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Influences of Curriculum on Novice Teacher Cognition: a Help or a Hindrance?

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Abstract: This study investigates how novice English as a foreign language teachers (EFL) navigate their teaching in a university setting while attending an in-service teacher training program to improve their teaching skills. The purpose is to explore the influences of the curriculum followed at an intensive English program on novice teachers' cognitions. Two Turkish novice teachers of English took part in this study, in which qualitative data collection was employed. Findings revealed that the teachers encountered certain challenges in realizing the curriculum objectives. These included confusions regarding the curriculum followed in their teaching context and tensions between their beliefs and practices while realizing the curriculum objectives which prevented them from teaching in line with their beliefs. The study also found that the teachers responded to the curriculum requirements in classrooms in different ways mostly compromising their own beliefs. The teachers' classroom practices coupled with the influences of the curriculum on their beliefs and practices indicated that the curriculum was a hindrance for them rather than a help. This calls for a more inclusive approach to curriculum development. The study suggests that institutions should encourage teachers' participation in decision-making processes of curriculum development and implementation. Otherwise, teachers will feel disempowered in the interpretation and application of the curriculum in their teaching contexts.

Introduction

With the growing interest in exploring teachers' mental lives over the last 30 years (Borg, 2006), there has been a fundamental change in the way the work of teachers is interpreted in educational research. Until the mid-1970s, teachers were considered to be people who mastered and readily applied a set of general principles and theories developed by experts (Freeman, 2002). Thus, general educational research focused on the causal link between teachers' behaviors and student learning. However, with the advent of constructivism and cognitive psychology in the mid-70s, a new body of research that viewed teachers as the cornerstone of the teaching process emerged (Fang, 1996; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). The new paradigm acknowledged teachers' role as active decision-makers who could construct their own workable theories (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). This made understanding

¹ This article is a part of the first author's MA thesis completed at Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus.

of these cognitive processes crucial and paved the way for research on teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Teacher cognition is defined as “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Studies on teacher cognition aim to explore the beliefs teachers hold about their pedagogical practices and uncover the factors that inform those beliefs. They also examine the relationship between teachers’ belief systems and their instructional practices.

Exploring second language novice teachers’ cognition is yet a relatively neglected domain of inquiry (Farrell, 2008). Borg (2010) maintains that “experientially we know a lot because we all work with these people but empirically in terms of research not much has been published” (p. 88). Among the existing studies, most focused on the challenges novice teachers face in their first years of teaching (e.g., Farrell, 2012). In fact, first-year teachers’ experiences are often described using such terms as frustrations, complexities and tensions (e.g., Farrell, 2003; Richards & Pennington, 1998). The existing literature also indicates that novice teachers are not adequately prepared for dealing with these problems. Although novice teachers’ problems are well-documented in literature, there is a paucity of research focusing specifically on how curricula followed in teaching contexts shape or reshape novice teachers’ teaching beliefs and practices.

The present study adopts the term “teacher cognition” to cover all the mental constructs of teaching that guide teachers’ meaning making and decision-making processes as well as instructional actions. The study was carried out in an Intensive English Program. These programs aim to prepare students for their English-medium academic studies. They provide teachers with structured guidelines regarding the manner and content of the instruction. That is, teachers are expected to follow a curriculum, which this study operationalizes as a set of teaching principles and norms that regulate the content, execution and process of teaching. Given that contextual factors are among the key influences shaping these teachers’ beliefs and teaching practices (Flores & Day, 2006), the present study seeks to elaborate on these factors and give voice to the perspectives of first-year teachers on the curriculum implemented in an intensive English program. The study aims to explore novice teachers’ teaching beliefs and practices and the influences of the curriculum on the way they develop a practice of language teaching. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the literature on novice teacher experiences in such English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts as Turkey and Northern Cyprus, which face an increasing demand for English-medium instruction at a university level (Kırkgöz, 2009).

Research on Teachers’ Beliefs

Research on teacher cognition shows that beliefs are influential in how teachers approach teaching and learning and what they do in the classroom (Pajares, 1992; Richards, 1996). Beliefs and practices, however, may not necessarily correspond (e.g., Lee, 2008). In her comprehensive review of the research on the correspondence between beliefs and practices, Baştürkmen (2012) indicates that other issues can prevent teachers from putting their beliefs into practice. These include contextual factors (e.g., institutional, curricular and social) and teachers’ teaching experiences.

As regards the sources of teachers beliefs, research suggests that there are three main factors. These include teachers’ prior language learning experiences (Farrell, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Yigitoglu & Belcher, 2014), formal teacher education and training (Borg, 2011; Debreli, 2012; Kurihira & Samimy, 2007; Lamie, 2001) and teachers’ own language teaching experiences (B. Flores, 2001; Yang & Gao, 2013). These sources may all have a share in the formation of teachers’ beliefs or one might outweigh the others. That is, teachers are affected

by these sources in unique ways and form highly personalized educational theories which are reflected in their classroom practices.

Novice Teachers' Beliefs and Experiences

The term *novice teacher* is frequently used in teacher cognition studies to refer to beginning teachers. However, as Farrell (2012) points out, there is no general consensus on the definition of a novice teacher in literature. For the purposes of this study, a novice teacher was defined as a teacher who has entered an established teaching context for the first time and who has less than two years of teaching.

Literature on novice teachers suggests that the first year of teaching has a crucial role in the future careers of beginning teachers (e.g., Farrell, 2008). If these teachers are left alone to deal with their problems and carry out new responsibilities without any support from the school and colleagues, they may feel ineffective and even leave the profession in their initial years of teaching (Farrell, 2012; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Hence, exploring novice teachers' experiences is significant as it might contribute to "better understanding of their needs, their expectations and their commitment, and help to provide them with meaningful opportunities for professional development" (Flores, 2001).

A perusal of the literature on first-year teachers reveals a number of focus areas. These involve novice teacher socialization (Farrell, 2003; Hayes, 2008), factors influencing novice teachers' beliefs and practices (Akbulut, 2007; Farrell, 2006; Urmston & Pennigton, 2008) and changes in these teachers' beliefs and practices while they are learning to teach (Erkmen, 2014; Kang & Cheng, 2013). The existing studies were mostly conducted in secondary schools adopting a qualitative approach. The ultimate aim of these studies was to gain insights into novice teachers' beliefs, behaviours, experiences, challenges and conflicts in their first year of teaching.

These studies reveal that novice teachers face difficulties in relation to classroom management, foreign language learning and teaching (e.g., appropriate methodology; use of teaching materials), professional support (i.e., lack of administrative, collegial and mentor support) and contextual realities of their teaching environment (e.g., exam-oriented education, a set syllabus) in their initial years of teaching. Owing to these problems, novice teachers might abandon the practices they believe to be right and adopt the established routines in their workplaces. The changes in their practices, however, may not necessarily lead to changes in their beliefs and vice versa. As such, it can be argued that novice teachers' beliefs are still in the process of formation at the end of their first year of teaching and that teacher education programs fail to equip novice teachers with the necessary skills for smooth transition to life in real classrooms.

A closer look at the studies reveals that they all acknowledge the profound impact of context on the beliefs and practices of first-year teachers. However, scant attention has been paid to the influences of the curriculum followed in first-year teachers' working environment on their beliefs and teaching practices. In addition, the majority of the novice teacher cognition studies are on secondary school teachers, which suggests that further research is needed in other educational contexts. English Preparatory Programs offer one-year courses of intensive English preparation in universities for all incoming students who failed to pass a preliminary English-proficiency examination (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005) and are one such context that requires additional exploration. These programs follow structured curricula aiming to help students use English internationally in different fields. As such, it is highly likely that novice teachers working at these programs have individual problems and context-specific needs. Therefore, the present study attempts to delve deep into the contextual

factors by taking an in-depth look into how novice teachers' beliefs and practices are mediated by the curriculum implemented at an established university setting. Knowledge of such an interplay is needed to provide insights into the professional needs of these teachers in their early years of teaching so that they can better negotiate the school culture and adapt to their teaching environment. The present study is intended to contribute to this goal by discussing whether the participants consider the curriculum and established practices followed in their teaching context as a help or a hindrance. The study addresses the following questions:

1. What are novice EFL teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching?
2. How does the curriculum followed in Intensive English Programs influence novice EFL teachers' teaching beliefs and practices?
3. How do novice EFL teachers respond to curriculum requirements in classrooms?

Methodology

This study adopted a case study design. Creswell (1998) defines case study as “an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p. 61). With in-depth portrayal of the participants and the context, insights gained from case studies can be constructed as tentative hypothesis that help structure future research (Merriam, 1998). This study employed a multiple case study design to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' views and experiences within their own contextual conditions providing different perspectives of the issue.

Context

The study was conducted at an English preparatory program in a state university founded with a special law in Northern Cyprus. The university is tied to its main campus in Turkey in all academic and administrative affairs. Increasing number of universities both in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus brings out a growing demand for teachers (see Selvi, 2014). This makes it inevitable to have novice teachers working in university settings. Intensive English Programs aim to equip students with the necessary language skills and prepare them for their English-medium academic studies. The context of this study recruits novice teachers both from Turkey and Northern Cyprus and provides them with an in-service teacher education program called ICELT² (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching) in their first year of teaching. The novice teachers attend the ICELT course to improve their language teaching skills while teaching English at SFL. At the time of the study, teachers had 20 hours of instruction per week. The study focused on the pre-intermediate (PIN) level curriculum since all the novice teachers were teaching this level at the time of the study. For investigative purposes, the study limited itself to investigating the reading, speaking and writing components of the program focusing on teachers' use of instructional materials (i.e., reading materials, grammar hand-outs, the coursebook and the code-set for written feedback) and their teaching practices for each component.

² ICELT is a course offered by Cambridge English, part of the University of Cambridge aiming to develop teachers' language skills, teaching knowledge and teaching practice in their current workplace. (see <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/272248-course-certificate-in-icelt-overview.pdf> for further information.)

Participants

The study used both convenience and purposive sampling. There were two basic criteria in selecting the participants. These were having participants without any teaching experience in an established school culture and having at least one participant from alternative teaching certificate programs to be able to better reflect the novice teacher profile in the research context. To select the focal participants, we explained the purpose and procedures of this study to five newly-recruited novice teachers. Among them, two teachers did not wish to participate in the study and one of them expressed her reservations regarding the intensive data collection process. Consequently, the study was conducted with two novice teachers with different educational backgrounds. The participants were Turkish non-native speakers of English. Both were in their 20s. In addition to their first semester at the program, one of them had 9 month’s teaching experience as a part-time teacher at a private language course. The teacher stated that the institution she worked for did not provide her with a programme or any kind of teaching materials and they were not following any official curriculum. As such, she does not consider this as a genuine teaching experience. However, it must be noted that the choice of the participants might still have influenced the results of the study. Both participants were attending the ICELT course at the time of the study. They were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The Table 1 provides demographic information about the participant teachers.

| Teacher | Age | BA | Graduation Year | Teaching Experience |
|---------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ash | 24 | Translation and Interpretation ELT | 2011 | - |
| Elif | 25 | | 2011 | 9 months at a private language course |

Table 1: Participants

Data Collection

For investigative purposes, this study focused on specific components of the programme based on the materials provided by the institution to realize curriculum objectives. These included an in-house published reading book, the course book, in-house published grammar hand-outs and the code-set for written feedback (samples can be seen in the appendices). The study used data and method triangulation (Denzin, 1978) to increase “scope, depth and consistency” in the results (Flick, 2009, p. 445) The table below summarizes the methods used for each component.

| Components investigated | Data Collection Methods Used |
|-------------------------|---|
| Reading & Speaking | 1- Semi-structured interviews 2- Observations 3- Stimulated-recall interviews 4- Final reflective interviews |
| Written Feedback | 1- Think-aloud protocol 2- Final reflective interviews |

Table 2: Stages and foci of data collection methods

Before each classroom observation, pre-observation interviews were conducted with each participant for reading and speaking components of the programme. The goal of these interviews was to explore the participants teaching beliefs and the factors mediating their instructional decisions. During the interviews, the participants were encouraged to reflect

upon their lesson plans (i.e., their intentions of how to conduct their lessons based on their beliefs about teaching that topic) and their experiences while preparing the lessons. All the interviews were held in Turkish. They were transcribed verbatim immediately after being carried out. Then, the participants were observed in the classroom. The observations enabled the collection of data regarding what was happening in the classroom to develop in-depth understanding of the participants' actions and behaviors in their natural settings. Finally, this was complemented by follow-up interviews that helped to uncover the reasons for possible differences between the participants' self-reported beliefs and their actual practices. The observations were analyzed and the written episodes were used as stimuli for the follow-up interviews. The goal of the stimulated recall interviews was to "facilitate the discussion and analysis of teachers' actions and rationales" (Borg, 2006, p. 211). During these interviews, the participants were provided with written transcripts of particular instructional episodes from audio-recorded lessons to elicit their commentaries on these classroom events. The interviews were also transcribed verbatim.

To get an in-depth understanding regarding the written-feedback practices, think-aloud protocols were conducted to see the way the participants used the code-set provided by the institution. The think-aloud protocols were transcribed verbatim, and the collected data provided a base for the interview regarding the written-feedback practices expected by the institution. As for the last phase, final interviews were conducted. During these interviews, the participants were provided with the syllabus objectives for each component, and they were encouraged to reflect upon their practices considering these objectives. Given that the syllabus objectives were in fact the institutional expectations to be realized by the materials used for each investigated teaching component, these interviews were thought to be necessary for the purposes of this study. The interviews were also transcribed verbatim, and all the collected data were compiled and filed separately for analysis.

Data Analysis

This study utilized qualitative data analysis adopting the principles of "grounded theory" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researchers did not have any pre-set beliefs before the analysis. Once the data collection process ended, the interview transcripts were read and the data was coded manually. Afterwards, through iterative reading, connections between the codes were made. This process involved making annotations on the textual data to identify recurring themes and discover emerging categories. Then, the data forming the emerging categories for each investigated teaching component were extracted and moved to another document and they were placed in charts. Through constant comparative analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), commonalities and differences both among the investigated components and between the participants were identified. Finally, the categories were further analyzed, and the data were organized into overarching themes. Observational data and think-aloud protocols, on the other hand, were re-visited and re-examined for recurring themes, and thereby key instructional episodes related to the emerging themes were noted down. Once the coding process was completed, the emerging themes and categories were organized according to their relevance to the research questions. After the most relevant and salient categories were established, they were listed under each theme.

Results

Teachers' Beliefs about Learning and Teaching

Both teachers reported that they favoured a student-centred and communicative way of language teaching because they thought people could only learn a language by actively using it. For Asli, "in an ideal dream world, people learn English like it is a big fun game. And they learn it to communicate, not to use it for a specific purpose." She believed that students should be given sufficient time to make meaning of the language themselves and to practice it so that they can internalize the language. Similarly, Elif believed "learning English should be experimental, you know, by taking risks and in a relaxed environment where there is meaningful communication". She thought students should be encouraged to actively participate in the learning process and take responsibility for their own learning. While reflecting on their roles in the classroom, the teachers both indicated that they would like to see themselves as facilitators who guide students and encourage discovery learning.

The teachers' strong belief in communicative language teaching was closely related to their personal histories as language learners. For Asli, her strong belief in communicative language teaching (CLT) stemmed from the fact that she had learnt the language this way. She said there was a lot of pair-work and discussions in her language classes and her teachers put great emphasis on both oral and written production. Therefore, she believed that she "internalized the language" as a learner "by actively using it for many years."

Elif, on the other hand, tended to refer to her experiences both as a language learner and a student-teacher while reflecting upon her experiences of teaching in her first year. The teacher reported that she came from "a poor-quality high school of the Turkish education system" where she had never participated in a group discussion. In fact, she had never been asked to share her ideas about anything until university. Therefore, in her pre-service education years, she believed that, as a teacher, she should "respect student autonomy" and "avoid acting as an authority" in the classroom. As such, it was evident that prior to entering teaching, she had pre-existing beliefs about being a teacher, which were mediated by her negative experiences as a language learner. Her beliefs were further reinforced by her pre-service education, where CLT was promoted. In her words, "in high school, I knew something was wrong but I could not put a finger on it. We had no context to make connections. So, of course it is the university, the courses and the teachers who favored CLT" that shaped my beliefs about learning and teaching.

The teachers also reported that their beliefs about teaching were greatly influenced by the in-service teacher education program (ICELT) they were attending at the time of the study. For Asli, the main reason was that the course enabled her to become more aware of what she was doing in the lessons and could better cater for her students' needs. Since the teaching principles promoted by the course were in line with how she was taught English, she tended to view ICELT principles as an ideal way of teaching a language. The course confirmed her existing beliefs about teaching and presumably led to her further adherence to them. As for Elif, similarly, the course was beneficial in that it helped her gain a better understanding of how to get students to discover and make meaning of language items without emphasizing the rules. The course also enabled her to put her theoretical knowledge into practice.

On the other hand, the results showed that the teachers were not able to put their beliefs about teaching into practice. They felt disempowered by the discrepancy between what they believed, what they were expected to do and what they ended up doing in their classrooms. The following section is aimed at explaining the reasons behind this by taking a closer look at the curriculum principles the teachers were required to follow in their teaching context on their beliefs and practices and their responses to these in classrooms.

The Influences of Curriculum on Beliefs and Practices

Confusion

First of all, the novice teachers were confused with the skill-specific expectations of the curriculum components under study. For example, Elif stated that she had a lot of difficulties while preparing reading lessons as she did not know what to prioritize in her instruction. Similarly, Aslı expressed her concerns by saying “There is no teachers’ manual to guide us or to tell us what to focus on while covering the texts”. As for the writing component, both teachers stated that they were not guided in the use of the written feedback code-set provided by the institution, which made them doubt their practices in the course of time. In the speaking component, the teachers’ confusion stemmed from the disparity, as they claimed, between the syllabus aims and the tasks used in the lessons as well as the disparity between the aims and assessment. They said these tasks prevented them from achieving the speaking objectives. For example, in the lessons where they covered the course book and grammar-handouts, they prioritized accuracy since the handouts were full of mechanical exercises and the parts in the course book where students could produce language were mostly omitted in the programme. The teachers also claimed that the language structures that were used in speaking objectives were actually tested in the grammar component of the exams and that speaking assessment itself did not directly test the students’ ability to use the language structures that were originally used in the speaking objectives. Therefore, both teachers felt that speaking objectives were in fact too far-fetched and not realistic.

The teachers’ uncertainty about skill-specific expectations also had impacts on their teaching practices. They developed further confusions about the methodology they employed in the teaching of certain skills. For example, while reflecting on how they prepared reading lessons, both teachers stated that since they were not guided properly as to what they were expected to focus on in their reading instructions, they did not have a structured methodology while exploiting the reading texts. The confusion about teaching methodology also had negative effects on the teachers’ perceptions of their instructional practices. For example, Elif stated that she was experiencing a lot of stress before the reading lessons since she believed that there could be a better way of teaching that she did not know of. This led the teacher to feel concerned about the effectiveness of the instructional decisions she made before the lessons resulting in her describing some of her teaching practices (e.g., extra materials/activities) as “not that to the point and beneficial”.

Tension

The curriculum to be implemented in the research setting also caused tensions between the teachers’ beliefs and practices. That is, there were divergences between what they believed and what they felt they needed to do in the classroom as well as divergences between what they believed and what they were required to do in classroom. The areas in which the participants faced complications were the required course content, principles of CLT and use of first language (L1) in EFL classrooms.

As for the required course content, both teachers expressed their reservations regarding what they were expected to cover in reading and grammar lessons. Aslı expressed her concerns saying “I feel like there are such good reading materials that could open up their minds, but we do not use them”. The teachers both viewed this as restricting and expressed the need to introduce students to different text types and genres. In addition, they had complaints about the grammar topics included in the handouts. The teachers both believed that students could only acquire such advanced grammar points as participle clauses (e.g., Lacking the necessary qualifications, he was not considered for the job.) as they got

acquainted with the language. In Elif's words, "there needs to be room for incidental learning given that the students will continue learning English in their departments".

Another complication concerned communicative teaching methodology, which the school strongly encouraged the teachers to adopt via the in-service teacher education sessions and programs like ICELT. Although the teachers wished to comply with the principles of the institution, they found it difficult to make certain aspects of their teaching communicative. This, as the teachers stated, was a result of a discrepancy between the methodology they were advised to follow and the materials they were provided to this end. For example, the teachers argued that the in-class grammar hand-outs to teach certain language structures were not even remotely communicative in nature. This resulted in an inevitable change in their original aims to be the facilitator of learning in the classroom, which the communicative approach proposes as a role for teachers. Instead, they just became the source of information and their teaching became prescriptive. Moreover, the teachers both admitted that they were not able to include enough activities requiring production and student interaction in their classes due to time constraints, the prescribed syllabus and exam-oriented instruction in their institution.

Although the teachers had similar complaints in this respect, their protests varied in strength. For example, although Elif found it problematic, she did not find it realistic to follow a totally communicative approach in her teaching context. When she was asked to reflect upon her feelings about her role as a teacher, she said "in this system it is impossible to think of being a facilitator since there is not that much room for discovery learning and tolerance for student mistakes in this system". Aslı, on the other hand, was relatively more resistant to the system. She was trying to keep the balance between the circumstances, curricular practices and her own beliefs. She said, "I have to stretch between the school and the student to help students catch up with the syllabus while trying to meet the school's expectations as much as possible".

It seems that, when faced with the contextual factors explained before, Elif tended to become more lenient towards compromising her ideals. This does not necessarily mean that she completely abandoned her beliefs about teaching English communicatively. In fact, due to her negative experiences as a language learner, this teacher still favored CLT. However, when she had difficulties in putting what she acquired in theory into practice, as in many other teacher cognition studies (e.g., Kang & Cheng, 2013), she tended to practice what she experienced rather than what she had studied.

The last area of tension concerned the teachers' use of L1 (mother tongue which was Turkish in this context) in their classrooms. Both teachers stated that they were expected to expose students to as much English as possible in their teaching context. Their beliefs about the use of L1 in language classrooms, however, differed. Elif seemed to favor the idea that there should be some room for the learners' mother tongue in language classrooms. She viewed "Turkish as a tool available to resort to" when she felt the need. Aslı, however, was less lenient with the use of L1. She said she did not want her students to depend on Turkish explanations in the lessons.

Although the teachers had different attitudes towards the use of L1, they both resorted to Turkish particularly in grammar lessons and they were unhappy about this. For Aslı, since her beliefs were in line with the institutional expectations, she said "I feel guilty because I feel responsible before the school". As such, the tension was caused by the difference between her belief and teaching practice. On the other hand, although Elif believed in the benefit of using L1 in facilitating language learning and teaching, she was also uncomfortable with resorting to her mother tongue in the lessons. It seemed that her use of L1 had led her to question her teaching practices given that she was asking questions to herself like "Am I cutting corners using Turkish - Am I taking the easy way out?" after these lessons. Although Elif did not explicitly relate her feelings to the institutional expectations regarding the use of

L1, her doubts about her teaching practices suggest that her beliefs about effective teaching might have been influenced by the professional development and ICELT sessions as well as administrative meetings where use of second language was promoted. As such, the tension she was experiencing resulted from the difference between her belief and institutional expectations.

Teachers' Classroom Practices

The influences of the curriculum principles explained above led the novice teachers to adapt and adjust their teaching in certain ways. Data collected from observations and think-aloud protocols revealed that the teachers responded to the curriculum principles in the classroom in three ways.

Compliance

First of all, data showed that the teachers adapted their ideals and instructional practices to the institutional requirements rather than keeping with their own beliefs and teaching accordingly. Such compliance surfaced especially in reading and speaking components of the programme. Firstly, as discussed previously, both teachers had complaints regarding having to teach academic texts only. They thought it was important that the students be introduced to other text types and encouraged to think critically so that they could improve their reading skills. Moreover, while reflecting upon their ideal reading lesson, the teachers both cited post-reading activities as part of these lessons. However, data from the classroom observations revealed that neither any other text types nor any post-reading activities were incorporated into their lessons. Elif's comments about the issue might explain the underlying reason behind the teachers' decisions in this respect: "There is no room for these [other text types/critical thinking] in the syllabus. Students are not responsible for them, so it is like why should they bother?". As the statement suggests, the teachers compromised their beliefs about ideal reading instruction and adopted practices that were dictated by the institutional material employed in their teaching contexts.

Similarly, the teachers also complied with institutional requirements for the speaking component of the programme in certain ways. Although the teachers both had expressed their belief in the benefit of production stage activities for their students' language development, they did not use these activities in the lessons where they used the course book. They both stated that if such tasks were omitted in the given syllabus, they just did so. Nevertheless, if they were optional, the teachers had different reasons for not incorporating them into their lessons. For Asli, the main reason was her students' negative attitude towards these activities. Since she believed the students would not do the activities requiring interaction and collaboration, she sometimes omitted the optional tasks as well. Elif, however, was concerned about the exams. She said given that the production stage activities did not have immediate effects on her students' performance in the exams, she replaced them with grammar or vocabulary revision practices. This suggests that the school realities (i.e., negative student attitude and exams) as well as the institutional requirements regarding the omission of production stage activities had a major role in the teachers' instructional decisions. These reflections show that the teachers could not translate their beliefs into practice especially in reading and main course lessons but conformed to the institutional requirements (e.g., following the prescribed syllabus and teaching materials.)

Mediation

For certain aspects of their language instruction, the teachers tried to resolve the tensions between their beliefs and the curriculum principles that manifested themselves in teaching materials/tools followed in their teaching context. Regarding written feedback practices, as explained before, the teachers were expected to indicate students' mistakes using the code-set provided by the institution. However, data collected from think-aloud protocols showed that in addition to the codes specified for certain language mistakes, the teachers used their own ways of making students realize their mistakes. For example, they provided extra clues next to the codes (e.g., purpose or result?) (Aslı, written feedback) to show that there was a problem with the choice of the connector (e.g., There are not many discipline problems in small classes so that teachers and students will experience less stress.) or they wrote questions on students' papers rather than using codes to help them do self-correction (e.g., a or the?, is this an obligation?, what is the adj form?) (Elif, written feedback). When reminded of such instances, the teachers said they frequently adopted these strategies since they believed the codes on their own might not be sufficient for most of their students to correct their mistakes and that these additional remarks made their feedback more interactive. These suggest that they were keeping with their beliefs about their students' needs while at the same time fulfilling the institutional requirements about not providing direct correction on student papers.

The teachers also tried to reconcile their beliefs and the institutional constraints caused by the teaching materials in grammar lessons. They indicated that the grammar handouts did not include contexts for the teaching of target language structures. The input parts, as they reported, consisted only of sentence-level examples and rules. However, the teachers turned this handicap into an opportunity to translate their beliefs into practice. It was observed that, in line with their beliefs, the teachers tried to teach grammar through meaningful contexts to help students understand the target language items. This shows that even though they felt restricted due to the task types they used in class, the teachers were still keeping with their beliefs about how to introduce grammar to a certain extent.

Deviation

The teachers also overlooked some of the institutional requirements and behaved in a way that contradicted what they were expected to do in class. First of all, the teachers both resorted to Turkish, especially in the grammar lessons. For example, while covering the modals hand-out, they provided Turkish translations of the target language structures (i.e., need not have done/ did not have to – be supposed to/would rather) and their explanations took up a huge part of the lessons. For Aslı, this was because she had run out of ways to paraphrase the modals in English to make them clearer to the students. Elif, however, believed it was "practical" to use L1 to help students understand the function of the modals she taught in the lesson. As discussed before, this teacher was more lenient with the use of Turkish in class and thought it enabled students to have a firmer grasp of the language items. The teachers' statements suggest that since they had limited time allotted for the language structures in the given syllabus, they felt the need to ensure their students' understanding of the grammar points, which eventually made them use L1. It is important to note that the use of L1 was a more salient feature of Elif's lessons. This shows that the teachers were keeping with their beliefs about the issue. That is, Aslı deviated from the expected practice only because she felt forced to do so due to the contextual factors. Elif, however, was doing the same because she believed in the benefit of judicious amount of mother tongue in the lessons.

Another form of deviation from the institutional requirements was related to the teachers' explicit emphasis on form while teaching grammar. Both teachers wrote grammar rules on the boards in a formulaic way while covering certain grammar handouts (e.g., should have+V3, needn't have+V3, be supposed to+V1). In the follow-up interviews, they provided similar reasons for their instructional decisions. Asli said that even though she knew ICELT trainers would criticize her for teaching that way, she felt forced to be prescriptive to avoid misunderstandings in class. Elif, likewise, explained her reason in the following way: "I always feel that when students see the rule, they feel more comfortable". The teacher added that since the students' use of wrong form of the verbs after the modals was "an unforgivable mistake in this system", she felt obliged to underline the rules in class. The teachers' responses suggest that they could not disregard the demand to prepare their students for the exams although this contradicted their teaching beliefs and the way they were encouraged to teach in class. As such, it can be argued that the teachers followed certain ways of teaching not because they thought that these were ideal teaching practices but because these were what was needed to be done in their teaching context. That is, they believed that what they were doing in the classroom was the optimum practice that could be adopted in their teaching context. This may further suggest that the novice teachers internalized certain context requirements. That is, they developed a belief system that was shaped by their experiences within their teaching context. As such, rather than the mismatch between their beliefs and teaching practices, the deviation might have been caused by the perceived discrepancy between the ultimate goal of the Intensive English Program, which helps students pass an English proficiency exam, the institutional materials used to this end and the communicative teaching methodology encouraged by the program and the ICELT course.

Discussion

The study found that the curriculum followed in the research context created confusion and tension among the novice teachers in their first year of teaching. The confusion resulted from lack of guidance as to how the teachers were expected to exploit the institutional materials/tools employed for certain skills as also reported by Hayes (2008). This made the teachers question the methodology they adopted in the teaching of certain skills, which may suggest that such teachers need more structured guidance regarding the shared practices followed in their teaching context to make sound pedagogical decisions. In this regard, formal mentoring programs might facilitate the adjustment of novice teachers to their teaching environment. Mentors and mentees' observing each other in class with a special focus on the application of the teaching tools in the context of a real classroom might help novice teachers gain practical knowledge. In fact, ICELT trainers were already observing the teachers at the time of the study. Also, the teachers were observing their colleagues as part of the course. However, there seemed to be lack of reflection of these teachers' problems. Based on the first author's personal experience as a previous ICELT trainee within the same institution and her informal talks with the ICELT trainees at the time, it was concluded that the observation discussions during this course were more related to general issues around language teaching, leaving little room for teachers to reflect upon their concerns. Therefore, it could be argued that these observations failed to provide the teachers with the opportunity to discuss their context-specific concerns. This may further suggest that in service-teacher education programs such as the ICELT course could make use of post-observation discussion to be able to provide information on how to better tailor the program to the needs of the specific teachers.

Another important finding was that the novice teachers were not always able to put their beliefs into practice, which in turn caused tensions between the two. This finding was in line with several previous studies on teacher cognition (e.g., Akbulut, 2007; Lee, 2008; Phipps & Borg, 2009). The novice teachers of the present study compromised their beliefs and complied with the curriculum requirements. This, in turn, led the teachers to question the effectiveness of their teaching styles, as they believed that they were not responding to their students' needs. This may suggest the educational institutions following tight schedules need to make room for teacher autonomy when planning and designing their curriculum. In addition, the teachers' lack of experience regarding how to adapt the syllabus to the contextual realities of their teaching context might have played a role in such confusion.

In line with previous studies conducted with both pre-service and in-service teachers with varying teaching experience (Farrell, 1999; Richards & Pennington, 1998; Yigitoglu & Belcher, 2014), the teachers in this study frequently referred to their schooling years to justify, explain and make sense of their beliefs and teaching practices. For Aslı, her positive language learning experiences made her favour a student-centered teaching approach. Therefore, it was mentally tiring for her to learn teaching in line with her beliefs while adapting it to the contextual realities of the institution. Nevertheless, for Elif, the way she learned English was traditional and exam-oriented. Her "negative experiences" as she later named them at university, however, might have also been stored in her belief system. That she did not see any harm in using mechanical and traditional exercises if she felt the students would benefit from them may suggest that she thought this methodology might have worked for her, and this might have made it easier for her to adapt to the context compared to Aslı.

Formal teacher education program was another factor that played a role (also reported by Debreli, 2012) in the formation of Elif's beliefs. Elif indicated that although she had felt the way she was taught English was problematic, it was only during her pre-service education that she was able to pinpoint the source of the problem and see the value in CLT. However, when she actually started teaching, she realized that it could be quite difficult at times to put what she acquired in theory into practice. This made her question her ability to teach. This emphasizes the need on the part of teacher education programs to highlight potential mismatches between theory and context-specific realities to better prepare student-teachers for the actual teaching settings.

In line with the previous research (Kurihira & Samimy, 2007; Lamie, 2001), in-service teacher education program also influenced participant teachers' teaching beliefs. For Aslı, the course enabled the teacher to become more aware of her pre-existing beliefs about teaching (as also reported by Borg, 2011) and to respond to her students' needs in a more effective way. Elif provided a similar perspective, describing how the ICELT course made it possible for her to put her theoretical knowledge into practice. However, it would be an overstatement to suggest that the teachers were able to operationalize all the principles promoted by the ICELT course in their teaching (as also reported by Kurihira & Samimy, 2007). This may be a result of the disparity between the principles advocated by the ICELT course and institution-specific contextual factors. However, further research is required to detect whether this is caused by the lack of consideration for local needs on the part of the ICELT course or factors brought in the equation by the teachers themselves, such as inexperience.

Finally, the study showed that the novice teachers responded to the curriculum principles in the classroom in different ways. First, they tended to comply with the curriculum requirements which manifested themselves in the given teaching materials and syllabus. That is, they adopted certain ways of doing things even if these did not coincide with their beliefs. This finding confirms previous studies which reported compliance on the part of teachers with established practices of school cultures (Flores & Day, 2006; Lee,

2008). Second, the teachers reconciled their beliefs with the institutional requirements and constraints which were caused by certain teaching materials/tools. Rather than embracing certain ways of teaching suggested by the use of these materials, the teachers tried to apply them in line with their beliefs (also reported by Farrell, 2006). Finally, the teachers deviated from certain institutional requirements while conducting their lessons. However, these deviations were not for the sake of putting their beliefs into practice. In fact, it seems that although the institutional expectations and the teachers' beliefs were in harmony in most cases (e.g., teaching English in line with the CLT principles), due to the contextual constraints, the teachers ended up diverging from both the institutional expectations and their own beliefs. The teachers' classroom practices show that it would be too simplistic to label their teaching practices as totally contradictory to or compliant with the curriculum principles given that they are inextricably interwoven with various factors such as educational background and contextual realities.

Conclusion

The study showed that the novice teachers could not reflect their beliefs in their teaching by complying with the curriculum principles as well as by deviating from them. This may suggest that the curriculum, as interpreted by these teachers, is a hindrance for them more than a help. This may further suggest that the novice teachers need guidance as to how to balance various partially competing demands (e.g., curriculum principles, ICELT principles, their own beliefs, contextual realities) in their initial years of teaching. The teachers' challenges might also highlight the need on the part of the institution to incorporate a more communicative speaking assessment into the programme so that the teachers can persist in their beliefs and thus realize the curriculum objectives.

This study was narrowed to the individual experiences of two novice teachers working at an intensive English program. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to the novice teachers working in the research context as well as novice teachers in general. Although this is a case study, it is believed that it has implications for teacher education and curriculum development. The findings of the study lends support to most studies on novice teachers (e.g., Farrell, 2006; Urmston & Pennigton, 2008) and teacher belief studies in general (e.g., Flores & Day, 2006; Phipps & Borg, 2009) in that there are conflicts between teachers' beliefs and contextual realities of their working environment (e.g., institutional expectation for communicative education, teaching practices dictated by the institutional materials, principals of teacher education programs, student expectations, prescribed syllabus.) This is because top-down curriculum practices, as in this context, overlook novice teachers' individual needs. This calls for a more inclusive approach to curriculum development. Therefore, on the part of educational institutions, the findings of this study further emphasize the need to develop tailor-made curricula instead of imposing top-down curricular practices upon teachers. Otherwise, novice teachers feel hindered while learning to operate in a professional environment.

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Appendix

1- Sample Interview Questions for Teacher Reflection on the Curriculum

A) Reading Component

1. I have observed three of your reading lessons. In these lessons, you covered (the names of the texts) I want you to reflect upon your reading lessons considering both these observed classes and your reading practices in general. What practices do you consider important in the teaching of reading skills in this institution?
2. Do you feel autonomous while teaching reading skills?
3. What is your role as a teacher in reading lessons?
4. We have talked about your views on an ideal reading lesson. Do you think your actual practices are in line with your beliefs about the teaching of reading?
5. Do you think you have been provided with enough guidance as to the expected reading practices in your school?
6. Can you reflect on your practices and the teaching material used for the reading lessons by taking the syllabus objectives set forth the reading skills into consideration?
7. Some teachers might prioritize some reading of the reading objectives more than others while other teachers might think that the aims given in the syllabus are equally important. How do you position yourself between these two groups?
8. Would you like to change/adapt/omit any of the objective provided in the syllabus? Why/why not?
9. Would you like to change/adapt/omit any parts of the material used for the reading skills? Why/why not?
10. Is there anything I did not ask but you would like to add?

B) Speaking Component

a) GHOs

1. I have observed three of your grammar lessons. In these lessons, you covered Modals Hand-out, Relative Clauses Hand-out and Verbs of Perception Hand-out. I want you to reflect upon your grammar lessons considering both these observed classes and your grammar teaching practices in general. What practices do you consider important in the lessons where you cover GHOs?
2. Do you feel autonomous in the lessons where you used GHOs?
3. What is your role as a teacher in GHO lessons?
4. We have talked about your views on an ideal grammar lesson. Do you think your actual practices are in line with your beliefs about the teaching of grammar?
5. Do you think you have provided with enough guidance as to the expected grammar practices in your school?
6. Can you reflect on your practices and the teaching material used for the grammar by taking the syllabus objectives set forth the speaking skills into consideration?
7. What are the effects of the GHOs provided by the institution on your teaching practices?
8. Would you like to change/adapt/omit any parts of the material used for the teaching of grammar? Why/why not?
9. Some teachers might prioritize some objectives of the objectives given for the speaking skills more than others while other teachers might think that the aims given in the syllabus are equally important. How do you position yourself between these two groups?
10. Would you like to change/adapt/omit any of the objective provided in the syllabus? Why/why not?
11. Is there anything I did not ask but you would like to add?

C) Corrective Feedback

Questions to understand the teacher's beliefs and the factors influencing her beliefs and practices regarding written feedback

1. What factors influence the way you give written feedback?
2. What do you think about the expected written feedback practices in your institution?
3. Do you strictly follow the code-set? Why? Why not?
4. How do you feel about the way you give written feedback to your students?
5. Do you think that your current written feedback practices are in line with your beliefs?
6. Do you think that you have been provided with sufficient guidance regarding the school expectations about teachers' practices of written feedback? Why? Why not?
7. Disregarding the assessment method used in this institution, how would you like to respond or would you respond at all to students' writing?
8. Is there anything I did not ask but you would like to add?

2- Sample materials used in stimulated recall sessions

A)

SOME FREQUENTLY USED CORRECTION SYMBOLS

| Symbol | Meaning | Example error & correction |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|
| SP | spelling error | The <u>anser</u> is easy. SP |
| WO | mistake in word order | I like very much it. WO |
| Gr. | grammar mistake | He is a handsome. Gr. |
| T | wrong verb tense | I <u>see</u> him yesterday. T |
| SV | subject and verb agreement | They <u>is</u> angry. SV |
| λ | something has been left out | The bank is next <u>λ</u> the cinema. |
| WW | wrong word | My <u>house</u> is on the second floor. WW |
| IR | irrelevant information | I have a sister. She lives in Izmir. <u>I love</u> Izmir. She is a doctor.... IR |
| M? | The meaning is unclear. | She lives in London <u>with her blue eyes</u> . M? |
| P | punctuation mistake | Do you like London. P |
| F/I | too formal or informal | Teachers don't wanna FA |
| Fr | fragment | <u>Because he is ill</u> . Fr |
| R | run-on sentence | <u>He was ill, he didn't go to school</u> . R |
| Prep. | preposition mistake | I looked <u>to</u> the blackboard. Prep. |

B)

105 HISTORY OF ECONOMICS

1 It is believed that the subject of economics first appeared in early Greek times. The reason for this belief is that the first writings on this subject were by Plato and Aristotle. Later, such Romans as Cicero and Virgil also wrote about **it**. However, there is no data showing the economic system during these times. The first known economic system was in medieval times, when the system of feudalism dominated. In feudalism, there was a strict class system consisting of nobles, clergy and the peasants. There was a series of nobles that were the holders of various sized lands. On these lands was a series of manors. These lands were similar to large farming tracts in which the peasants or serfs worked the land in exchange for protection by the nobles.

A. What do the following refer to?

1. it (para. 1) : _____

B. Find words in the text that mean the following. Write only ONE word on each line, and do not change the form of the word.

1. areas (para. 1) (n.) : _____

C. Mark the following statements True (T) or False (F).

T F 1. According to Malthus, population couldn't grow without science and technology.

T F 2. At the end of the 20th century, it was believed that a healthier nation meant a healthier economy.

D. Answer the following questions.

1. What did the peasants receive for working the nobles' lands?

E. Mark the best choice.

1. Which of the following is **NOT** an idea supported by the "laissez-faire" thinking?

- a) Low level of wages
- b) High level of competition
- c) Privately owned companies
- d) State ownership of property

**C) 2014
GHO 11**

**PRE-INTERMEDIATE GROUP
(Instructor's Copy)**

MODALS II

TASK I. Fill in the blanks with the correct modals so that the sentences have the same meaning.

| | USE | MODAL |
|--|--|---|
| <i>e.g. Let's start checking the exercise.</i> | <i>suggestion</i> | <i><u>Shall</u> we start checking the exercise?</i> |
| 1. I'm sure she is a teacher. | present deduction (certainty) | She <u>must</u> be a teacher. |
| 2. It is a good idea to exercise regularly. | advice | You <u>should</u> exercise regularly. |

| | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 3. Perhaps she is studying. | present deduction (certainty) | She <u>may/might</u> be studying. |
| 4. Students are not allowed to use their mobile phones during exams. | prohibition | Students <u>can't/mustn't</u> use their mobile phones during exams. |
| 5. You are expected to write your answers in ink. | obligation/necessity | You <u>must/have to/need to</u> write your answers in ink. |
| 6. Do you mind if I use your pen? | permission | <u>May/Can/Could</u> I use your pen? |
| 7. It is not necessary for you to buy a present. | lack of necessity | You <u>don't have to/don't need to/ needn't</u> buy a present. |
| 8. Do you know how to ice-skate? | ability | <u>Can</u> you ice-skate? |
| 9. It was necessary for her to work overtime. | obligation/necessity | She <u>had to</u> work overtime. |
| 10. I'm sure she is not serious. | present deduction (certainty) | She <u>can't</u> be serious. |
| 11. It wasn't necessary for James to get the train because his sister offered to give him a ride. | lack of necessity | James <u>didn't need to/didn't have to</u> get the train because his sister offered to give him a ride. |
| 12. Sorry, I couldn't come last night. | ability | Sorry, I <u>wasn't able to come</u> last night. |

The table above summarizes the modals that you have already practiced in *the course book* and in the grammar handouts. In this handout, you are going to learn some more modals.

EXPECTATION

“BE (NOT) SUPPOSED TO” is used to say what people have to do or don't have to do according to the rules or the law, or about what is (not) expected to happen.

- * I **am supposed to pay** the rent at the beginning of the month.
- * You **are not supposed to park** here. It is private parking only.
- * **Aren't** you **supposed to finish** this homework before you go to sleep?



When we use **“be supposed to”** in the **past**, we talk about an *unfulfilled expectation*. That is, someone was expected to do something, but he or she **didn't do it**.

- * Jack **was supposed to call** me last night. I wonder why he didn't.
- * My **parents were supposed to be** here at 8 o'clock, but they still haven't come.

TASK II. Fill in the blanks using the correct forms of “be supposed to” and the verbs given in the box. Use each only once.

| | | | |
|------|------|--------|----|
| take | keep | attend | do |
|------|------|--------|----|

1. I was supposed to take the library books back yesterday, but I forgot and now I'll have to pay a fine.
2. There's a conference at the Convention Center tomorrow and you are supposed to Et cetera...

Mixed Exercises

TASK VI. Respond to the situation provided in ONE statement. (Answers may vary.)

1. Your colleague prepared a report which you had already prepared. You say:
You needn't have prepared the report.
2. Your friend invited some of the people from work but not others. When the others found out, they were upset with him. You say:
You should have invited everybody.

TASK VIII. Read the e-mail message from a young tourist to his mother. Fill in the blanks using the CORRECT FORMS of the VERBS in parentheses and the MODALS OR MODAL-LIKE EXPRESSIONS given in the box. You can use the modals MORE THAN ONCE.

| | | | |
|------|--------|----------------|---------|
| NEED | SHOULD | BE ABLE TO | HAVE TO |
| CAN | WOULD | BE SUPPOSED TO | |

Dear Mom,

I know I (1) should have written / was supposed to write (write) to you earlier, but believe me; I really haven't had the time even to get some rest until now. I am really sorry if I made you worry about me, and I'm sure you will understand why I (2) couldn't / wasn't able to call (call) you or write to you earlier...