suffered the greatest decrease in gains over the three-week period. What should be done to curb steep declines in word retention? The answer comes from Keating (2008). Supporting Eckerth and Tavakoli (2012), he recommends classroom practitioners to recycle vocabulary frequently via tasks with high involvement load. Another recommendation could be to include a focus-on-form component in vocabulary instruction because as Laufer and Girsai (2008) state, word learning and retention are better when vocabulary instruction has a focus-on-form aspect. Similarly, Sonbul and Schmitt (2010) report that the main pedagogical implication of their study is based on the superiority of incidental + explicit learning over incidental learning alone. While looking into the future, we see that as Eckerth and Tavakoli (2012) state, the main educational appeal of the Involvement Load Hypothesis is its potential instructional applicability: a formula for teachers to use to better manipulate and foster their students' vocabulary learning. In order to gain better insights and more applicable data, there is an absolute need for controlled experiments that aim to test the hypothesis with a variety of tasks in various teaching contexts (Kim, 2011) with learners from different proficiency levels including lower-intermediate and elementary groups.

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Appendix A

Comprehension questions: Circle the correct answer.

1. Which of the following most closely expresses the main idea of the essay?
 - a. People who procrastinate need to get motivated.
 - b. Procrastination is unintentional.
 - c. Procrastination can be understood and controlled.
 - d. Some of the world's most famous people have been procrastinators.

2. Procrastinators tend to be
 - a. lazy
 - b. male
 - c. perfectionists
 - d. low achievers

3. Which of the following is **not** mentioned as a cause of procrastination?
 - a. Not being sure how to do something
 - b. Expecting too much of oneself
 - c. Not being sure when a project is due
 - d. Not being motivated

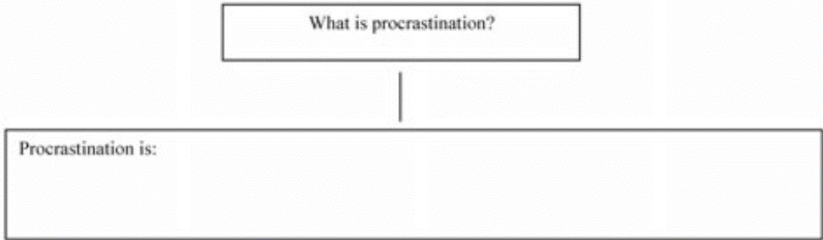
4. According to the authors, inability to concentrate or of feeling overwhelmed and indecisive could be a sign of
 - a. Procrastination
 - b. Physical illness
 - c. Burnout
 - d. Mental instability

5. The authors imply that a tendency to procrastinate
 - a. is always a problem for college students.
 - b. can be controlled easily with several simple steps.
 - c. is something the individual can at least partly control.
 - d. is a sign of more serious problems.

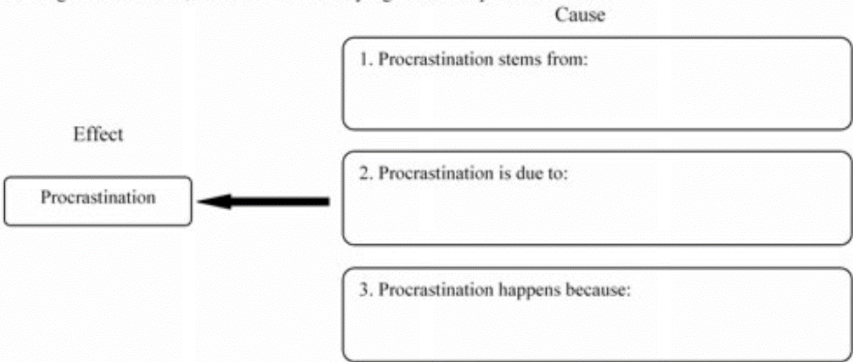
6. To overcome procrastination, the authors suggest all **but** which of the following?
- a. Set realistic expectations
 - b. Do things that you would enjoy
 - c. Seek out support
 - d. Spend more time on planning

Directions: Based on the reading, fill in the following graphic organizers as precisely as possible.

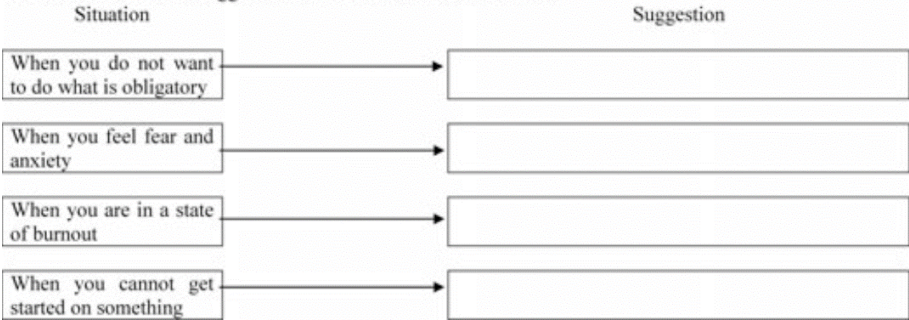
1.



2. According to the authors, what are the underlying causes of procrastination?



3. Provide the authors' suggestion for what to do in each situation.



Appendix B

Directions:

1. Please read the following passage.
2. Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate words from the list.
3. Based on the reading, answer the questions that follow. Choose the best answers.

Coping with procrastination

By Roberta Moore, Barbara Baker, and Arnold H. Packer

Any discussion of time management would not be complete without an examination of the most well-intentioned person's worst enemy: procrastination. The dictionary (Dictionary.com) defines procrastination as "the act of putting off or delaying an action to a later time." Interestingly, most procrastinators do not feel that they are acting intentionally. On the contrary, they feel they fully intend to do whatever it is, but they simply cannot, will not, or—bottom line—they do not do it. Procrastinators usually have good reasons for their procrastination: "do not have time," "could not find what I needed,"—the list is never-ending.

Even procrastinators themselves know that the surface reasons for their procrastination are, for the most part, not valid. When procrastination becomes extreme, it is a self-destructive course. However, people feel incapable of stopping it. This perception can become reality if the underlying cause is not uncovered. Experts have identified some of the serious underlying causes of procrastination.

Often procrastination stems from a real or imagined fear or worry that is focused more on the potential consequences of that which is being avoided. For instance, you procrastinate preparing for an oral presentation because you are (1) _____ about forgetting your entire (2) _____ despite your preparation. You are so (3) _____ about doing "a bad job" that you are unable to concentrate on your speech.

Being a perfectionist is one of the main traits that (4) _____ fear and anxiety. Often it is our own harsh judgment of ourselves that creates the problem. We elevate our standards and then critically judge ourselves. When you (5) _____ yourself speaking before a group, are you thinking about how nervous the other students will be as well, or are you comparing your speaking abilities to the anchorperson on the six o'clock news? Concentrating on improving your own past performance, and thinking of specific ways to do so, (6) _____ performance anxiety.

It would seem that the obvious answer to a lack of production is for the procrastinator to find a way to "get motivated." There are situations where lack

of motivation is a (7) _____ of a poor decision. When you seriously do not want to do what is obligatory, you may need to reevaluate your situation. Did you decide to get a degree in a field with a high salary when you really knew you would be happier studying in another area? If so, when you find yourself wasting time instead of being (8) _____, it may be time to reexamine your decision. Setting out to accomplish something difficult when your heart is not in it is often the root cause of self-destructive behavior.

Often procrastination is due to an inability to concentrate or a feeling of being overwhelmed and indecisive. Many experience these feelings during a particularly stressful day or week. The persistence of these feelings; however, indicates that you are in a state of burnout. Burnout is especially likely to occur if you are pushing yourself both physically and mentally and not having time to unwind. Learning to balance your time and set realistic expectations for yourself will prevent burnout.

Sometimes you put off doing something because you literally do not know how to do it. This may be hard to admit to yourself, so you may make other excuses. When you cannot get started on something, consider the possibility that you need help. For example, if you get approval from your favorite instructor for a term paper topic that requires collecting data and creating graphics, you can be (9) _____ if you do not have the necessary skills and tools to do the work. Sometimes it is difficult to ask for help and sometimes it is even hard to recognize that you need help. Being able to (10) _____ personal limitations and seek out support and resources where needed is a skill used everyday by highly successful people.

Comprehension questions: Circle the correct answer.

1. Which of the following most closely expresses the main idea of the essay?
 - a. People who procrastinate need to get motivated.
 - b. Procrastination is unintentional.
 - c. Procrastination can be understood and controlled.
 - d. Some of the world's most famous people have been procrastinators.
2. Procrastinators tend to be
 - a. lazy
 - b. male
 - c. perfectionists
 - d. low achievers

3. Which of the following is **not** mentioned as a cause of procrastination?
 - a. Not being sure how to do something
 - b. Expecting too much of oneself
 - c. Not being sure when a project is due
 - d. Not being motivated

4. According to the authors, inability to concentrate or of feeling overwhelmed and indecisive could be a sign of
 - a. Procrastination
 - b. Physical illness
 - c. Burnout
 - d. Mental instability

5. The authors imply that a tendency to procrastinate
 - a. is always a problem for college students.
 - b. can be controlled easily with several simple steps.
 - c. is something the individual can at least partly control.
 - d. is a sign of more serious problems.

6. To overcome procrastination, the authors suggest all **but** which of the following?
 - a. Set realistic expectations
 - b. Do things that you would enjoy
 - c. Seek out support
 - d. Spend more time on planning

Appendix C

Directions:

There are ten words listed below. Write a sentence for each word which includes the word showing its meaning. Each of your sentences should include more than **seven words**.

| Word | | Meaning | Sentence which uses the word |
|--|-------------|--|------------------------------|
| (a) apprehensive | <i>adj.</i> | afraid | |
| (b) oration | <i>n.</i> | a formal speech, especially one given on a ceremonial occasion | |
| (c) vexed | <i>adj.</i> | worried; distressed | |
| (d) spawn | <i>v.</i> | to cause or create | |
| (e) envision | <i>v.</i> | imagine | |
| (f) abate | <i>v.</i> | decrease; lessen | |
| (g) caveat | <i>n.</i> | a warning or caution | |
| (h) assiduous | <i>adj.</i> | diligent | |
| (i) stymie (mostly used as passive; be+stymied) | <i>v.</i> | to present an obstacle to; stand in the way of | |
| (j) divulge | <i>v.</i> | to make (something secret) known | |
| Note. v: verb, adj: adjective, n: noun. | | | |

*Cultivating awareness in
listening skills through a bottom-
up approach: An exploratory
study*

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Main focus

The need to do this research emerged while I was teaching academic skills to undergraduate students studying English at the preparatory school of English, Çukurova University. They received 8 hours of instruction per week in academic skills sessions. They used a class pack adapted from authentic materials organized in four skills, prepared by the syllabus team of my institution. These materials were a bit more advanced than students' actual levels as the aim was to have the students exposed to the language and use skills to decode the unknown; for this, they used their prior knowledge in English with some tips. For example, to find out the main idea of a listening / reading text, students focused on the words that they already knew while ignoring the words that they do not know. After teaching this class for a month, I became aware that unlike other skills, most of the students had difficulty in doing the listening exercises, which involved note-taking, listening for gist and listening for details. I also observed that students ignored how the words were pronounced. They focused on how the words were spelled, as words in English are not always spelled as they are pronounced, unlike in Turkish. This method helped them remember the words in reading and writing activities, but they were not aware that it hindered their listening skills. Also, their pronunciation was poor while they were reading out loud or speaking in English. To find a solution to this obstacle, I held informal interviews and class discussions and most of the students stated that they had difficulty in identifying the sounds, accents and similar words. They complained that they could not follow the conversations in dialogues as speakers talked too fast. This made them frustrated as they were competing against time while doing the exercises and this created fear for listening to an English text. Bearing all these weaknesses in mind, students were eager to participate in this research.

Background

Listening is an indispensable skill which is needed all the time for acquisition of a language and communication. Although listening is considered a passive skill, it is an important skill to develop other skills (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012); it facilitates a great deal of input while learning a language both in L1 and L2. However, unlike acquiring the language by listening as a child in L1, we do not have the luxury of that time to improve our listening skills in L2 as an adult learner. As a result, we need to use strategies to accelerate learning and the acquisition process by using different techniques according to students' levels of English. Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty (1985) define listening as 'attending to and interpreting oral language. The student should be able to hear oral speech in English, segment the stream of sounds, group them into lexical and syntactic units (words, phrases, sentences), and understand the message they convey' (p. 73). Based on Bowen, et al.'s definition, it can be inferred that pronunciation is important in language teaching because in order to listen and understand one should hear the words first and their pronunciation. Teachers should help their students become aware of the importance of pronunciation by explaining that pronunciation helps one acquire English faster; mastering the basics of English pronunciation at an early stage of learning English will assist the learner to become fluent faster. 'Our ear is so important in this process and focusing on clearly hearing and then speaking the sounds of English leads to large gains in fluency later on' (English Central, 2015, p.1). It is very significant for any English language learner that English is not pronounced as it is spelled (Conti, 2009).

Informing the students about the necessity of pronunciation in language teaching, as soon as it becomes evident it is a problem and reminding them about it from time to time in class, will help raise their awareness. This will facilitate conducting the pronunciation exercises in class. Pronunciation exercises do not only mean having students repeat after the teacher, which could be boring after a while. Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin (1996) explain that pronunciation techniques involve teaching the alphabet, phonemic symbols which represent sounds, doing minimal pairs, practising tongue twisters and singing songs. There are many books available to do these activities. The internet is another source to find activities: Visual aids like watching movies and YouTube videos are beneficial for pronunciation purposes. Since they are authentic materials, students are exposed to the real language and develop an ear for the language. First, learners hear sounds then words, after that phrases and finally sentences. In summary, what learners go through during this process is like a 'bottom up process', 'using bits to make the whole' (Ak, 2012, p. 13). As

Ak states, ‘listening involves processing’ and the other process is ‘top-down process’, which is ‘inferring message from the contextual clues with the help of background knowledge’ (p. 14). Teachers use either top down or bottom up, according to students’ needs.

Research questions

- 1) To what extent can my students differentiate the sounds, the accents and similar words in listening practice?
- 2) How can I help my students improve their listening skills through identifying different sounds, accents and similar words in listening practices?
- 3) Do my interventions affect my students’ performances in listening practice?

Research methodology

Based on students’ reported problems and needs and my observations in class, I considered that some interventions could be alternative practices to my students’ needs. Rost (1991) proposes that effective listening is a complex process, which might require various skills listed below:

- 1) Discriminating between sounds
- 2) Recognizing words
- 3) Identifying grammatical grouping of words
- 4) Identifying “pragmatic units” –sets of utterances which function as whole units to create meaning.

With these four steps in mind, I designed my interventions and I followed the order seen in the table below.

Table 1: Interventions

| Blocks | Interventions |
|--------------|--|
| First block | Teaching and revising phonetics Memorizing tongue twisters /songs |
| Second block | Doing listening activities from different websites Assigning listening activities as homework |
| Third block | Watching videos from YouTube Assigning listening activities as homework |
| Fourth block | Watching films Assigning listening activities as homework (watching the news) |

Settings

The academic year in my institution consists of four blocks and each block lasts eight weeks. Elementary level students receive 24 hours of instruction per week; 16 hours are allocated for course book study and eight hours for academic skills. Teaching the course book and academic skills is shared among the teachers, and my responsibility during the research period was to teach academic skills for eight hours per week. The research started in the fifth week of the first block (when I identified the problem) and continued until the end of the fourth block.

Participants

The research started with 25 students in the fifth week of the first block but unfortunately eight of them dropped out of the course for personal reasons. Fortunately, the other 17 students took an active part in the research until the end of the fourth block. They were from different backgrounds and departments. Although most of the students did poorly in listening exercises, a few of the students were better. Through informal talks during the breaks, I discovered that these students had already developed an ear for English, as they had been watching English movies and documentaries with Turkish subtitles and listening to English songs in their free time.

My interventions

The first block

In the first block, I started teaching them how to identify and pronounce vowels and consonants in the English alphabet and their functions in words. I made use of pronunciation activities provided by their course book as well as the activities provided by two websites (http://busyteacher.org/classroom_activities-pronunciation/homophones-worksheets/ and <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-pronunciation-activities>). In addition, students listened to a pronunciation poem on YouTube. Furthermore, I had students listen to tongue twisters and then memorize them. They also recorded their voice to listen to themselves afterwards. They posted these recordings on their class Facebook group for the rest of the class to listen to; this encouraged them to pay attention to each other's pronunciation. Another activity was using songs.

I encouraged my students to prepare their own song activity and share it with their friends.

The second block

In the second block, for students' listening comprehension skills, I introduced them to a listening activity website called 'esl -lab' (www.esl-lab.com), where the listening activities are graded as easy, medium and difficult. These activities were designed for different situations; they consisted of not only multiple-choice comprehension questions but also practice of note-taking and using relevant vocabulary in a listening context. Because of my students' level, I had them do the more appropriate, lower-level exercises at the end of each class session. I also assigned some listening activities for them to do in their spare time outside school as it was not possible to finish all the activities during the class hours. To my surprise, most of the students in my class finished all the listening activities in the section I had assigned during their spring break.

The third block

In the third block, I continued doing extra listening activities by having students watch YouTube videos at least three times a week; they loved doing this. I selected these videos according to students' interests. I watched these videos in advance to decide whether the language level of the videos was appropriate and whether the theme of the videos was suitable. As an assignment, they listened to a TED talk outside class. Since all my students have smart phones, they could access these talks easily. I let my students choose the talks according to their interests. I wanted them to take responsibility.

The fourth block

In the last block, students watched English films without English subtitles towards the end of each session. While watching the films I had students write down as many words, phrases or sentences as they could hear. Also, I chose some sentences from the script of the films and had students fill in the blanks with a word or phrase while watching. Towards the end of the 4th block, to collect data I gave the students learning logs where they could reflect on the effects of the listening activities I implemented in class. After that, I prepared 7 questions, based on the written reflections of the students, to consolidate data.

Findings and discussion

I classified the reflections of the students under emerging themes at the end of the research. They are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Positive Outcomes of My Interventions

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Pronunciation (awareness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I became familiar with the pronunciation of different words. • My pronunciation changed. |
| Accent (awareness) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can identify words with different accents. • I realized that the most important factor affecting our understanding of listening activities is accent, pronunciation, and clarity of the words. |
| Pace of speech/ dialogues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I learned to identify key words in fast dialogues and take notes. |
| Vocabulary Range | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I improved my range of vocabulary. • I can use new words in my sentences. • I created my own dictionary. • I learn different words in each listening activity. • Practising with subtitles, seeing the word while hearing helps me remember more |
| Note-taking skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can take proper notes as I know the pronunciation of words. • I can take better notes. |
| Favourite listening activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esl-lab activities, songs, watching films, watching videos from YouTube. |
| Listening comprehension | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can understand a listening text more than I used to. • I'm better at listening now. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I became more interested in English songs and films. • I became more enthusiastic. • I can focus on the listening more than I used to. • I am more enthusiastic about doing listening activities, even difficult ones too. |
| Students' suggestions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While watching a film or series with subtitles, make a note of the words and then find their meanings you re-inforce the meaning as the same words come up in other series or films. • Do vocabulary revision before going to bed. • Do listening according to your interests. • Do different listening activities. • Do listening activities with multiple choice questions. |

As shown in the table, there has been an improvement in students' listening skills, in terms of identifying words with different accents, following the pace of the dialogues, and taking better notes. Additionally, students' pronunciation of the words improved as well as their range of vocabulary. Most students also became more eager to do listening activities than they did before. Students became aware of the fact that watching films videos and doing listening activities according to their interests helped them do better in listening activities and they recommended this to other students. Furthermore, I wrote my reflections about my interventions into the process. This is also presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Practitioner's reflections

| Blocks | Reflections |
|-------------------------|--|
| The First Block | Students were happy to take action to improve their listening skills. They did not like memorizing the tongue twisters and listening to their voice after recording, but they never got tired of doing song activities. |
| The Second Block | Students started to hear and identify the words and accents and then comprehend the sentences more than during the first block. They were also aware of their progress too. |
| The Third Block | I observed that my action research participants started to do better in listening exercises compared to my students who I was teaching in other classes. |
| The Fourth Block | Students did not mind watching the YouTube videos or films without a subtitle. Watching films and YouTube videos was not a burden to them. They were more confident in doing the listening practices at their level. Exploring the language beyond their level was not as frustrating as it was before. According to students' reported reflections, these revealed that there had been a significant improvement in students' listening skills, in terms of identifying the pronunciation of the words and accents, pace of speech, vocabulary range, note-taking, comprehension and overcoming the fear of listening to authentic materials. Students also did well in the listening sections of their Achievement I and Achievement II exams. There was a decrease in the listening score of all the students in Achievement III but their listening score increased in Achievement IV and eventually 17 of the students passed their proficiency exam in June. |

Table 3 presents my reflections on my interventions, block by block, as a teacher researcher while the students were going through the research process. Starting from the second block, I observed that students began to enjoy doing the listening tasks as they were aware of their progress. In the third block

they gained confidence, as they were not afraid of doing listening activities. In the fourth block, listening to authentic materials was not an obstacle for the students. They could use the skills that they learned during this process. All in all, my interventions as a researcher and the students' enthusiasm during this process contributed to their success.

Reflections and looking into the future

The results of my interventions in the class were rewarding for me both as a teacher and a researcher. First, working with students was very motivating, which made carrying out the research easier. Second, I realized that the students appreciated what was being done for them and most of them did their best to take part in the activities both in and outside class. This research developed a bond between me and the students and among the students too. This is something very important for classroom management. Third, I also observed that doing activities for action research broke the class routine for a positive change. They did not see these extra activities as a burden. Finally, both the students and I became aware that 'practice makes perfect'. We will keep this in mind as our motto.

Doing action research has put another plus to my professional development as a teacher researcher. Searching the literature before and during the research contributed to my academic knowledge and helped to inspire ideas about the next research topics. Now I strongly believe that 'a problem well stated is a problem half-solved'. Therefore, I will be more sensitive and observant of my students' weaknesses in class and take action accordingly in the future. Also, I will encourage my colleagues to be teacher researchers.

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Empowering teacher-researchers, empowering learners

Edited by

Gary Barkhuizen, Anne Burns, Kenan Dikilitaş and Mark Wyatt

This book reports on research that matters to teachers. It matters because the researchers are teachers and teacher-research mentors who have inquired about topics that are important to them, their classrooms, and their learners. The chapters describe the methods used to explore these topics and they present the outcomes of the inquiry. The authors also reflect on the research process itself. As such the book has universal appeal and the potential to empower teacher-researchers well beyond its covers.

Gary Barkhuizen is professor of applied linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and research fellow at the University of the Free State, South Africa. His work in language teacher education focuses on narrative research approaches to inquiring about teaching and learning. He has published extensively in this field.

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Mark Wyatt (Department of English, Khalifa University) has interests in language teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, teacher motivation, teacher cognition and the benefits of practitioner research for both language teachers and their learners. He co-edits ELT Research.

