

EXPLORING IN-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINEES' AND TRAINERS' PRACTICE AND BELIEFS IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

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Introduction

Exploring in-service training (hereafter INSET) provides teachers with an opportunity “to throw light on the complex processes taking place in schools and classrooms” (Burgess et al., 1993: 173). It is noteworthy that research “into INSET for teachers of languages which are not their mother tongue” is limited (Roberts, 1998: 97). Moreover, to our knowledge, beliefs of language teacher trainers have received scant attention in pertinent studies. In this naturalistic inquiry, therefore, we explored in-service English language teacher trainees' and their trainers' beliefs and reported practice in the Northern Cyprus educational context.

The English language situation in Cyprus is interesting, in that the island has a history of British rule (1878-1960). However, at present the English language in Northern Cyprus is not used for official purposes, but rather, is widely spoken as a *lingua franca* for cross-cultural communication. English is also extensively used for educational purposes; it is part of the compulsory school curriculum, as a foreign language, within the National Education system, as well as the major medium of instruction at most colleges and universities in the north. The current study was conducted at one of the English-medium tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus, a member of the European University Association. It is an international university, with various faculties and schools offering degree programs in sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, law and medicine

Beliefs are regarded as statements teachers make about their ideas, thoughts and knowledge (Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis, 2004). Language teachers' beliefs and knowledge inherent in their cognition play “a pivotal role” in their professional lives; they develop cognitions related to various aspects of their teaching practice (Borg, 2006: 41, 283). A growing body of studies into language teacher cognition research over the past two decades “has demonstrated its potential for deepening our understandings of what it means to become and

be a teacher” (Borg, 2006: 1-2). Therefore, developing language teachers' awareness of their cognitions is crucial for INSET efficacy (Lamb, 1995) in that it can provide valuable insights into envisaged changes such as growth in trainees' professional knowledge, progress in learning and, consequently, development in practice throughout training.

Literature review

Teacher cognition is considered as “an often tacit, personally held, practical system of mental constructs held by teachers...” (Borg, 2006: 35). Related research, therefore, has been “concerned with understanding what teachers think, know and believe” (Borg, 2009: 1); nowadays it is “aligned particularly closely with work in teacher education...” (Borg, 2006: 35). Fostering cognitive changes is one of the major objectives of professional development, since “components of teacher cognition show a strong correlation to teachers' classroom practices” (Fishman et al., 2003: 645). INSET courses envisage improving trainees' teaching competence and professional growth (Hopkins, 1986; Kennedy, 1995; Knight, 2002; Veenman et al., 1994), and in recent years, they have changed with the major focus currently on professional learning and institutional needs (Craft, 1996), as well as on professional innovation and change (Fullan, 1993). INSET courses within the social constructivism framework can promote teacher learning through cycles of related activities, integrating its various dimensions (Roberts, 1998: 46).

Cognition, teaching practices and cognitive changes in in-service language teachers have become one of the central themes of cognition research (Bailey, 1996; Breen et al., 2001; Freeman, 1993; Woods, 1996). More recently, cognitions of INSET language teachers in relation to professional development experiences in their contexts have been explored by Atay (2004), Lamie (2004), Liyanage and Bartlett (2008), Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis (2008). However, only a limited number of studies into

cognition and *reported* practices of INSET language teachers, mostly trainees, have been conducted over the past decades.

In this regard, the cognition of secondary school INSET teachers, including their beliefs about classroom practices, were examined by Richards, Tung and Ng (1992). The study demonstrated the relationship of the trainees' cognitions to their teaching practice, professional training and approaches to language teaching. Cognitive changes in bilingual teachers engaged in teacher education, and a relation between their beliefs and reported practices were found by Flores (2001). These studies have provided evidence for the dynamic nature of beliefs, specifically, the influence of language teacher education on cognition, as well as a relation between trainee teachers' beliefs and teaching experience. The relevant studies have also demonstrated that INSET language teachers reconstruct their instructional practice through engagement in professional discourse to rename their experiences, and consequently, give new/different meanings to their professional actions (Freeman, 1993).

It is noteworthy that research to date has mostly focused on the language teacher trainees' beliefs, but has not explored the cognitions of INSET trainers, which motivated us to undertake the present study. To our knowledge, only Kern (1995) investigated cognitions and related changes of undergraduate students of French, as well as of their instructors. The assumption in the study was that the participants' congruent beliefs about language learning might have a positive effect on the students' learning experiences. However, a lack of congruence between the students' and their instructors' beliefs identified at the beginning mostly persisted. Interestingly, some beliefs were more incongruous towards the end of the study. Teacher trainees and trainers, therefore, can hold both congruent and incongruous beliefs, and some of their cognitions may not change over time.

The findings of the research to date have been summarized by Phipps and Borg (2007) and can be listed as follows:

- “teachers’ cognitions can be powerfully influenced by their own experiences as learners;
- these cognitions influence what and how teachers learn during teacher education;

- they act as a filter through which teachers interpret new information and experience;
- they may outweigh the effects of teacher education in influencing what teachers do in the classroom;
- they can be deep-rooted and resistant to change;
- they can exert a persistent long-term influence on teachers’ instructional practices;
- they are, at the same time, not always reflected in what teachers do in the classroom;
- they interact bi-directionally with experience (i.e. beliefs influence practices but practices can also lead to changes in beliefs)” (Borg, 2009: 3).

Research questions

In the light of the limited studies into cognition and reported practices of language teacher trainees and trainers at the in-service level, the present naturalistic inquiry aimed to explore both INSET English language teacher trainees' and trainers' reported practices and beliefs, focusing on cognitive changes, if any, over the training course. It adopted Borg's framework for language teacher cognition research in order to examine “evidence of change (or lack of it)” in language teachers' cognitions (Borg, 2006: 70). The study was conducted over 18 months, throughout the course implementation, and it addressed the following research questions:

1. What beliefs about teaching practice did the INSET English language teacher trainees and trainers hold at the start of the course?
2. What were the trainees' and their trainers' beliefs in the interim?
3. Was there evidence of cognitive change in the participants towards the course completion?

Method

Context

The study was conducted at an English-medium tertiary institution in Northern Cyprus. The undergraduate degree programs at the institution include English language courses aimed at developing students' academic English knowledge and skills, mostly in the first year of their studies. Language teachers assigned to

teaching these courses are holders of BA degrees in ELT as well as BA in English studies and a teaching certificate. Although prospective English language teachers complete one semester of teaching practice towards their graduation, the complexity and diversity of the real language classroom is challenging not only for novices, but also for experienced teachers. It is also very demanding for those language teachers who wish to further develop professionally to combine full-time teaching with in-service training. Moreover, language teachers have to take into account their students' different English language proficiency levels, mostly ranging from the passing score of 60 and above on the institutional proficiency test, as well as different academic needs of the degree programs.

Participants

The study involved thirteen English language practicing teachers who had applied for and completed a university-based INSET course. Unlike their other colleagues, they did not have any previous in-service training experience. Of the 13 trainees, 3 were male and 10 female, with an average of 5 years of teaching experience. Eleven of the participants held BA degrees in English, 2 BA degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT). The native language of 11 course takers was Turkish, and 2 participants reported English to be their first language. Throughout their training, all the trainees continued to teach English courses at the university. The study also involved five teacher trainers from the same institution, with training qualifications from one of the UK-based examination bodies. Two of the trainers were female, 3 male; two of them were native English, and 3 native Turkish speakers, averaging 7.6 years of training experience.

Regarding the ethical considerations, the researchers applied for and were granted permission to conduct their research at the institution. All the teacher trainees as well as their trainers gave their written consent to participate in the study. They signed to the effect that they were aware of the purpose of the study, and that there was no risk involved in their participation. It was also made clear by the researchers that the participants' names would not be used in prospective reports.

Course

The course aimed to provide the English teachers with in-service training, ensuring

balance between the demands of practical application and understanding of theoretical background. The course content was designed to develop the candidates' awareness and ability in terms of language development, methodology, and practical teaching. It also took into consideration the academic English needs of faculties and schools at the institution (see: Appendix A). The course was conducted in 3 modules, over a period of 18 months; its content was delivered through weekly-scheduled two-hour input sessions. Moreover, the participants had an hour weekly tutorial sessions with their trainers and peers. In addition to the group tutorials, each trainee also had a weekly scheduled tutorial hour with his/her trainer individually. The number of individual tutorials varied according to the needs of each trainee. Further, the course also had a web site where additional input was provided by the trainers and related links. Whole group discussions on the topics covered were also encouraged in this site. Throughout the course the trainees had 4 assessed teaching practice sessions, they completed 4 methodology assignments, 6 language development tasks, 6 peer observation tasks, and 2 micro-teachings. At the end of the course, the trainees also took a formal examination.

Data collection

In order to capture the English language teacher trainees' and trainers' cognitions over the training process the study adopted a mixed design. It employed multiple data collection strategies: questionnaires, interviews, evaluation forms, and retrospective accounts. At the start of the course, after the trainees' first teaching practice was observed without formal assessment, a pre-questionnaire based on the trainers' observation checklists was administered both to them and their trainees. The questionnaire comprised 28 statements related to various aspects of teaching practice, on a five-point Likert scale ("strongly agree" =5, "agree" =4, "undecided" =3, "disagree" =2, and "strongly disagree" =1). The administration procedure aimed to obtain the participants' initial beliefs, specifically, if the trainees agreed or disagreed that they were good at various aspects of language command, lesson preparation, classroom teaching and personal qualities. The trainers completed the same pre-questionnaire for each of their trainees respectively; specifically, they indicated their agreement/disagreement as regards each

trainee’s competence in terms of the same aspects of teaching practice.

In the interim, semi-structured interviews based on an interview guide designed by the researchers (see: Appendix B) were held with all trainers individually. The guide was based around two major themes, the trainees’ teaching practice and professional learning. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researchers. They were conducted in a flexible, open-ended manner, and provided additional insights in relation to the themes being explored. Further, the INSET course coordinator requested the trainees to anonymously evaluate the course in terms of its content, organization, methodology, and teaching practice.

In the final course evaluation, the trainees wrote about their reasons for course enrolment, whether it met their expectations, as well as the content areas they found most/least useful. Copies of the trainees’ completed course evaluation (interim and final) forms (see: Appendices C and D) were obtained by the researchers from the course coordinator.

Towards the course completion, after the last observed and assessed teaching practice, a post-questionnaire, identical to the pre-questionnaire, was administered to the trainees and their trainers. The procedure aimed to elicit the participants’ beliefs regarding the trainees’ competence in teaching practice, focusing on evidence of cognitive change, if any, at the end of the course. In the post-questionnaire, all respondents were also requested to write brief retrospective accounts of their professional development experiences on the basis of the questions prepared by the researchers (see: Appendix E). Specifically, the trainees stated their reasons for taking the course, if it met their expectations, what they found most and least useful, and the role of the trainers and peers in their professional development. The trainers

also wrote about the most and least useful things, and the role of individual and group tutorials in their trainees’ professional growth.

Data analysis

The pre- and post- questionnaires administered to the participants aimed to elicit their positive and negative responses in relation to the trainees’ competence in various aspects of teaching practice. The quantitative reports were statistically processed for identification and comparison of the trainees’ and trainers’ responses, and the average for each aspect of teaching practice was calculated. In this study, the aspects with the averages below M=3.5 (not rounding up to the nearest positive “agree” =4) were regarded as problematic and needing improvement.

The qualitative data comprising the teacher trainers’ interim interview reports, the trainees’ interim and final course evaluation reports, and both the trainees’ and trainers’ retrospective accounts were content analysed (Patton, 2002). The data sets were processed, systematically coded and categorized in terms of the key theme in this study, teaching practice of the trainees (personal qualities, language command, lesson preparation and classroom teaching) until no further modifications were required. The data collected over the training were triangulated and interpreted to explore the participants’ beliefs, and to draw inferences about their relation to the trainees’ teaching practice. The main focus in this inquiry was on cognitive change, if any, in the language teacher trainees and their trainers over the INSET implementation.

Results

At the start and end of the course, the trainees and trainers filled in the same questionnaire to rate the trainees’ competence in terms of various aspects of teaching practice. Although the number of the participants was not statistically

Table 1: The trainees’ pre-questionnaire reports on their competence in lesson preparation (n = 13).

I am good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson	7.7%	23.1%	46.2%	15.4%	7.7%	3.08	1.038
Being aware of the importance of the lesson plan	7.7%	38.5%	23.1%	23.1%	7.7%	3.15	1.144
Considering timing of each activity	7.7%	30.8%	46.2%	7.7%	7.7%	3.23	1.013
Balancing the activities	7.7%	46.2%	30.8%	15.4%	-	3.46	.877

Table 2: The trainers’ pre-questionnaire reports on the trainees’ competence in lesson preparation (n=13).

Trainee is good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson		23.1%	38.5%	38.5%		2.85	.801
Balancing the activities	15.4%	38.5%	30.8%	7.7%	7.7%	3.46	1.127

large, exploring and comparing the trainees’ and trainers’ questionnaire responses was part of the research design in this study. Analysis of the pre-questionnaire reports revealed that most respondents strongly agreed and agreed that the trainees were competent in terms of *language command* and *personal qualities*. However, both the trainees’ and trainers’ responses suggested that several aspects of the trainees’ *lesson preparation* and most aspects of *classroom teaching* were problematic. These findings warranted attention, and this study therefore focused on the trainees’ and trainers’ related beliefs, and cognitive changes, if any, towards the course completion.

Lesson preparation

At the start of the course, the quantitative analysis of the pre-questionnaire data revealed incongruence between the trainees’ and their trainers’ beliefs in relation to those aspects of the trainees’ competence in *lesson preparation* that were perceived as problematic (responses averaging below 3.5). In this regard, the trainees’ reports suggested the following aspects of their competence to be problematic: *clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson*, *being aware of the importance of the lesson plan*, *considering timing of each activity*, and *balancing the activities* (illustrated in Table 1).

Interestingly, the trainers’ related responses seem to indicate problems in the trainees’ competence only in *clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson* and in *balancing activities* (illustrated in Table 2).

As the training proceeded, the trainees felt that they were learning in terms of *lesson*

preparation. In their interim course evaluations, they reported that they were benefiting from the course in terms of the following:

...what I was practising so far in terms of preparing tasks, lessons, etc...

I have gained a lot in terms of lesson planning and preparing tasks.

The way I plan teaching lessons and the array of new ideas in teaching my classes.

Interestingly, in the interim interviews, the trainers also reported that the trainees, individually, and as a group, were showing promising progress in *being more aware of their aims* and *lesson planning*, as the excerpts below illustrate:

...Yes, she’s definitely improved on preparation. Hmmm, now she’s got more variety in tasks, mmm good staging, more aware of her aims.

...Pretty thorough. She thinks a lot now about what she is doing. She thinks ... through things like aims.

...there is an upward curve and definite progress, one of the things that applies ... to the others as well. If I don’t mention that again, it’s not only the preparation has got better, the lesson plan, they have sort of started to structure good aims.

The interviewees also shared their beliefs about some promising changes in relation to problems previously observed in the trainees’ *balancing the activities*:

...she didn’t have enough time to do all the activities she put on the paper. And on the paper ... everything looks OK. Later on, she

Table 3: The trainees’ post-questionnaire reports on their competence in lesson preparation (n = 13).

I am good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Mean	Std. deviation
Clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson	46.2%	15.4%	38.5%	4.08	.954
Being I aware of the importance of the lesson plan	61.5%	23.1%	15.4%	4.46	.776
Considering timing of each activity	46.2%	23.1%	30.8%	4.15	.899
Balancing activities	30.8%	38.5%	30.8	4.00	.816

Table 4: The trainers' post-questionnaire reports on the trainees' competence in lesson preparation (n=13).

Trainee is good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson	15.4%	61.5%	23.1%		3.92	.641
Balancing the activities	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%		4.08	.760
Considering timing of each activity	23.1%	53.8%	15.4%	7.7%	3.92	.862
Choosing suitable materials methods for the level/type of class	23.1%	53.8%	15.4%	7.7%	3.92	.862

started being more aware of this, putting fewer activities and getting into depth of those activities.

Before ...it was like two lessons in one. So, it was a kind of one main activity and then another one which wasn't necessarily following each other. She has made a lot of improvement on that. Now, again, she put a lot of effort into...very well-prepared lessons together with professionally designed materials and most of them are her own work.

The trainers noted the progress in the trainees' *lesson preparation* as well:

I remember his first draft lesson plans. Especially in writing aims, I mean in mind maybe he had his aims, but not very clear on paper. So, we had to work, especially on putting together his aims in so far as they are being clear, achievable. They weren't at the beginning, ... he is making progress on that, but he has to still work on that.

...at the beginning, she wasn't very good at it. She has improved in this area, but still she sometimes does not consider this while she is putting something in her plans. She needs to spend more time on preparation before the observations.

I remember her first lesson plans, they needed a lot of improvement, but eventually as I said, having observed her and as she became more aware of her weaknesses in the class, her preparation progressed quite a lot.

Importantly, towards the course completion, the trainees' and trainers' post-questionnaire reports, related to the initially problematic aspects of the trainees' competence in *lesson preparation*, were mostly consistent with the trainees' course evaluation reports and the

trainers' interview reports. Specifically, the trainees' responses (averaging 4 and above) to the aspects of *clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson*, *being aware of the importance of the lesson plan*, *considering timing of each activity* and *balancing activities* suggested changes in their beliefs and improvement in the related competence (illustrated in Table 3).

The trainers' reports on their trainees' competence in *balancing the activities* also suggested the trainees' development of competence in *lesson preparation*. However, the trainers' responses (still averaging below 4) indicated that the trainees did not significantly improve their competence in *clarifying and specifying the aims of each lesson*, *considering timing of each activity*, and *choosing suitable materials/methods for the level/type of class* (illustrated in Table 4).

Finally, in the end-of-course evaluations, in relation to *lesson preparation*, the trainees' beliefs, stated in response to what content areas they found most useful, supported the suggested positive changes in their cognitions and professional learning:

...dealing with materials was the most useful area in the course. Also lesson planning (arranging time, presentation-practice-production, stages, interaction types)...

Designing perfect lesson plans and learning a variety of task types I could implement in my lessons.

Lesson planning was also mentioned most frequently among the most useful things in terms of professional learning in the trainees' retrospective accounts:

Table 5: The trainees' pre-questionnaire reports on their competence in classroom teaching (n=13).

I am good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Being careful with the pace of the lesson		53.8%	23.1%	23.1%	3.31	.855
Giving proper feedback on the students' written work	15.4%	23.1%	38.5%	23.1%	3.31	1.032
Organising seating arrangement	7.7%	53.8%	7.7%	30.8%	3.38	1.044
Providing a smooth progress among the activities		46.2%	46.2%	7.7%	3.38	.650
Staging the activities	15.4%	23.1%	53.8%	7.7%	3.46	.877

I can say that I improved myself in terms of lesson planning...

I believe that I improved my skills in designing, selecting and deciding about tasks and materials that best correspond to ss needs...

I feel more comfortable in teaching and designing my lesson/which was my main objective...

I have developed my ability to integrate all the skills into a lesson to add a variety. I have learned the importance of a lesson plan and have gained the ability to prepare communicative and interactive lessons and activities overall.

Classroom teaching

At the start of the course, the analysis of the pre-questionnaire responses (averaging below 3.5) revealed incongruence between the English language teacher trainees' and their trainers' beliefs about several problematic aspects of the trainees' competence in *classroom teaching*. The

trainees perceived problems in *being careful with the lesson pace, giving proper feedback on the students' written work, organizing seating arrangements, staging the activities and providing a smooth progress among activities* (illustrated in Table 5).

Staging activities was also perceived as problematic by the trainers, however, they also reported problems in other aspects of the trainees' competence such as *checking learning / comprehension, asking graded / directed / appropriate questions, organizing pair / group work activities, summarizing and concluding lesson, dealing with texts / dialogs appropriately, giving clear / concise / checked instructions, achieving the lesson aim, and fostering genuine language use* (illustrated in Table 6).

As the training progressed, the trainees felt that they were improving their *classroom teaching*. In their interim course evaluations, they stated that they were benefiting from the course in terms of the following:

Table 6: The trainers' pre-questionnaire reports on the trainees' competence in classroom teaching (n=13).

Trainee is good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Checking learning	7.7%	30.8%	23.1%	38.5%	3.08	1.038
Asking graded, directed and appropriate questions	7.7%	30.8%	30.8%	30.8%	3.15	.987
Organising pair/group work activities	15.4%	15.4%	53.8%	15.4%	3.31	.947
Staging the activities	15.4%	15.4%	53.8%	15.4%	3.31	.947
Summarising and concluding the lesson	7.7%	53.8%	30.8%	7.7%	3.38	.768
Dealing with texts and dialogs appropriately	7.7%	46.2%	30.8%	15.4%	3.46	.877
Giving clear, concise and checked instructions		61.5%	23.1%	15.4%	3.46	.776
Achieving the aim of the lesson	15.4%	46.2%	38.5%	-	3.46	1.050
Fostering genuine language use	15.4%	38.5%	23.1%	23.1%	3.46	1.050

...I feel that I developed my classroom management techniques, giving feedback appropriate to the level of the ss and exploiting materials.

I have learnt more classroom management techniques and pedagogical guidance as well...

The issues I've improved: classroom management, giving feedback, group and pair work (roles in groups!), preparing listening tasks...

I had problems with time management in my lessons. I can say that I'm doing better now (at least so far)...

The trainers' interim interview reports on the trainees' related professional learning were positive. The interviewees thought that since the start of the course there had been "a rising curve", and almost all the trainees had been "improving" in *classroom teaching*, as the excerpts below illustrate:

When it comes to actual classroom performance, she's made a lot of progress...

...There are a lot of positive elements and considering the profile I've been given by the previous tutor, it seems like there is quite a lot of progress going on there.

The trainers also shared their beliefs about problems previously observed in the trainees' teaching practice, specifically giving clear, concise, and checked instructions, and presenting the materials in a meaningful and contextualized way. Importantly, they noted some promising changes in this regard:

...for example, she was giving instructions and distributing worksheets or role cards at the same time and no checking. ...she was giving more floor to the students in the last observations. In that sense she has improved in that area.

...while she was giving instructions for the activities in her second observation, she was giving very very long instructions and repeating herself. As a result of this, she had very high TTT. In the following observations, she paid particular attention and improved her instructions.

...he had the potential right from the beginning, but putting ... sort of a meaningful, sequential order of the activities, he's made a lot of improvement and he's quite aware of this as well.

The other thing was she had an activity-based lesson. There was no context in the lesson. Students were doing the activities, but she didn't create any context. They didn't know why they were doing this. In her following observation, she has improved in this area.

However, the trainers were still observing problems in the trainees' *organizing pair and group work activities* in the classroom:

In terms of classroom management skills, she had problems in seating arrangement. She wasn't paying any attention to how students were sitting in her class at the beginning. In her following observations, she has improved in this area. She pairs and groups students very clearly, but she doesn't consider when to use pair work or group work.

She doesn't involve students in the lesson that much. Her lessons are between herself and one student almost all the time.

The trainers also believed that *giving instructions* and *checking learning* were the trainees' common problems, and that they should further improve their related teaching practice:

There is a slight tendency when some of them still do ... kind of lecture the students to talk about the language rather than to get them to do something with language. When the students get confused, when something has been explained to them in a rather complicated way, sometimes when the students don't seem to pick that up the things, the students can't actually do what it is there they are going to do. But, in fact, they can do it. They just can't talk about it. So you know little things like that going on. So, I mean, solid progress but it can go further.

Towards the course completion, the trainees' and trainers' post-questionnaire reports in relation to the initially problematic aspects of the trainees' *classroom teaching* supported the trainees' course evaluation reports and the trainers' interview reports. The trainees' post-questionnaire responses (averaging above 4) suggested positive changes in their beliefs as well as competence in *being careful with the lesson pace*, *giving proper feedback on the students' written work*, *organizing seating arrangements*, and *staging the activities*. However, their responses (averaging below 4) did not indicate adequate improvement in such aspects of classroom teaching as *providing a smooth progress among activities*, *asking graded / directed / appropriate questions*, *dealing with texts / dialogs appropriately* and *summarizing / concluding lesson* (illustrated in Table 7).

Interestingly, the trainers' related reports suggested improvement in the trainees' competence in the initially problematic *asking graded / directed / appropriate questions*, *staging activities*, *organizing pair/group work activities*, *giving clear, concise / checked instructions* and *achieving the lesson aim*. However, their responses (averaging below 4) did not indicate adequate development in the

Table 7: The trainees’ post-questionnaire reports on their competence in classroom teaching (n=13).

I am good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Being careful with the pace of the lesson	46.2%	23.1%	23.1%	7.7%	4.08	1.038
Giving proper feedback on the students’ written work	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%		4.08	.760
Organising seating arrangement	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%		4.15	.801
Staging the activities	46.2%	38.5%	15.4%		4.31	.751
Providing a smooth progress among the activities	23.1%	46.2%	30.8%		3.92	.760
Asking graded, directed appropriate questions	7.7%	61.5%	30.8%		3.77	.599
Dealing with texts/ dialogs appropriately	23.1%	46.2%	30.8%		3.92	.760
Summarising / concluding the lesson	15.4%	53.8%	30.8%		3.85	.689

trainees’ *checking learning / comprehension, summarizing / concluding lesson, dealing with texts / dialogs appropriately*, and *fostering genuine language use*. Moreover, the trainees’ performance in *giving proper feedback on the students’ written work* (M=3.38), as well as *giving homework / information related to the next lesson* (same M=3.62) were reportedly somewhat problematic (illustrated in Table 8).

In their retrospective accounts, the trainees stated the most useful aspects of their professional learning for *classroom teaching* as follows:

Exploring the four skills...grammar and vocabulary in terms of teaching. The parts of a lesson such as how it should be checked and monitored.

Moderations/observations have led me to understand that timing, preparation is needed and to be thought over to be able to construct a good lesson for learners.

Exploiting materials; adjusting the level of the tasks to the level of the students; methods to be used.

I can say that I improved myself in terms of lesson planning, classroom management, classroom activities.

Table 8: The trainers’ post-questionnaire reports on the trainees’ competence in classroom teaching (n=13).

Trainee is good at	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Mean	Std. deviation
Checking learning	15.4%	38.5%	30.8%	15.4%	3.54	.967
Asking graded, directed and appropriate questions	30.8%	53.8%	15.4%		4.15	.689
Organising pair/group work activities	30.8%	46.2%	23.1%		4.08	.760
Staging the activities	30.8%	53.8%	15.4%		4.15	.689
Summarising and concluding the lesson	15.4%	53.8%	30.8%		3.85	.801
Dealing with texts and dialogs appropriately	23.1%	53.8%	15.4%	7.7%	3.92	.862
Giving clear, concise and checked instructions	30.8%	53.8%	15.4%		4.15	.689
Achieving the aim of the lesson	38.5%	38.5%	23.1%		4.08	.641
Fostering genuine language use	30.8%	30.8%	30.8%	7.7%	3.85	.987
Giving proper feedback on the students’ written work	7.7%	23.1%	69.2%		3.38	.650
Giving homework/ information related to the next lesson	15.4%	30.8%	53.8%		3.62	.768

...enriching the way I introduce my teaching points...keeping the class rhythm alive with a variety of activities...

Discussion

The present paper focused on cognitive changes, if any, in the English language teacher trainees and trainers throughout the INSET training. The course participants shared valuable insights into their cognitions that we regarded as related to their professional learning and classroom experiences (Borg, 2009). Towards the course completion, the trainees' initial beliefs related to several problematic aspects of *lesson preparation* changed, suggesting their learning as well as improvement in the related competence. However, in this regard, the trainers did not believe that their trainees adequately developed their related competence, except *balancing the activities*.

At the end of the course, the participants' incongruous beliefs about *classroom teaching* mostly underwent changes, therefore suggesting development of the trainees' *teaching practice*. The trainees believed they improved their related competence, however they still required development in *providing a smooth progress among activities, asking questions, dealing with texts / dialogs appropriately* and *summarizing / concluding lesson*. In this regard, the trainers also believed that the trainees improved their *classroom teaching*, however, they reported inadequate development in the trainees' *checking learning / comprehension, summarizing / concluding lesson, dealing with texts / dialogs appropriately*, and *fostering genuine language use*.

Consideration of these findings, especially related to the trainees' problems with *checking learning*, as well as *fostering genuine language use*, in light of the current language learning theories and practice, suggests the following. The English language teachers involved in the present study need to provide more opportunities and encouragement for their language learners to interact with their peers and the teacher, through 'collaborative dialogues' (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) in the target language, in order to co-construct knowledge. This can be implemented through communication tasks providing context for the target language use. Importantly, such activities have cognitive as well as social dimensions and they mediate language learning (Swain, 2000: 97). Moreover, language instructors can also consider integration of language learning with content learning, CLIL, which is conducive to creating a more effective language learning environment (Dalton-Puffer, 2007) in their classrooms.

Further, the findings of the cognitive changes in the participants, and the suggested improvement in the trainees' language *teaching practices* are consistent with the research which has provided evidence for the dynamic nature of beliefs (Flores, 2001) as well as the relationship between language teacher cognitions and their practices (Borg, 2009; Freeman, 1993; Richards et al., 1992). Furthermore, our findings indicated that towards the course completion, the trainers' beliefs about certain aspects of their trainees' competence in *lesson preparation*, as well as in *classroom teaching* somewhat persisted or did not change, thus being incongruous with the beliefs of their trainees, however, to a lesser extent, which is at variance with Kern's study (1995).

Importantly, the participants in this study were making their cognitions explicit and becoming critically aware of their "past experiences, and current beliefs, practice and knowledge" (Roberts, 1998: 46) through questionnaires, course evaluations, as well as individual tutorials, observations and assignments. The INSET course provided them "opportunities to clarify ...own meanings" and promoted "social relationships that support changing views of self as teachers" (Roberts, 1998: 45) through such integrated activities as peer observations, microteaching sessions, group tutorials, and on-line discussions. Moreover, the language teacher trainees had opportunities to reflect on their professional learning and teaching experiences as their retrospective accounts illustrate:

...with the experience I gained in class, I connected this course, and now I feel more confident, educated, realistic and creative...

...now I know what I am doing and why I am doing it...

The trainees' cognitions, however, might not be reflected in their actual teaching practice (Borg, 2009).

Finally, the persistent beliefs of the participants and the inadequate development of some aspects of the trainees' teaching practice can be accounted for by the fact that teacher cognitions "can be deep-rooted and resistant to change"; moreover, "they can exert a persistent long-term influence on teachers' instructional practices" (Borg, 2009: 3). Further, although "long-term change promoted by INSET courses" is possible, its "temporal extent and width of application" (Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008: 289), the uptake of training (Lamb, 1995) can be questionable. Furthermore, individual needs of the trainees,

the degree of relevance (Fullan, 1982) of some content areas of the training practices for the language classroom realities, as well as some situational factors (Borg, 2006; Hayes, 1997; Lamb, 1995) can be another reason for lack of the cognitive change.

Conclusion

This study explored beliefs of the English language teacher trainees and trainers over the INSET training course. The related findings can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of congruence between the teacher trainees' and trainers' beliefs at the start of the in-service training course in terms of several problematic aspects of *lesson planning* as well as *classroom teaching*;
- Development of the participants' cognitions in the interim;
- Promising congruence between the trainees' and trainers' beliefs on completion of the INSET training;
- Suggested improvement in the teacher trainees' professional practice towards the end of training;
- However, persistence and lack of change in some participants' beliefs, as well as continuing problems with certain aspects of *classroom teaching*, especially *checking learning* and *fostering genuine language use*.

Overall, triangulation of the multiple data towards the course completion revealed positive cognitive changes in the participants, suggesting progress in the trainees' professional learning, growth in knowledge as well as development in teaching practice.

This study is not without some limitations such as employing self-report instruments, pre- and post-questionnaires administered to the course participants. Further, the actual teaching practices of the trainees were not observed by the researchers. Questionnaires may not be adequate in terms of capturing the complexity of teacher beliefs. Therefore, the evidence of cognitive change in studies employing self-report instruments should be treated and interpreted with caution. However, in this study we assumed that the questionnaire "data based on and elicited in relation to observed classroom events" (Borg, 2006: 185-187, 280), as well as the interviews, evaluation documents, and retrospective accounts captured the trainees' and

trainers' cognitions related to the actual teaching practice.

The present study contributes to the research on teacher cognition in that it undertook exploration not only of the INSET trainees' but also trainers' beliefs and reported practice over the entire training course, which is still an underdeveloped area. Importantly, the study suggests some implications for the institutional training on offer, specifically reconsideration of its content and structure in terms of the identified problematic aspects in the trainees' teaching practice, especially in *checking learning* and *fostering genuine language use*. For example, the trainers can consider introducing into the course content and requirements 'collaborative dialogues' (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) in the target language, thus encouraging their trainees to assign communication tasks to their students in order to provide context for genuine language use as well as mediate language learning (Swain, 2000). The training on offer can also consider introduction into the course of CLIL, integrating language learning with content learning, in order to encourage teacher trainers to create a more effective language learning environment in their classrooms (Dalton-Puffer, 2007).

Further, teacher trainers themselves can undertake an ethnographic study for in-depth investigation and understanding of their own as well as trainees' training experiences, actual teaching practices and related cognitions. This approach may clarify incongruous beliefs, persistent beliefs, contextual constraints, and inform the teacher training on offer in terms of coherence, fine-tuning and improvement. Furthermore, teacher trainers can explore trainees' post-INSET cognitions and teaching practices to discover the impact of the course, specifically the acquired knowledge and skills, on their instructional practice and professional development. Finally, we would like to recommend that training institutions in other educational contexts consider conducting naturalistic inquiries into their trainees' and trainers' beliefs in order to ensure efficacy of their training services, improvement of teaching practices, and promotion of professional growth of all those involved.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all the colleagues who participated in the present study. Our special thanks go to Professor Simon Borg for his invaluable feedback on the initial draft of this paper.

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Appendix A

The INSET course content

The list of the topics covered throughout the course was as follows:

- Marking a set of learners' written work (Language Development Task iv)

- Input on peer observations
- Writing skills
 - What makes writing academic? (Genre, register, lexis, grammar)
 - Approaches to teaching writing (Sentence-paragraph, process-product, models, input, tasks)
 - Feedback and assessment
 - Materials production
- Textbook exploitation – EAP (Planning an EAP lesson)
- Oral presentations - Note-taking, tasks, peer-assessment (LDTi)
- Classroom management & Dealing with large classes
- Classroom management (microteaching)
- What else makes speaking ‘academic’? (Designing speaking tasks)
- Testing and assessing speaking
- Writing an academic proposal (LDTvi)
- Lesson plan aims
- Stages of a lesson
- Reading
 - Textbook exploitation
 - Supplementary reading
 - Designing reading activities
- Pair-work and group work activities (LDTii)
- What is grammar?
 - Language awareness
 - Teaching grammar
 - Grammar and EAP
 - Micro-teaching
- Vocabulary
 - What is lexis? Lexical Awareness
 - Review of an article on vocabulary teaching (LDTv)
 - Teaching and learning vocabulary
 - Task-based learning – Integrating skills
 - Lexical approach
- Listening
- Sentence construction
- Computers in language teaching and learning
- Syllabus design

Appendix B

Interview Guide

1. Could you please briefly report on the interim progress of your trainee’s teaching practice in terms of:

- personal qualities

- language command
- lesson preparation
- classroom teaching

2. Could you please report on the trainees' professional learning so far?

Appendix C

Interim Evaluation

On-line component: For the first time, in order to keep input sessions to 2 hours weekly and avoid intensive weeks, we have extended the course to 18 months and introduced an on-line component. How do you feel about the on-line sessions conducted so far (On-line writing and Classroom Management)?

Content: How do you feel about the content of the course so far, in terms of relevance to your own teaching situation?

Organization: How do you feel about the organization of the course in terms of the topics covered, length of sessions, etc.?

Methodology: How do you feel about the methodology used in the course, i.e. input sessions led by trainers, presentations by teachers, peer observations, etc., ?

Teaching Practice: What are your feelings about the conduct of the observed lessons, teacher feedback and tutor feedback?

Personal and Professional Development: In what ways do you feel that you have benefitted from the course so far?

Do you have any suggestions for possible improvements to the course for next module?

Do you have any suggestions for any particular topics or themes that you would like to explore in the next module?

Appendix D

End of the course evaluation

1. What were your reasons for taking the course and to what extent has the course met your needs and expectations?
2. What content areas have you found most useful in the course?

3. What changes do you suggest making in the course?
 - a. Assignment cycle
 - b. Observation cycle
 - c. Input sessions
 - d. Tutorials
 - e. Others

Appendix E

The trainees' questions

1. Why did you decide to enrol on the course at the beginning? Please state your reasons.
2. Has the course met your expectations? Why? Why not?
3. Write 3 things that you have found most useful during the course for your professional development.
4. Comments/Suggestions
5. Write 3 things that you have found least useful during the course for your professional development.
6. Comments/Suggestions
7. What was the role of your trainers in your professional development?
8. What was the role of your peers in your professional development?

The trainers' questions

1. Write 3 things that you have found most useful during the course for your trainees' professional development.
2. Comments/Suggestions
3. Write 3 things that you have found least useful during the course for your trainees' professional development.
4. Comments/Suggestions
5. Can you please describe the role of the group tutorial in your trainees' professional development?
6. Can you please describe the role of the individual tutorials in you trainees' professional development?