

## Novice EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching and Learning, and their Classroom Practices\*

### Mesleğinin İlk Yıllarındaki İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğretme ve Öğrenme ile ilgili İnançları ve Uygulamaları

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study was to examine novice EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and the relationship between their beliefs and classroom practices. Nine non-native novice EFL teachers teaching at a private university in Northern Cyprus participated in this nine month long study. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, post-lesson reflection forms, and stimulated recall interviews. The findings of the study showed that novice teachers' previous experiences as students' have an impact on the formation of their initial beliefs about teaching and learning. The results also revealed that when teachers became aware of the incongruence between their beliefs and practices, they attempted to align their beliefs more closely with their practices. Lastly, the study found that due to students' expectations, teachers were willing to perform certain practices which were contrary to their beliefs. Recommendations for future research and implications of the findings are discussed.

**Keywords:** Novice teachers, beliefs and practices

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmanın amacı, mesleğinin ilk yıllarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretme ve öğrenme ile ilgili inançlarını ve uygulamalarını incelemektir. Bu dokuz aylık çalışmaya, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta özel bir üniversitede mesleğinin ilk yıllarında olan dokuz İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Veri toplama yöntemleri yüz yüze yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, ders gözlemleri, gözlem sonrası yansıtıcı forumlar ve öğretmenlere anımsamayı sağlayan görüşmeler oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonuçları öğretmenlerin inançlarının öğrencilik yıllarında oluştuğunu göstermektedir. Bulgular inançlarının ve uygulamalarının çatıştığının farkına vardıklarında, inançlarını uygulamalarına uyarlama girişiminde bulduklarını göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada ortaya çıkan bir başka bulgu ise öğretmenler öğrencilerinin beklentileri doğrultusunda inançlarına ters de olsa bazı uygulamalar yapmaya gönüllü olmalarıdır. Bulgular doğrultusunda öğretmen eğitim programlarına önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Yeni öğretmenler, inançlar ve uygulamalar

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of teachers' beliefs has generated great interest among researchers since the 1970s. In the 1960s, the popular research paradigm, which was called the process-product approach to the study of teaching, was mainly concerned with "the relationship between teachers' classroom behavior, students' classroom behavior and student achievement" (Clark and Peterson 1986, p. 61). In other words, research on teaching focused on teachers' observable behaviors (process) which affected students' learning (product). From this perspective, learning was seen as a product of the behaviors performed by teachers in class (Borg 2006; Freeman 2002). Teachers' thought processes, i.e. their thinking, decision-making, and judgments, were not part of research during that time. Later, in the 1970s, there was a shift in the study of teaching from researching teachers' behaviors to researching teachers' thinking. Borg (2006) states that this shift arose firstly as a result of the developments in cognitive psychology which emphasized the importance of thinking on behavior. Therefore, an understanding of what Walberg (1977) called, teachers' "mental lives" was required to understand teaching better. Secondly, there was a recognition and

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acknowledgement of teachers' active role in shaping educational processes. That is, teachers were no longer seen as mere transmitters of knowledge, but as active agents in the act of teaching. Lastly, it was recognized that reducing teaching to a set of discrete, observable behaviors that could be characterized as effective teaching left unanswered questions. Therefore, qualitative studies examining individual teachers' teaching and cognition gained importance. As a result, rather than investigating "how teachers' actions led – or did not lead – to student learning" (Freeman 2002, p. 2), researchers became interested in what teachers do and why teachers teach the way they teach. In other words, studies have started to examine the ways teachers' beliefs influence their classroom practices in relation to teaching and learning (Pajares 1992).

It is generally acknowledged that teachers' beliefs are established long before they start their profession (Borg 2006; Johnson 1994; Pajares 1992). The sources of teachers' beliefs, in general, have been identified as teachers' learning experiences as students or 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975) and/or teacher education programs. Moreover, the literature on change in teachers' beliefs suggests that pre-service teachers' and novice teachers' beliefs are difficult to change as the process of change may be cumbersome. According to Richardson and Placier (2001), change can be voluntary, or it can be imposed, as when the teacher is required to change as a result of political, cultural or institutional obligations.

In the field of second/foreign language teaching, studies by and large focused on the experiences of pre-service language teachers' beliefs and practices and/or the transition from language teacher education programs to learning to teach on the practicum (e.g. Busch 2010; Johnson 1994; Numrich 1996; Özmen 2012). Various studies have highlighted the positive impact of language teacher education programs on pre-service teachers' beliefs and practices and that pre-service teachers' beliefs changed as a result of these courses (Cabaroğlu & Roberts 2000; Mattheoudakis 2007; Richards, Ho & Giblin 1996). While others proved that such programs are weak interventions or insufficient to meet pre-service teachers' needs (Borg 2008; Hobbs 2007; Seferoğlu 2006).

The field of education and teacher cognition has recently seen increasing interest in investigating novice or first year language teachers' beliefs and/or practices. Some of the studies found that beliefs may not always be reflected in teachers' classroom practices (e.g. Andrews 2003; Farrell 2003, 2008; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Sato & Kleinsasser 1999; Tabachnick & Zeichner 2003; Urmston & Pennington 2008). For instance, in Singapore EFL teaching context, Farrell's (2008) study of a first year English language teacher revealed that the teacher did not abandon his beliefs, even though they were not applicable in his teaching context, and tried to find a balance between his beliefs and the institution's expectations. Similarly, in their study of five novice English language teachers working in secondary schools in Hong Kong, Urmston and Pennington (2008) reported that there was inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and their classroom practices. A general conclusion seems to be that of the inconsistency between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, which were mainly caused by the constraints within the educational system.

Recently, in Turkey the number of research studies that examine Turkish EFL teachers' and pre-service teachers' beliefs and/or practices has increased (e.g. Akbulut 2007; Özmen 2012; Öztürk & Atay 2010; Phipps & Borg 2009; Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil & Ölçü 2009). For example, Phipps and Borg (2009) in their longitudinal study examined 11 EFL teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching and practices in the preparatory school of a private English-medium university in Turkey. The data, collected through interviews and observations, revealed that teachers had to teach in ways contrary to their beliefs, mainly due to student expectations and preferences. In his study of 13 Turkish novice teachers, Akbulut (2007) found that novice teachers were not able to apply their ideas in their teaching, for reasons of contextual constraints and discipline problems in their classes.

Teachers' beliefs and practices, particularly in the initial years of their teaching, are critical for understanding how they approach teaching. In this respect, the study particularly aims to attract teacher educators, policy makers and related bodies' attention to the fact that beliefs are important in understanding how teachers approach their work. They can, therefore, build into their programmes tasks that encourage teachers to reveal and become more aware of their beliefs. Along this line of thinking, this article examines the novice teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and the relationship between their beliefs and practices in the context of English as a foreign language teaching. Of the several research questions in the larger study, the article addresses the following questions:

*- What beliefs do novice teachers hold about teaching and learning English? What beliefs do they hold with regard to teaching approaches, and use of pair and group work? Is there a relationship between their beliefs and practices (i.e. actions)?*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative methods as it was believed that a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon under study would be presented. Moreover, as there is no physical way of examining teachers' beliefs, the study adopted multiple methods (or triangulation) which would provide rich data and also enable cross-checking similarities and differences across methods and data sources. Data were triangulated using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, post-lesson reflection forms, and stimulated recall interviews.

### 2.1. Context and Participants

Data was collected from nine non-native EFL teachers teaching at an English preparatory program in a private university in Northern Cyprus. The English preparatory program aims to equip students with the English they would require in their departments. At the time of the study, teachers had 20 hours of instruction per week, and class sizes ranged from 18 to 20. All the classes are equipped with computers (with the Internet connection), OHPs and videos. The medium of instruction is English and teachers are expected to use a student-centered teaching method. Teachers are provided with published course-books as well as in-house course-books. In addition to these, teachers can use other supplementary materials to meet their students' needs and interests.

The participants were chosen on the basis of representativeness; namely, the teachers had to be novice EFL teachers with maximum one year teaching experience and were required to conduct their lessons through the medium of English. It was also believed that this kind of sample would serve the aim of the study and provide useful data to understand the issue under investigation. The teaching experience of the nine teachers is outlined below. (The acronym NT (Novice Teacher) will be used to refer to the teachers.)

- 5 (NT2, NT3, NT4, NT6, NT9) were teaching for the first time,
- 3 (NT1, NT5, NT8) had 1 year teaching experience and
- 1 (NT7) had 6 months' teaching experience as a part-time teacher

All the teachers were Turkish Cypriots who were in their early 20s. They had graduated from the same university and had been English language learners at some time in their lives. At the English preparatory program, all the newly employed teachers, whether experienced or not, are first required to attend a 15-day intensive pre-session training course. The aim of the course is to introduce the teachers to the teaching context and also to give preliminary training on

teaching. When the academic year starts, all the newly employed teachers, experienced or inexperienced, are required to attend the 13-week Pre-ICELT (In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching) qualification course which is an in-house tailored course run by qualified instructors at the English preparatory program. The course aims to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge and improve their teaching skills. There is no written assignment, but each teacher is observed four times by his/her mentor in an academic year.

## 2.2. Data Collection

Data (see Table 1) were collected over an academic year of nine months by means of two semi-structured interviews, four classroom observations, four post-lesson reflection forms, and four stimulated recall interviews.

**Table 1: Phases of Data Collection**

Duration	Method
September-October	Semi-structured interview 1
October-November	Observation, Post-lesson reflection form, Stimulated-recall interview
December- January	Observation, Post-lesson reflection form, Stimulated-recall interview
March- April	Observation, Post-lesson reflection form, Stimulated-recall interview
May- June	Observation, Post-lesson reflection form, Stimulated-recall interview, Semi-structured interview 2

The first type of data collection method was semi-structured interviews which aimed to elicit in-depth data from the teachers on their beliefs about teaching and learning English. The less structured interview type allowed me to be flexible with the questions; hence, I was able to explore issues that needed to be clarified by my participants. All the teachers were asked whether they preferred the interviews to be conducted in English or Turkish. All stated that they preferred English as they did not know the Turkish equivalents of certain terms and they would feel at ease if they used English. The first interview which was held at the beginning of the academic year consisted of two sections. The first section of the interview aimed to obtain background information about the teachers, such as their educational background, years of teaching experience, reasons for choosing EFL teaching, influential people in their choice of teaching, and their internship experience. The second section of the interview questions were related to teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, such as characteristics of effective teachers, effective teaching approaches, their expectations and worries, and how they viewed themselves as teachers. The interviews were held at the teachers' offices and lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. The second semi-structured interview was held at the end of the academic year. The same questions that were used in the second section of the first interview were used to track any changes in teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning.

The second type of data collection was observations. The aim of the observations was to check whether teachers' beliefs were reflected in their teaching practices. They were also used as a complementary instrument to stimulate teachers to think about or reflect on their lessons. The teachers were observed every two months; in total, four observations were conducted in one academic year. During observations, my role was that of non-participant observer; that is, I only watched and recorded what was happening in the classrooms, and did not interact with the teachers. Observations were also unstructured; that is, there was no observation sheet to record certain aspects of teachers' behavior or actions, as the focus was not on evaluating teachers' teaching. Each observation lasted one class hour, i.e. 50 minutes.

Immediately after the observations, teachers were provided with a post-lesson reflection form which was intended to encourage teachers to reflect on certain parts of their lesson (such as achieving objectives, strengths and weaknesses of their lesson) and their beliefs. It was also used

to stimulate teachers' thinking in relation to their teaching. Post-lesson reflection forms were collected before the stimulated recall interview, and read thoroughly. If there were uncertainties or vagueness in teachers' descriptions, they were asked to explain these during the conversation-like interviews which were conducted after the stimulated recall interview.

Stimulated-recall interviews were held within two days of the observations. Stimulated recall interview technique involves the use of audiotapes or videotapes to record a teacher while teaching. The tape is then played back and viewed by the teacher sitting with the researcher. The teacher is encouraged to stop the tape at any point to make comments on his/her teaching. The researcher can also stop the tape to elicit further comments from the teacher. The main aim is to help the teacher recall his/her thought processes and reflect on what was happening during his/her teaching (Gass and Mackey 2000). The present study used stimulated recall technique after each observation and the teachers were explained about the procedures before the stimulated recall interview. It was believed that using this kind of interview would make teachers more aware of their beliefs and practices. The duration of the interviews, which were carried out in English, varied from twenty-five minutes to one hour.

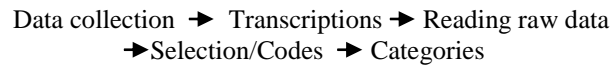
### **2.3. Procedure**

The first step of the study was to get access to the teaching institution and to get teachers' consent. As I had worked at the institution for several years, there was no particular problem that I faced during this phase. The university board welcomed my study and gave me permission to conduct my study. The second step was to get teachers' consent. I had not been acquainted with any of the teachers; therefore, I was introduced to them by the Head of the English preparatory program. When I met all the newly employed teachers in person, I gave them a verbal explanation about the study and the procedures. I also told them that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time they wished. The teachers were then provided with a participant information sheet to get more information about the study, and a consent form to sign in which they were assured that only I and/or the supervisor would have access to the data and that they would be given pseudonyms in order to preserve their anonymity.

In this study, my role as a researcher was that of a participant-as-observer; that is, I was both a subjective and objective participant. Being a subjective participant meant that I had to spend most of my time within the institution and therefore become involved in the teachers' world. I was also an objective participant as I was only interested in data that would serve the aim of the study. Adopting the role of participant-as-observer carries the risk of 'going native' (Bryman, 2004); in other words, losing the sense of being a researcher and becoming too involved in the world of my participants. However, as I was aware of the risk I restrained myself from getting too involved with the teachers' lives and always reminding myself that my only aim in this context was to collect data. I believe that I was able to maintain my role as a researcher and did not find myself getting too involved in their lives.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

This study utilized qualitative data analysis. The process of data analysis began as soon as all the recordings were transcribed. As I transcribed all the data myself, I became more familiar with the data. Once all the transcriptions were ready, I started reading each transcription and written data, with the research questions in mind, several times to code similar themes. Re-reading the transcriptions and written data enabled me to identify and categorize the common themes. The figure below outlines the process of data analysis.



*Figure 1 Process of data analysis*

In the next level of analysis, I cross-checked data for similarities and differences, which lead me to compare teachers' beliefs and also to ensure validity across data. In the last level of analysis, in order to reduce bias in the process of data analysis, I asked two research fellows to code two of the interview transcriptions. I also provided them with the research questions. Then, based on our agreement I made amendments to some of the codes and/or themes.

### 3. FINDINGS

The findings are presented in three sections. The first section describes teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, i.e. the relationship between their beliefs about teaching English and their classroom practices. The second section describes teachers' teaching approaches, i.e. the relationship between teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, and their classroom practices; and the last section describes the relationships between their beliefs about the use of pair and group work, and their classroom practices. The sections will first be described, and then supported by teachers' statements which were obtained during data collection. The following abbreviations will be used in the quotations to refer to the instruments: I1: Interview 1, I2: Interview 2, SRI: Stimulated recall interview, and PRF: Post-lesson reflection form.

#### 3.1. Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

When the teachers were asked what their beliefs about teaching and learning were, three of them referred to their practicum experience. NT1, NT2, and NT4 commented on the gap between theory and practice. These three teachers had believed that teaching would be similar to what they had read about in books. Thus, this awareness during their practicum experience had prepared them for their actual teaching experience.

Moreover, the 'apprenticeship of observation' seemed to have impact on the way they preferred to teach. Personal images of both good and bad teachers, and good and bad teaching were depicted when referring to their learning experience. When describing good teachers, the teachers recalled their learning experiences as students. The following extracts are illustrative:

I used to have **a teacher who had very enthusiastic skills**, she used to ask us if we had any problems, or if we needed help, she told us we could go to her office, she used to say I can help you any time you want (NT7, I1)

**A teacher at high school who often brought visual aids** like pictures, posters and so on and who gave us the opportunity to better understand the subject... **She was always well-prepared**, and taught history in such a way that all students became excellent listeners. (NT8, I1)

In addition to their positive learning experiences, the teachers also referred to their negative learning experiences as students. All the teachers stated that they did not want their students to experience what they had experienced and that these bad experiences had shaped their views about how they should not teach.

**I used to have a very bad teacher**, he used to look at the wall, he didn't have any eye-contact with us, he used to look at the walls and he kept talking and talking...he also used to give us the exam questions and answers, that was my worst experience...**I decided to be a good teacher, not like him** (NT7, I1)

The teachers also referred to their own learning experiences as students, and highlighted that their students could learn the way they had themselves learnt grammar and vocabulary. For example, NT6 stated that she had learnt English 'by hearing' and not learning grammar rules by heart. NT1, on the other hand, recalled how she used to write unknown words on papers and stuck them on her wall. As can be seen from these explanations, teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning had been shaped during their schooling, which is a finding echoed in the studies of Abdullah-Sani (2000) and Richards and Pennington (1998).

Moreover, four teachers in the study stated that motivation and willingness to learn were important factors in learning English which is in line with previous research findings (Osam & Balbay 2004; Tercanlioğlu, 2005). The following quotation represents the four teachers' beliefs about the importance of motivation, and highlight the potential importance of extrinsic motivation in learning English:

they need to be **motivated to learn**...firstly they should **feel the need of learning the language**...first **we should ask them or make them aware why they need to learn this language**... once they know the reason why they are learning English I think then they will do many things to become successful learners (NT9, I1)

When teachers talked about their beliefs about teaching English, they all explained that they were not always able to put their beliefs into practice due to two constraints; namely, students' expectations and the syllabus. Referring to the students, the teachers expressed the view that their students wanted to learn grammar in a traditional way where the grammar rules are first presented deductively, and then practiced by doing exercises. As a result, some of the teachers were not always able to do what they had aimed or believed to be beneficial for them. The following are typical examples of how teachers explained their students' preference for learning grammar:

**They feel they are lost if they don't learn the grammar rules**, they can't use it, they can't think of the logic or sentence pattern to actually form correct sentences...**they feel like they have to know all the grammar rules, why that word is actually there to form good, correct grammatical sentences.** (NT6, I2)

I had students who said to me "why are we doing this? Is it going to be in the exam?" their worry is not to learn English, **it's just passing the proficiency and the prep school, so that's why students want more mechanical exercises...they want to get ready for the exam**, and it is quite hard to change their view, you know saying that this is not about passing the exam but learning English... (NT6, I2)

Sometimes it is not possible to create a student-centered environment. Because for example if you are going to teach them a grammar topic, **they don't want to participate they just want to listen to the teacher** (NT2, I2)

As the teachers were aware of their students' needs, they attempted to meet their needs in various ways. For example, NT4 explained in the second stimulated recall interview that although

her students preferred to see the grammar rules on the blackboard she used “small word cards and colorful chalks” to attract their attention. Similarly, NT7 stated in the second SRI that she used drawings and pictures to attract students’ attention and later gave students controlled practice. NT2 explained in the third SRI that she taught the new grammar topic with examples and then gave students pictures to write sentences about them. These practices imply that teachers moulded their teaching style to meet students’ needs. The following quotation is illustrative of how teachers shape their teaching based on students’ needs:

I find myself searching for different techniques, and since I have been teaching at different levels so far....I try to improve myself and **adapt myself according to the students’ needs**, and I think this comes with experience and then flexibility (NT2, SRI 3)

In relation to students’ expectations, teachers also talked about their use of the mother-tongue while teaching grammar. They mentioned that students wanted them to explain new grammatical items using the mother tongue, which was contrary to their beliefs. However, at the end of the study five teachers emphasized that using the mother-tongue while teaching would have a facilitative role in monolingual classes.

As an ELT teacher, we should try and use English as much as possible, but sometimes if it is necessary like they ask for the meaning of a word and you do everything, **you try everything like miming, gestures, explanation, drawing, if these don’t work then you can give the Turkish equivalent.** (NT1, I2)

When they don’t understand a topic, **the teacher should explain it in L1. But the teacher should not teach in L1, there should be a controlled use of L1; just for translation of some sentences, and when they don’t understand something, or may be translation of some words** (NT3, I2)

The second problem related to hindrance of their beliefs into practice was the syllabus and the course book. The teachers indicated that they were not able to do extra activities that they thought would be beneficial for their students because they had to complete the syllabus and the chapters in their course book.

I believe that CLT is effective... but **we have a very loaded program** I think even if we use these activities, they can’t achieve this fully...I believe that it is effective but needs time, **it’s not for our students.** (NT4, I2)

Using different activities is very difficult, because you **have to follow the syllabus** and you have to follow the course book, and **you have very limited time**, so ideally it is a good idea but when it comes to practise...to reality...it doesn’t work, (NT8, I2).

### 3.2. Teaching Approaches

All of the participants in this study held constructivist conception of teaching and learning; that is, they viewed students not as passive recipients, but as active participants in the process of teaching and learning. They believed in the importance of using language for communication in meaningful contexts. Additionally, they believed that high student involvement and active participation were fundamental to language learning. All the teachers stated that they aimed to use



student-oriented practices in their classes. Moreover, the teachers stated that they were concerned about their students' needs and expectations, and that they were ready to meet their needs.

**Contextualizing** language is very important, and I support communicative teaching, communication is very important... they should be encouraged to use the language (NT4, I1)

I think what is important is to find out what **students need** to learn ...then organize what to teach and how to teach them (NT2, I1)

Observational data revealed that teachers' beliefs about student involvement were indeed reflected in the warm-up stages, but not in other stages of their lessons.

Look, when I ask questions I try to **involve everyone**, I **ask questions** to different students...in general, they are more active, more participative...(NT1, SRI 1)

I believe **before giving a task, having a speaking activity** is a good practice...warming up the students motivates them... (NT2, SRI 1)

Although all the teachers were satisfied with the activities that they had used at the warm-up stage, four teachers also mentioned in the stimulated recall interviews that the presentation stages of their lessons were not very effective. These teachers became aware that they spent too much time on the presentation of a structure and did not give the students ample opportunity to practice. This awareness made them realize that they were not putting their beliefs into practice. The following statements illustrate teachers' views:

Although I tried to involve all the students in the lesson, I always **hear my voice**...Because it was presentation, it seems like **I am doing most of the talking**... (NT1, SRI 1)

I think I can do more activities in one lesson, I think I spent too much time on presentation and I think this is one of my weakness, because in my other lessons as well, I spent too much time on presentation or if it is writing lesson for example I spent too much time on pre-writing stage...(NT4, SRI1)

I think it was a teacher-centered lesson. I think I should have done more group work, allow the students to be more involved in the lesson, rather than me talking and talking. It annoyed me talking for one hour. Hearing my voice for one hour annoyed me... The students just sat and listened, did the exercises and got the answers from me. (NT5, SRI2)

Observational data collected after the first observation revealed that these three teachers involved their students more actively in the learning process. Thus, this realization helped these teachers change their way of teaching to align with their stated beliefs. The following quotations from post-reflection forms show NT1 and NT4's realization and how they involved students in the learning process:

In my previous recording, I realized that my lesson was a little bit teacher-centred...Before giving them the form, I wrote many examples on the board and personalized the topic. My

students examined the examples on the board and found out the rule. It was very good to expose students into the usage and discover the form. (NT4, PRF2)

### 3.3. Use of Pair and Group Work

All the teachers stated that learning English required students to make productive use of the language. For these teachers, the speaking skill took priority over the other skills. They mentioned that students should use English in the classroom as much as possible, because they would not have the chance to use the language outside the classroom. They believed that one way of enabling students to use the target language was use of pair and group work activities. The following quotations from stimulated recall interviews illustrate teachers' beliefs about the value of pair and group work activities:

Group work was better than pair work, because if it was pair work one person leads the task, but when it is group work and especially if they have individual tasks they all become involved in the lesson. And in general students enjoy group work more, (NT8, SRI 3)

I like doing **pair work**. Students **get to work with each other**...And the advantage is I am aware who is at a higher level than the other. I put them with different people so they can learn from each other, even a word, a sentence or may be correct each other, so peer correction. Learning from each other is worth I believe. (NT5, SRI 4)

Although they believed that one way to encourage students to use the target language was using pair and group work, further discussions during stimulated recall interviews revealed that these activities had potential drawbacks, i.e. classroom management problems and use of the mother tongue. The following two statements are clear examples of how group work may create classroom management problems:

I asked them to work individually but may be I could have asked them to work in pairs, but they were very noisy that day....so I think if I had asked them to work in pairs it would have been noisier...(NT3, SRI2)

I think using **group work is very risky** because you may lose your classroom management and this is what I faced during my lesson...because I constantly warned them to be quiet and not to talk...when they were in their groups they were talking and they were chatting about other things, so it is risky...(NT4, SRI 3)

NT3 was the only teacher who later explained that she often avoided using pair or group work in her classes because she was concerned about losing control of the students. This avoidance may be linked to teacher's lack of knowledge about how to perform such activities. She explained that she preferred using whole class discussions because she would easily control the students.

The second problem related to the use of pair and group work activities was the use of the mother tongue. The following remarks illustrate the teachers' concern in relation to the use of the mother tongue:

Both are totally student-centered...**students get to speak, they get to do the activities... they learn from each other**....The disadvantage is that they use Turkish, I tried to

prevent it to a certain extent but I can't prevent it completely, which is okay. At least they get to use some English. (NT1, I2)

**I believe that Turkish gives them more security, more confidence...I think they feel more secure. Sometimes I don't get distracted when they speak Turkish while doing the task, because they are working on the task, they are talking and discussing and they can't discuss it in English obviously, so I just let them do it, because sometimes it is a need, you can't just do everything in English.** (NT2, I2)

Moreover, the teachers talked about the importance of teachers' role during pair and group work activities. They explained that one way to prevent students from using Turkish was moving closer to them. However, this technique was not as effective as they had expected.

In group and pair work, teacher's role is very important because students tend to use Turkish when they work in group and pair work. So the teacher's role is important sometimes she should be a controller, sometimes a facilitator, so when they are **in group the teacher should control or monitor them carefully, we should go near them, walk around and listen to them and if they use Turkish we should encourage them to use English.** (NT1, I2)

I do warn them all the time and **when I go next to them they switch to English and as soon as I move away they start talking in Turkish** (NT8, I2)

To summarize, the findings obtained from the interviews, observations, post-lesson observation forms and stimulated recall interviews revealed that teachers, by and large, held constructivist beliefs about teaching and learning, yet they were not always able to put their beliefs into practice due to students' expectations and demands. However, once teachers became aware of the incongruence and gap between their beliefs and practices, they tried to match their beliefs with their practices. Moreover, when the students demanded them to use the mother-tongue to explain or clarify new structures, the majority of the teachers performed practices which were not in line with their beliefs, i.e. they switched to their mother-tongue.

#### 4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The literature supports the view that apprenticeship of observation is influential on the formation of teachers' beliefs and how they approach teaching and learning (Pajares 1992). The findings from this study also indicate that these novice teachers' prior learning experiences were influential on how they chose to teach English. Moreover, when they talked about their learning experience, they made reference to their previous teachers' personal characteristics. There is also evidence here which resonates with the findings of Phipps and Borg (2009) and Akbulut (2007) that although novice teachers' beliefs guided their classroom practices, they may not always be reflected in their practices due to constraints, such as the syllabus and students' expectations.

At the beginning of the study, all the novice teachers appeared to hold similar beliefs about teaching and learning; that is, they all favored student-centered classes, where student involvement was high. Although some of the teachers realized that they were not able to achieve a high level of student involvement, they were soon able to align their teaching according to their beliefs. For example, although students demanded explicit grammar teaching, teachers implemented various teaching techniques (e.g. drawings) to make learning 'more fun' and to ease the learning process they switched to their mother-tongue, which was contrary to their beliefs. This finding is in line with Richardson (1998) and Farrell's (2008) assertion that teachers opt to

adjust their instruction to better meet their students' needs. The teachers also mentioned that learning English requires motivation and willingness.

Studies by Abdullah-Sani (2000), Dellar (1990) and Erdoğan (2005) have reported that pair and group work activities did not always lead to effective student-student interaction. Similarly, although the teachers in the present study conceptualized pair and group work as student-centered and wished to use them frequently, they were dissatisfied with their experiences of these two alternative ways of organizing student-student interaction as students tended to use their mother-tongue. According to the teachers, this was due to students' refusal to use the target language; they did not relate it to their own teaching style or lack of know-how. However, it should also be noted that as these teachers were concerned about their students' needs and expectations (i.e. their use of mother-tongue to explain), they were willing to do practices which were contrary to their beliefs.

To sum up, the study found that novice teachers' prior learning experiences were effective in shaping their initial beliefs. In relation to teaching and learning, the importance of promoting the speaking skill in the classes was a commonly held belief among all the teachers. As students would not have much opportunity to practise English outside their classes, they believed that use of communicative activities would be beneficial. Additionally, a student-centered teaching approach was favored among the teachers, who felt that teacher-dominated classes would not facilitate learning.

Based on these findings, the study argues that novice teachers are involved in a learning period in their first year of teaching and that their beliefs are susceptible to change. The findings also indicate that the experiences and the beliefs about teaching and learning these novice teachers had in their first year are similar to pre-service teachers' experiences, in that their beliefs (and practices) were still being shaped. Thus, these findings imply that novice teachers are likely to change their beliefs and practices in order to meet their students' needs, and also change in beliefs and practices may occur gradually and over time (Freeman 1989). The findings also suggest the necessity of giving novice teachers the opportunity to assess and/or reflect on their beliefs and practices to become more aware of their beliefs and practices, and thereby to improve teaching and learning. In-service training programs and/or regular workshops could be organized to help raise awareness of such beliefs and practices.

Further research may explore novice teachers' beliefs and experiences in their first two years of the profession, taking into consideration variables as contextual opportunities and constraints, school culture and collegiality. Such longitudinal studies may further our understanding in relation to how contextual factors (other than students) may influence change in beliefs and practices. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate how the effect of change, if any, influences students' learning from students' point of view. The participants in my study were mainly concerned with their teaching and students, and they believed that change in their practices benefitted students' learning. It is possible that in their following years, these teachers might become aware of other opportunities and constraints in their teaching which influence their beliefs and practices.

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### Uzun Özet

Alan yazınında eğitim ve öğretim sürecinde en önemli unsurlardan birinin öğretmenlerin inançları olduğu belirtilmiştir. Öğretmenlerin inançları önemlidir çünkü inançlar öğretmenlerin ders içeri uygulamalarını ve davranışlarını etkilemektedir. Yapılan çalışmalarda da inançların bilişsel, duygusal ve seçim yapma süreçlerinde etkili bir rol oynadığı gösterilmiştir (Pajares, 1997). Dolayısıyla öğrenci eğitiminde ve onların başarılı olmalarında öğretmenlerin inançları, tutumları ve yaklaşımları büyük önem taşımaktadır. Eğitim alanında yapılan çalışmalarda İngilizce öğretmenlerinin inançları ile bağlantılı çalışmalar gün geçtikçe artmaktadır. İngilizce öğretmenlerinin inançları genel olarak öğretmen adayları ile yapılan çalışmalarda (örneğin: Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996; Cabaroğlu ve Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudakis, 2007, Busch, 2010) veya tecrübeli İngilizce öğretmenleri ile yapılan araştırmalarda incelenmiştir (örneğin: Tsui, 2003; Osam ve Balbay, 2004; Phipps and Borg, 2009). İngilizce öğretmen adayları ile yapılan çalışmalarda genel olarak öğretmen adaylarının inançlarının aldıkları eğitim programları esnasında değiştiğini ve bu programlar genelde adayların düşünceleri ve inançları kapsamında olumlu bir etki bıraktığı bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, İngilizce aday öğretmenlerinin derslerini tamamlamaya odaklı oldukları rapor edilmiştir. Tecrübeli İngilizce öğretmenleri ile yapılan çalışmalarda ise, öğretmenlerin inançlarının değişmesinin zor olduğu bulunmuştur ve inançları ile sınıf içi uygulamalarının bağlantılı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmalardaki öğretmenlerin odağı öğrencilerin etkili bir şekilde öğrenmeleri ve öğrenilen konuların kullanımınıdır. Dolayısıyla, bu iki grup öğretmenlerin ders işleyişleri farklıdır. Mesleklerinin ilk yıllarında olan İngilizce öğretmenleri ile yapılan çalışmalar ise son zamanlarda ilgi göremeye başlamıştır ve dolayısıyla sınırlıdır (örneğin: Abdullah-Sani, 2000; Farrell, 2003). Bu çalışmalarda genel olarak, mesleğinin ilk yıllarında olan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yaşadıkları sorunlar incelenmiştir. Çalışmalardaki bulgularda yeni öğretmenlerin inançları ve uygulamaları arasında fark olduğu belirtilmiştir. Bu farklılık genel olarak öğrencilerin davranışları ve beklentilerinden kaynaklanmıştır. Bir diğer sebep de, yeni öğretmenlerin inançları ile okul kültürü ve okul yönetiminin beklentilerinin çatışmasından ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ise, mesleğinin ilk yıllarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretme ve öğrenme ile ilgili inançların ve uygulamalarının ilişkisini incelemektir ve bu alandaki çalışmalara katkıda bulunmaktır.

Bu çalışmaya, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta özel bir üniversitede mesleğinin ilk yıllarında olan dokuz İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Beş öğretmenin daha önce hiç iş deneyimi yoktu, üç öğretmenin bir senelik iş deneyimi ve bir öğretmenin de altı aylık iş deneyimi olmuştur. İnançlar doğrudan gözlemlenemediğinden ve ölçülemediğinden, bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin kullanımı uygun görülmüştür. Veri toplama yöntemleri yüzyüze yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, ders gözlemleri, gözlem sonrası yansıtıcı forumlar ve öğretmenlere anımsamayı sağlayan görüşmelerden oluşmaktadır. Çalışma dokuz ay sürmüştür. Çalışmanın başında öğretmenler ile 45 dakika ve 1 saat kadar süren yüzyüze yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. Bu görüşmede öğretmenlerin geçmiş dil öğrenme deneyimleri, etkili öğrenme ve öğretme yöntemleri, beklentileri gibi konular ele alınmıştır. Ders gözlemleri her iki ayda bir yapılmıştır. Gözlemlerden sonra öğretmenlere gözlem sonrası yansıtıcı forumlar verilmiştir. Bu forumların amacı, öğretmenleri işledikleri derslerin zayıf ve güçlü yönlerini belirlemek ve derslerinin ve kendilerinin hangi alanda geliştirebileceklerinin farkındalığını sağlamaktır. Gözlemden sonra iki gün içinde öğretmenlerden bu forumlar alındı ve onlarla anımsamayı sağlayan görüşmeler yapıldı. Bu anımsamayı sağlayan görüşmelerde öğretmenlere videoya kayıt edilen derslerini izleyerek inançlarını ve uygulamalarını değerlendirme olanağı sunulmuştur. Sene sonunda yapılan yüzyüze yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin amacı, öğretmenlerin inançlarına ve sene içi ders uygulamalarının ilişkisini değerlendirmektir.

Çalışmanın sonuçları, öğretmenlerin öğrenme ve öğretme ile ilişkin inançlarının öğrencilik yıllarında oluştuğunu göstermektedir. Öğretmenler öğrencilik yıllarında kendilerine iyi öğretmenleri model olarak aldıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenler öğretmen merkezli yaklaşım yerine, öğrenci merkezli yaklaşımın kullanılması taraftarı olduklarını belirttiler. Öğrencilerin sınıflarda aktif katılımı ve dili kullanmalarının da önemini eklediler. Öğretmenler bunlara ek öğrencilerinin dil öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını ve gereksinimlerini de göz önünde bulundurduklarını ve öğrencilerin onlar için önemli olduklarını söylediler. İkili çalışma ve grup çalışmalarının öneminden bahseden öğretmenler, öğrencilerin dili en etkili bu tür çalışmalarda kullanabileceklerinin vurguladılar. Fakat öğretmenlerin sınıf içi uygulamalarında, inançlarını derslerine uygulayamadıklarını belirttiler. Bunun başlıca sebepleri öğrencilerin beklentileri ve müfredatın onları sınırlamasından dolayı olduğunu açıkladılar. Öğretmenlerden sadece bir tanesi ikili ve grup çalışmalarını çok sık kullanma taraftarı olmadığını ve bunların yerine tüm sınıf tartışmasını tercih ettiğini belirtti. Bu öğretmene göre ikili ve grup çalışmasında, öğrencileri kontrol etmek zordur. Diğer öğretmenler ise bu tür çalışmaları kullandıklarını, fakat bu çalışmalarda öğretmenin rolünün önemli olduğunu söylediler. Özet olarak, öğretmenler inançlarının ve uygulamalarının çatıştığının farkına vardıklarında, inançlarını uygulamalarına uyarlama girişiminde bulundular. Önemli bir başka bulgu ise öğretmenler öğrencilerinin beklentileri doğrultusunda inançlarına ters de olsa bazı uygulamalar yapmaya gönüllü olmalarıdır. Bu öğretmenler için öğrencilerinin ihtiyaçları ve beklentileri hayli önemliydi.

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