

**Learning to Teach English: Untrained Beginning Teachers
During their First Year of Teaching in Syria**

Submitted by Abdulrahman Jesry to the University of Exeter
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Signature

Abdulrahman Jesry

This thesis is dedicated to my parents
for their love and support
and to Cyrine, my daughter.

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing consensus that learning to teach is a complex process. It is not only a simple matter of extending the pedagogical repertoire of content expertise. It is also about establishing oneself as a teacher within the institutional and instructional contexts of schools and classrooms and learning the norms of behaviour as well as how to respond to different sets of forces and dilemmas in the workplace. While the process of learning to teach has been well documented in general education, detailed studies on this phenomenon in the field of ELT have been rather limited in number. Further, the learning-to-teach literature has been focusing on teachers who have attended previous teacher education, but has rarely addressed the experiences of beginning teachers who start teaching without any previous preparation for the profession. This study narrates the story of learning to teach within the field of ELT as experienced by untrained beginning teachers in the first year of their teaching experience in Syria. Using multiple research methods such as autobiographical accounts, different kinds of interviews and classroom observation, the study aims to understand how these beginning teachers learn to teach English in private language centres. Findings suggest that the first-year experiences of learning to teach are shaped by pre-practice influences and in-practice influences. The pre-practice influences come in the form of personal beliefs formulated during teachers' prior school experiences. These beliefs are held either consciously or unconsciously and have clear impacts on beginning teachers' current conceptions and classroom practices. The in-practice influences, on the other hand, come from the workplace settings where beginning teachers work. In these settings, beginning teachers encounter a wide range of complications and challenges and show diverse responses to both macro- and micro-level sets of contextual factors within their educational institutions and classrooms. These findings could be used as a point of departure in order to introduce changes into the curricula of teacher education programmes in the Higher Institute of Languages at the University of Aleppo and other teacher education institutions in the region.

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List of Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BERA	British Education Research Association
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GE	General English
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HILs	Higher Institute of Languages
L1	First Language/Mother tongue
L2	Second/foreign Language
MA	Master of Arts
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCRTE	National Centre for Research on Teacher Education
OHP	Overhead Projector
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
TETE	Teaching English Through English
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TTT	Teacher Talking Time

Chapter One

Introduction

Learning to Teach in the ELT Domain

This introductory chapter outlines the scope and focus of this study. It provides information about the background of my research and how I became interested in my topic. It also introduces what the topic is generally about, the reasons why I have decided to do research on this topic and how it relates to the academic world around it.

Sections 1.1 and 1.2 provide the background of my study, which includes a description of my own experience as a beginning teacher. Section 1.3 provides the rationale of the study and show how my research topic has been triggered by my own teaching experience. In section 1.4, I articulate the main aim of the study and refer briefly to how I will research my topic. In section 1.5, I frame the research question which the thesis is going to be structured around. Section 1.6 involves a discussion of the significance of this study and the contribution it will make to our knowledge. Finally, in section 1.7, I outline the whole thesis with brief descriptions of each chapter in it.

1.1 How I became an English language teacher

In June 2005, I was appointed a full-time assistant teacher in the Higher Institute of Languages (HILs) at the University of Aleppo, Syria. The Syrian Ministry of Higher Education suggested that I was required to teach for one year, at the University of Aleppo, before I could pursue my fully-funded postgraduate studies in the UK. I was one of four scholar candidates who were expected to obtain TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) degrees in the UK to contribute, upon their return, to the design and implementation of the MA TEFL (Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language) programmes in the HILs.

The process of my employment consisted of providing documents which showed my BA (Bachelor of Arts) certificate issued by the Department of English Literature with the GPA (Grade Point Average) being the most essential component of the whole process. In fact, it is a common convention in the HILs and

the whole Syrian educational system that teachers are appointed in educational institutions based mainly on their BA graduation certificates from the faculties which have provided them with the relevant subject matter knowledge. Teachers never follow any teacher education programmes prior to their employment in the teaching profession. Zuber-Skerritt (1992: 3) refers to this case in higher education: “Unlike secondary school teachers, most teachers in higher education – especially in universities – have not had any professional preparation or training for teaching.” This situation has been changing in many countries where providing formal teacher education programmes has become a norm and expected standard. In the UK, for example, this is indicated in a report published in 2004 by the ‘Learning and Teaching Support Network’ official website on the establishment of courses that support new teachers in Higher Education:

Most UK institutions now offer PG Cert (HE) courses to support new academic staff. The SNAS project arose from a desire expressed amongst Course Tutors and Subject Centres to share information about subject specific resources to support new academic staff [LTSN Generic Centre, 2004, Available at: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/> Accessed: 14 June 2013].

However, this gap still exists in the Syrian educational system including preparatory and secondary education, too; teachers are expected to start their teaching career without any previous preparation for teaching. In my case, the transition between being a student and a teacher was quite abrupt. One day, I was sitting in a classroom as a student in the Department of English Literature to find myself the very next day facing alone 20 students in an old dark classroom in the HILs.

1.2 Being a beginning English language teacher

I was asked by the HILs’ management to teach a number of GE (General English) courses. My teaching schedule comprised two types of teaching duty. The first was to teach students inside the HILs, whereas the second involved me being sent to teach at the Faculties of Economics and Sciences at the University of Aleppo. For both duties, I was only given copies of the textbooks as well as my weekly teaching schedule, and then I was left alone to find my own paths into the world of teaching

when I had to do many things in and outside the classroom which were entirely new to me as a teacher. 'Facing teaching alone' is an accurate description that captures my situation in the first few months, and being under stress and pressure is what characterised my early teaching experience.

My biggest concern and cause of worry was classroom discipline, especially when teaching at the faculties. My first lesson took place in a huge auditorium in the Faculty of Sciences. At the beginning, students thought I was a student in their group, and they did not show any response when I stood at the front. This increased my anxiety, as I was now required to draw their attention in some way that I was their teacher. It took me some minutes of 'shouting' to get the students seated to find myself facing about 300 students. I felt I could not manage that big number, so I only introduced myself and the textbook we were required to cover, and then I left the room not wishing to come back to it again. In the second lecture with the same group, I asked all those students who did not bring their books to leave the room in order for me to have fewer students to teach and reduce students' noise and chatting as much as I could. After the lecture, I was called by the Dean who told me that I was not allowed to send all these numbers of students out of the classroom and that this act should not be repeated. In fact, in that course, I spent my lessons without writing anything on the board fearing that turning my back might result in so much noise on the students' part which will require me to 'shout' again to get everything back to normal.

Due to the big number of students in the faculties, my lessons followed a lecture format where I was the provider of information and students were passive recipients. I read the reading texts aloud and explained the new vocabulary and grammatical structures. Students listened and took notes of everything I said. In a staff meeting in the HILs, the Dean suggested that speaking and listening activities should be crossed out when teaching at the faculties although the textbook said on its cover that it was part of a communicative series designed to enhance interaction and communication in the language classroom. The Dean was of the opinion that encouraging speaking activities with hundreds of students would seem such an unmanageable, time-consuming process and that there would be so much noise produced which would affect lessons in adjoining classrooms. This meant to me

that students needed to be as quiet as possible in the learning process where classroom interaction needed to be minimised if not completely absent. Listening activities also had to be crossed out because neither of the faculties was equipped with the speakers and tape recorders needed to conduct this sort of activities. As for the language of instruction I used in the faculties, I chose it to be mainly Arabic based on the assumption that students had never had English lessons with English as the medium of instruction due to their having come from public-sector schools where the general teaching model was based on the translation of the target language components into Arabic. I also preferred Arabic because it would help avoid getting complaints from students or having to repeat myself in case students did not understand what I was saying.

In the HILs, on the other hand, classrooms were provided with tape recorders with sound amplifiers as well as video players with big screens. Accordingly, I was able to teach the listening activities I came across in the textbook. However, I did not have any clear idea of how listening activities could be conducted effectively, but because I had enrolled in a private language centre when I was a schoolboy, I tried to conduct the listening activities in the same way my teacher in the private language centre did. I asked students to look at the dialogue or text while listening, trying to follow with their eyes what the speakers were saying. I thought the purpose of these listening activities was to get students to listen to the correct pronunciation of English produced by real 'native' speakers. The language of instruction I used for my classes in the HILs was mainly English. Although I was not completely sure to what extent using English as a medium of instruction was beneficial to the learning process, I adopted this approach because I saw other teachers use English with their students. However, students sometimes asked for Arabic explanations. This made me think that using some Arabic in my classes would possibly help them learn faster. So, I started using some Arabic in my classes until one of my female colleagues, when passing by my classroom door, heard me using Arabic. She told other teachers in the staffroom about this incident, and it was like a scandal in the HILs that I was using Arabic in my classroom. She also threatened to tell the Dean that I was breaking the rules of the HILs. That was the first time I knew that there was such a policy in the institute. In fact, this incident

made me decide to stop using Arabic at all in my classroom fearing of any interference from the management and also decided to keep my classroom experiences to myself.

Generally, in both the faculties and the HILs, my teaching was all focused on the assigned textbooks. In the faculties, I felt comfortable to use the coursebook because my lessons consisted chiefly of reading texts and explaining English grammar, having had listening and speaking activities crossed out. Using the coursebook also helped me maintain control over the big number of students and reduce noise that could have been produced; students were all the time busy following the reading texts I was reading aloud or writing down on their books explanations of grammatical rules or answers to questions and exercises I was dictating them. As for the level of freedom I had in the faculties in choosing or skipping the coursebook components, I had the complete decision to choose the units, lessons and activities to be taught to my students because it was my responsibility alone to design the final exams for the student groups I taught. This meant that I could also decide the amount of language information to be given in every lecture. On the contrary, although the same approach of the textbook-based instruction was also used in the HILs, I hardly had any freedom over the textbook components in that I could never skip any activity due to the HILs' policy which stated that all textbook activities should be covered, including those in the workbook. Their assumption was that all students belonging to a certain grade level should be able to do the same test carried out at one specific time. Thus, my teaching strictly followed a fixed schedule suggested by the Head of the English Department at the HILs in which plans about the units and activities to be covered were made clear.

In general, I was more confident teaching the reading and grammar parts of the textbook than dealing with speaking, listening and writing. Teaching reading and grammar was straightforward and depended on the textbook which provided all the details needed. In other words, for every lesson, the textbook provided a reading text and a number of questions about it. I read the text aloud and provided the meanings of the new words. Then, I asked each student to read aloud one part of the text when I checked their pronunciation and provided corrections to it when

needed. After that, I asked students to do the questions of the text individually and then got some of them to tell the answers to the class. I finally wrote these answers up on the board to be checked and compared with other students' answers. Grammar lessons also followed one fixed pattern. I started the grammar lesson with writing up on the board the grammatical rules with one or two examples. I explained the rules and linked them with the examples. Students copied the rules and examples to their notebooks. After that, I asked them to open their textbooks and do some exercises where they came across more examples reinforcing the grammatical rules already explained. I got answers to the exercises from students and wrote them on the board. Students checked their own answers and made the changes needed on their textbooks.

Thus, this brief account has sketched some prominent aspects of my early teaching experience as I approached it as a beginning teacher without any kind of previous training or induction. In the following section, I will articulate my professional concern as well as the intellectual position for doing this research. These represent the rationale for my present study.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Although my early teaching experience was characterised by anxiety and uncertainty, I was able to teach after all, despite having had no previous teacher preparation or training of any kind. In fact, when I entered the classroom for the first time in my life, I was, in a way, ready to teach. Now, I look back on my early teaching experience with a sense of mystery and surprise - 'How did I know how to teach without any kind of previous preparation or training?' It seems that there is something mysterious about the profession of teaching that makes it seem like a naturally-acquired skill that is ready to be put in practice when it is needed (Applegate, 1989). So, how did I become a teacher despite the absence of prior professional preparation which, as education literature shows, beginning teachers are expected to obtain prior to entering the teaching career? (Wallace, 1991; Randall & Thorntom, 2001).

An explanation can be provided in the 'cultural transmission' model introduced by Lortie (1975) in his notion of the 'apprenticeship of observation': that beginning

teachers arrive at their classrooms with generalised notions and ideas about teaching derived from their prior learning experiences at schools and that the thousands of hours beginning teachers have spent watching their teachers in action since early childhood contribute to the creation of these notions and ideas and somehow exert an influence on their becoming teachers and on their early teaching experiences. Head and Taylor (1997: 25) put it like this, “memories of some of your own teachers can exert a powerful influence on your mental picture of the kind of teacher you would like (or not like!) to be.” For me, these memories seemed to have helped me become a teacher and influenced my perceptions of teaching and helped me make decisions in the classroom. The methods I adopted in teaching reading and grammar were derived from my early experiences as a learner. I was actually replicating the practices of my former teachers.

Further, I can also recall other influences coming from the surrounding teaching context on my early experience of becoming a teacher. As the previous account shows, the way I taught attended to a set of issues such as the common practices in the HILs and the faculties where managements’ decisions played a role in the way I was expected to teach and act. General instructions and codes of conduct suggested by the people in charge exerted a kind of pressure on me to teach and act in ways that coped with their rules and expectations.

Thus, I have decided to conduct this study because I believe that we need to penetrate deeply into the early stages of teachers’ experiences in order to understand the process of how they learn to teach.

Research on learning to teach is not a new phenomenon, but one that started in the late 1970s and 1980s. It emerged as a result of a movement in the research focus from describing the ‘best’ teaching practices that teachers were expected to acquire, which had been the predominant model until mid-1970s, to a considerable concentration on the role of the teacher in the teaching process. This shift contributed to the emergence of a research area called ‘teacher cognition’ or ‘teacher thinking’ which gave rise to the idea that, in order to obtain a better understanding of the teaching process and how people become teachers, researchers need to examine not only teachers’ behaviours but also the nature of what they know and think and how they learn to teach (Freeman & Richards,

1996). Research on learning to teach started to become an established area of educational research, but it was making slow progress. This was indicated by a comment raised by the National Centre for Research on Teacher Education (UK) in 1988, describing research on learning to teach as one that largely remained an 'unstudied problem' (NCRTE, 1988: 27). Since that period, a considerable amount of research on learning to teach has been undertaken, and certain areas such as the role of teachers' prior learning experiences (i.e. the 'apprenticeship of observation') started to receive acknowledgement. However, there was no equal progress within the field of ELT (English language teaching), and publications within this field have been rather limited if compared with the learning-to-teach research on general education. Freeman (1996: 351) points out that second language teacher education had been based more on established practice than on empirical research:

most conventional practices in language teacher education have operated like hand-me-down stories, folk wisdom shared as "truths" of the profession with little other than habit and convention on which to base them.

The field of ELT has been an isolated community, and many research findings derived from researching general education have not received equal attention within the ELT world (M. Borg, 2002). For a long time, people have been learning to teach foreign languages, but ELT research has paid little attention to the understanding of how these processes operate and what kind of knowledge and experience underlie them. Although some researchers have attempted to address this gap such as Bailey (1996), Johnson (1994), Numrich (1996) and Fradd & Lee (1998), there is still a need for more research in this area.

Moreover, surprisingly, there is little research done on beginning English language teachers who start their career without any previous preparation. I believe that we need research on this particular phenomenon, as there are big communities of English language teachers in and outside the Arab world who start teaching without previous training, and, research has hardly addressed this phenomenon to understand these untrained teachers' early experiences of becoming teachers and learning to teach.

Further, the last decade has witnessed a growing research interest in the influence of the working context on teachers' process of learning to teach, a fact that makes learning to teach a complex, multi-dimensional process. This, in turn, suggests that we need to probe more deeply into teachers' experiences while they do their work in their local settings and teaching contexts.

Given the role I have been destined for as an English language teacher who began teaching without previous training and as a prospective university teacher responsible for providing teacher education programmes to new teachers in the HILs, I set out this study to understand how beginning teachers, similar to myself, perceive their early teaching experiences and how they learn to teach English during the first year without any previous formal teacher education programmes and what this process of learning to teach consists of and what underlies it. The assumption is that understanding how teachers learn to teach may lead to a better understanding of the nature of language teaching (Freeman and Richards, 1996), which may, in turn, contribute to the design and implementation of more effective teacher education programmes in the future, such as the MA TEFL programmes in the HILs' in which I will be involved as a prospective teacher trainer. In the HILs, they started the MA TEFL programmes in 2010. The teachers who currently teach on these programmes are senior lecturers in the Department of English Literature. The course content consists of theoretical modules such as psycholinguistics and teaching approaches and methods. However, for teacher education to be so theoretical is not surprising because, as Farrell (2008: 52) notes, "language teacher education programmes have a history of emphasising 'How to teach' with its main stress on methods rather than what it means to be a language teacher." The literature on teacher education suggests that the first year of real-world teaching represents a 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984) and that second language teacher education needs to draw upon an understanding of teachers in their own teaching contexts in which learning to teach takes place so that more congruity between teacher education and how teachers learn to teach can be achieved.

Further, the MA TEFL courses in the HILs are currently small-scale projects offered to small numbers of students, usually the top graduates of the Department of English Literature. There are large numbers of English language teachers in

Syria who still enter the teaching profession without any previous teacher preparation. We know very little about the experiences and the 'reality shock' of these teachers who have not been prepared for teaching in any way.

1.4 Aim of the study

This study aims to understand more about the process of learning to teach within the field of ELT. It aims to provide a research-based contribution to our existing knowledge on how English language teachers, particularly those without previous training, learn to teach in the first year of their teaching experience. The study will explore the process of learning to teach as experienced by three Syrian untrained, first-year teachers who work for private language centres. The study employs multiple research tools and adopts a naturalistic approach which sets out to study individual teachers in their natural settings. These are intended to provide a thick description that is vital to the construction of a rich picture to fully understand the process of learning to teach.

1.5 The research question

The majority of studies on learning to teach have been conducted in the context of teacher education or on first-year teachers who have attended formal teacher education programmes. There appears to be a scarcity of studies which portray the experiences of English language teachers while they learn to teach in the first year without any previous teacher education programmes. Further, as Farrell (2008) observes, the experiences of first-year teachers have been well documented in general education, whereas those of first-year language teachers have received comparatively less attention in the language education literature. Thus, the study intends to address the following main research question:

- How do beginning English language teachers without any previous training learn to teach during the first year of their teaching experience?

There are two sub-questions which the study will specifically address:

- (a) What is the influence of prior learning experiences on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?
- (b) What is the influence of the teaching context on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?

Thus, the study portrays the lived experiences of untrained beginning teachers in the first year of teaching in terms of the past and present influences that shape these experiences. My view of learning to teach in this study draws on a teacher socialisation model, within which learning to teach is not only viewed as a process of extending the pedagogical repertoire of content expertise, but also establishing oneself as a teacher and the kind of underlying influences that shape such a process.

1.6 Significance of the study

Findings of this study will help capture an understanding of how teachers learn to teach. Communities of researchers in the field of learning to teach and professional development may find this work significant. This study will also be of significance to educators and professionals running initial and continuing teacher education programmes, and in Syria itself, as the basis for a discussion of teacher preparation as a mode of reform. Teacher practitioners, especially those who begin their teaching careers without any previous teacher preparation, may also find the findings of this study useful. They need to understand what their future experiences will be like as prospective English language teachers in the first year.

Further, the literature on learning to teach shows that the majority of studies and publications within this field have been carried out in the Western World. There are comparatively fewer attempts to extend research on learning to teach to the Arab World, and when these exist (e.g. Al-Khwaiter; 2001, Faour, 2003; Gahin, 2001), they seem to have a narrow focus on teachers' thinking and beliefs and how these affect classroom practice without considering the wider teaching context where teachers' work operates. A similar situation is found in the Syrian context where research focus has long been on ELT from SLA (second language acquisition) perspectives. To my knowledge, there have been only three studies, all conducted in the same year, which tackle learning to teach, but again with an exclusive focus

on the study of teachers' belief system. Gharib (2009) explores teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning at the secondary-level school education. Issa (2009) compares the beliefs held by Syrian and British teachers regarding EAP (English for Academic Purposes) writing at the university level, and Othman (2009) discusses teachers' beliefs with reference to teacher and learner autonomy at tertiary education. These studies deal with teachers' beliefs as existing in a vacuum in teachers' heads without considering the importance of contextual influences for understanding the process of learning to teach. It is hoped that this study will extend our knowledge of the many and varied locally-based practices of English language teaching whose practice appears to have long been defined and dominated by 'native' speakers (Hayes, 2009; Holliday, 2005).

In addition, all three Syrian studies have been conducted in public-sector contexts. The private sector, with its ethos and peculiarities, has been overlooked despite its importance and dominance over the ELT industry all over the world in general and in Syria in particular.

The study is also undertaken by a Syrian researcher who has taught in Syrian universities, institutes and private language centres and who shares the informants the same educational, linguistic and cultural background. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) argue that such an 'insider' stance help obtain a greater understanding of the culture in which research is undertaken. Smyth and Holian (2008, cited in Unluer, 2012: 1) argue that

insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it "really works". They know how to best approach people. In general, they have a great deal of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire.

So, in this study, being an insider-researcher is likely to lead to a greater understanding of the process of learning to teach than if it were conducted by an outside researcher.

Finally, the context of this study, however, is not typical of other ELT contexts worldwide, but to the extent that other contexts in other parts of Syria or other Arab countries are similar, the findings can extend to include these contexts as well. For example, the findings of this study might have insights for the neighbouring countries, as there is a growing community of language teachers from different

countries in the Middle East who want to work in the Arabic gulf countries, and many of them start teaching in private language centres without any previous teacher education programmes.

1.7 Overview of the study

In this introductory chapter, I have sketched out aspects of my own teaching experience and articulated my professional concerns which emerged from that experience. I have also addressed the rationale for conducting this study, the main aim of the study and its significance and how it relates to the world around it.

In chapter 2, I present the contextual background information that readers need to obtain in order to understand where participant teachers came from and what constitutes the essence of their prior classroom experiences as school and university learners. A full coverage of the educational culture in Syria, its emergence, prominent features and components and the educational traditions which have grown up will be provided in this chapter. The chapter also offers background information on the emergence of the private sector in Syria with its common beliefs and practices. Such contextual information helps readers interpret and make sense of the findings presented later in the data analysis chapters.

In chapter 3, I provide a theoretical ground for the study through reviewing relevant studies in the literature of learning to teach and show the development of the main ideas, notions and traditions concerning the professional experiences of beginning teachers. This will include a discussion of how learning to teach has emerged and how it has been viewed over the last three decades including the aspects that have received acknowledgement in the ELT world. The chapter finishes with a critical overview of the literature reviewed, identifying a gap in the literature which the study attempts to address.

In chapter 4, I discuss the research design I have selected to conduct this study. This will consist of the general conceptual paradigm under which this study operates as well as a discussion of the research tools and instruments I used to obtain the data needed for this study. The chapter also provides an account of the data collection procedures and how this data is analysed. Ethical considerations,

limitations, and issues of research trustworthiness are also presented in this chapter.

In chapter 5, I present the study findings and identify the main themes as revealed in the data. This chapter will address the first sub-question framed in chapter 2.

In chapter 6, I continue the study findings and identify the main themes as revealed in the data in relation to the second sub-question framed in chapter 2.

Chapter 7 involves a discussion of the main findings. It highlights my interpretations of and opinions about the main issues raised throughout the study. It answers the research question, with the two components, and explain how these answers will add to our knowledge of the process of learning to teach.

Finally, chapter 8 considers implications for practice in preparing beginning teachers as well as implications for future research.

Chapter Two

Teaching in the Public and Private Sectors in Syria: Educational Culture and Common Practices in English Language Teaching

This chapter describes the common approaches and instructional practices which characterise the profession of teaching in Syrian public-sector schools. It also shows how private language centres, which represent the teaching context where participant teachers work in this study, have emerged in Syria and the basic assumptions and common practices that underlie them. This contextual background information helps readers interpret and make sense of the judgments made in the following data analysis chapters and evaluate participants' accounts in light of the details presented.

There are five major sections in this chapter. Section 2.1 focuses on the educational culture in Syrian public-sector schools. This includes a discussion of the distribution of power in public-sector schools, the dominant model of teaching, the dominant model of learning and the relationships between students and teachers. Section 2.2 describes the specific local practices of English language teachers in public-sector schools in Syria. This includes information on how English language teaching is typically practised in the classroom and the common approaches that characterise it. Section 2.3 explains how the private sector emerged in Syria and reasons behind its rapid growth in the Syrian society. Section 2.4 outlines the common beliefs and practices of private language centres. Finally, section 2.5 deals with the BANA/TESEP dichotomy in education and sheds light on how these two concepts have different sets of beliefs and practices.

2.1 The educational culture in Syrian public-sector schools

An educational culture involves knowledge, values, attitudes and sets of practices which bind people together giving them certain common features which are derived from their history, faith, traditions and surroundings. Describing the Syrian educational culture entails knowing where Syrian teachers and learners sit in the hierarchy of power in the Syrian educational system. This will help

understand the nature of their roles and behaviours in the teaching and learning processes. Understanding the Syrian educational culture also needs identifying the features of the broad sets of teaching practices as well as learning approaches and the role of society's beliefs in Syrian public-sector schools.

2.1.1 The distribution of power in Syrian public-sector schools

A hierarchy of authorities and centralisation of power and decision-making control in the Syrian educational culture is presented in Figure I below. Decisions on the educational process and national curricula are all top-down. At the top of the pyramid stands the Ministry of Education which is responsible for setting the main decisions on and goals of education at public-sector schools such as defining the curriculum and its objectives, distributing schools over the country and writing and supervising the national examinations. At the next level come the Directorates of Education in the regions. These act as representatives of the Ministry of Education in different cities, towns and villages. They are responsible for choosing inspectors and supervisors from the cohort of experienced teachers to guarantee that the educational plan set by the Ministry of Education is implemented at schools, but they make no decisions on the educational process, examinations or the curriculum. Next in the hierarchy come the school administrators whose main job is deploying teachers to different grade levels and classrooms inside the schools, setting the teaching schedules and rules and maintaining discipline at the wider level of the school and checking teachers and students' attendance. The following level in the hierarchy covers the bulk of teachers in the workplace. These are in a direct contact with the curriculum, pupils and classroom life; however, they are not expected by the higher authorities to assess or give decisions on the educational process; they strictly follow the plans and textbooks set by the higher authorities in the educational hierarchy. At the very bottom of the pyramid are the learners with very little influence on the education that they are required to receive.

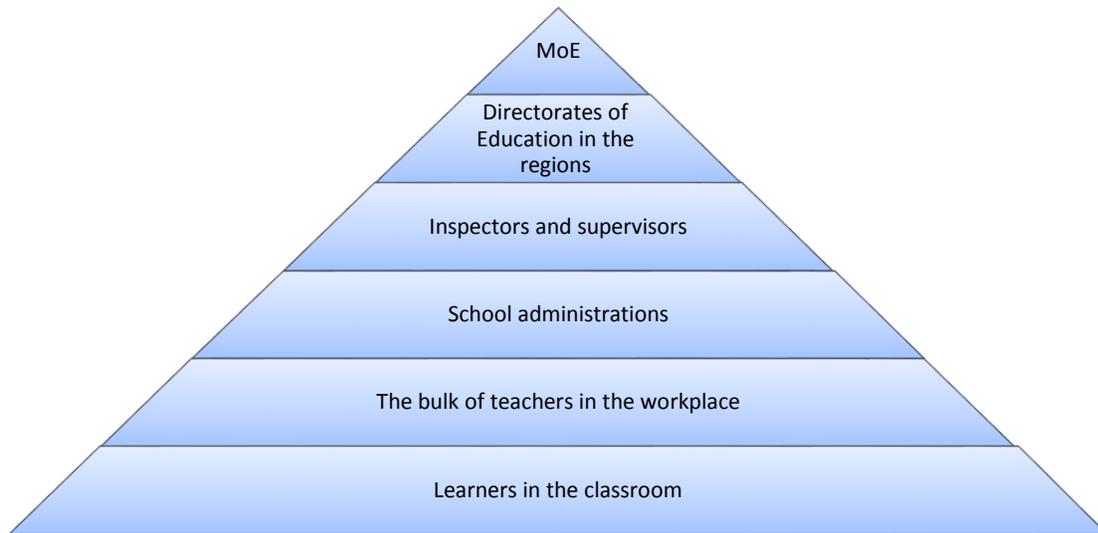


Figure I. Hierarchy of authorities and distribution of power.

<http://www.syrianeducation.org.sy> [accessed: 15, February, 2010]

2.1.2 The dominant model of teaching: ‘transmission’

Syrian teachers in public-sector schools follow a traditional theory of teaching and learning, one which views teaching and learning as a process of systematic ‘giving and taking’. In this model, the teacher is the central factor of delivering knowledge, whereas the learner represents the recipient side in the process.

In the Arabic language, this method of imparting knowledge to learners is widely known among teachers as ‘Talqeen,’ with ‘transmission’ as the English counterpart. Describing this approach, Nola and Irzik (2005: 175) comment:

According to the transmission model, there is a fixed body of already existing knowledge that needs to be taught and learned. Teaching essentially consists of the transmission of this body from the teacher to the pupil.

The traditional transmission instruction is based on a theory of learning which suggests that learners learn concepts and facts by absorbing the content of their teacher’s explanations. Information is learned through guided and repetitive practice in a systematic and highly prescribed fashion, and is imparted in a way independent of any application. The transmission model assumes that learning is

mainly dependent on the teacher and teaching is accomplished by telling. The teacher's job consists of setting activities, normally through textbooks, in which certain content has to be mastered by learners. The procedures for student work are explained in detail so that learners accomplish their work with as few errors and as little confusion as possible.

Trigwell and Prosser (1996a: 80) add:

This approach is one in which the teacher adopts a teacher-focused strategy, with the intention of transmitting to the students information about discipline. In this transmission, the focus is on facts and skills, but not on the relationships between them. The prior knowledge of students is not considered to be important and it is assumed that students do not need to be active in the teaching-learning process.

The transmission model prevails in Syrian public-sector schools and assumes that knowledge exists independently of the learner; teachers disseminate information, already set by the Ministry of Education in textbooks, mainly through a lecture format, which requires learners to accept information and knowledge as presented by their teachers. The transmission approach is imagined to work as “‘jug and mug’ – the knowledge being poured from one receptacle into an empty one” (Scrivener, 2005: 17). This view is based on the simplistic belief that “being in a class in the presence of a teacher and listening attentively is [...] enough to ensure that learning will take place” (Scrivener, 2005: 17). Learning, according to this view, is a gradual, additive and information-based process in which bits of knowledge are accumulated gradually in a ‘synthetic’ (Wilkins, 1976) manner. The typical ‘transmissive’ lesson can be best described as strictly didactic. Didacticism is basically teacher-centred (Entwistle, 1997) and is often conducted within the so-called ‘chalk and talk’ formal tradition in which the focal points are the blackboard and the teacher's voice. Teachers often act as controllers in that they are in complete charge of class activities as well as of what students do, what they speak and when they speak.

2.1.3 The dominant model of learning: 'memorisation'

In the Syrian educational system, the 'transmission' model is, to a great extent, associated with memorisation of information in the learning processes. Learning is "largely regarded as the digestion of a body of knowledge and progress seen in terms of how much can be memorized and reproduced" (Harris, 1997: 14). The memorisation technique is based on and facilitated by extensive repetition, a model known as rote learning, which has as central the idea that one will be able to quickly recall the material the more one repeats it. The priority in this model is given to the ability to reproduce the material memorised, and understanding is given scant attention.

Because the curriculum and its objectives are set by the Ministry of Higher Education and teachers have little influence over teaching materials or what they want to teach their pupils, they follow what Biggs (1999: 14) calls a 'surface approach' which gives importance to memorisation to give the impression that the objectives are being met:

The surface approach arises from an intention to get the task out of the way with minimum trouble, while appearing to meet requirements... Memorization becomes a surface approach when it is used instead of understanding, to give the impression of understanding.

According to such a 'surface approach,' memorisation becomes synonymous with learning. Good teaching is one that fosters accurate memorisation, which may give parents and school administrators the impression that the teachers are doing their job and the children are engaged in learning. Memorisation is also emphasised in Syrian schools because the education is product-oriented and exam-driven (Abdulkader, 2009; Gharib, 2009; Othman, 2009). Passing the exam is the ultimate aim for both pupils and teachers in the teaching and learning process. Exams, especially the final national ones in the 9th grade and Baccalaureate, play a crucial role in shaping the pupils' future careers, social status and income. Classroom instruction is usually focused on preparing students for the exams, which normally ask students to retrieve information they have memorised during their academic

term or year, and hence memorisation becomes a straightforward approach to achieve that aim.

2.1.4 Relationships between teachers and learners

As Figure I above shows, learners sit at the bottom of the hierarchy of authorities and distribution of power in the Syrian educational system. The teacher acts as an authority and main source of knowledge. In Syria and the Arab World, learners usually revere their instructors and regard them as knowledgeable individuals to whom they should show both respect and obedience. The fact that teachers are revered individuals has its roots in the history of the Arabic language and Islam where early, primitive forms of classrooms and instruction first appeared in mosques subsequent to the revelation descended upon Prophet Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula in the year 610. This high status given to teachers first appeared in the mosque circles where children, normally called apprentices, gather around their 'Sheikh' (i.e., Priest), and listen carefully and respectfully to what he says. No apprentice is allowed to argue with the 'Sheikh' because the latter is viewed as the source of both absolute power and knowledge. On the contrary, they show a high degree of respect represented by kissing the Sheikh's right hand and standing politely and silently in front of him and not speaking unless asked. The Islamic doctrine exhorts Muslims to appreciate and respect teachers since they are rich sources of knowledge and because Prophet Muhammad himself was believed to be a teacher with a mission for the humanity. Teachers are associated with prophets and messengers for the knowledge they possess and the mission they perform. A widely known saying in Arabic which pupils are taught and made to memorise on early schooling days is "Whoever teaches me a letter, to them I become a worshipper."

Transmitting knowledge to learners, in contexts where teachers are strictly obeyed and seen as rich sources of knowledge, entails imposing formal relationships with learners and maintaining discipline as a priority in the teaching and learning process. Discipline involves learners listening in silence in order to learn. Good learners are described as those who never argue but listen carefully to what is being said to them. The assumption is that if they make noise, it means that

they are not listening which, in turn, indicates that they are not learning. Therefore, discipline comes as an essential requirement in order for learning to take place and has become widely expected by the Syrian society, as Biggs and Telfer (1987: 361) comment: “keeping them [students] quiet, was society’s expectation, so society accordingly endorsed the teacher’s use of strong measures in doing so.” In this sense, part of the teachers’ job is that of helping the learners to learn to act in a socially acceptable way (Allwright, 1996). In some situations, discipline is maintained by applying corporal punishment against children who are usually expected to sit arm-crossed during the whole lesson, raising their hands if they have a question or want to participate. Caning pupils is an expected and accepted consequence of their bad behaviour or negligence of class work or homework.

2.2 Common ELT practices in Syrian public-sector schools

The process of English language teaching in Syrian public-sector schools is mainly focused on the teaching of reading, vocabulary and grammar. Textbooks, which are published by the Ministry of Education, provide the materials needing to be covered in English lessons such as reading texts, vocabulary and grammatical rules with language exercises. The medium of instruction in English lessons is learners’ first language, Arabic. It is used to translate reading texts and new words encountered and to explain grammatical rules allowing learners to make comparisons between the new target language structures and their own mother tongue. Understanding the English language through the analysis of grammatical rules and translating sentences is usually referred to as the Grammar-Translation method of language teaching. Such a method is still widely applied in public-sector school contexts. It focuses on getting students to learn grammatical rules by rote and then practise these rules by doing grammar drills and translating sentences to and from English. More attention is usually paid to the form of the translated sentences than to their content or communicative purpose. There is no listening and speaking practice.

Because the main focus of English language teaching is placed on reading, vocabulary and grammar, an approach of textbook-based instruction is strictly adopted and encouraged. Textbooks provide a wide range of activities and

reading texts. Teachers feel secure following a textbook because tests and exams are all structured around the textbook components and activities. However, teachers do not enjoy any freedom to adapt or skip activities, as this might involve the risk of students' encountering these activities in final exams and not being able to handle them.

Final exams play a major role in the way English language teaching and learning occur. More specifically, although a new textbook series has been introduced into the Syrian educational system since 2000 with a focus on the 'communicative' aspect of English language teaching and learning, the exam-driven system still shapes the way teachers teach and learners learn (Othman, 2009; Gharib. 2009). Teachers appear without choice but to perpetuate the traditional teaching approaches which focus on those aspects that are likely to be encountered in the exam (i.e., grammar, vocabulary, reading and translation) and skip others (i.e. speaking and listening) because they are not tested.

Being teacher centred, the English language teaching process is dominated by an interaction pattern called IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) in which "an initiation by a teacher [is made], which elicits a response from a pupil, followed by an evaluative comment or feedback from the teacher" (Edwards and Mercer, 1994: 202). Lemke (1990: 28) provides an example of this IRF exchange:

Teacher: Are you a boy? (= I)
Ana: No. (=R)
Teacher: Correct. (=F)

In this example, the teacher asks a question (Initiation), the student answers (Response) and the teacher then evaluates the response (Feedback). Such an approach to the exchange of information in the classroom tends to be more about the learner saying what the teacher wants to hear. The pattern assumes that teachers already know the answers to their own questions and students presumably expect them to. Language teachers, teaching within a transmission model, tend to focus most of their teaching on this triadic pattern because maintaining it gives them a number of advantages. The teacher is the one who gets to initiate the exchanges, set the topic and control the direction in which the

topic develops. The teacher also decides which student will answer which question(s) and even decide which answer(s) will count as the legitimate one(s).

As for how English lessons are typically taught in a typical Syrian classroom, teachers use the reading texts to teach learners a set of literacy skills such as awareness of English sounds, English print, spelling and vocabulary. The teaching of reading usually follows this pattern:

- Teachers read the text aloud while providing the translation of sentences and new words and occasionally drawing students' attention to the spelling and pronunciation of new words. Translation is focused on the sentence as a basic unit. Teachers read aloud a text sentence by sentence and stop at sentence or phrase boundaries to dictate the translation to learners who write it above the words,
- students copy the translation on their books as dictated by the teacher and may be asked to write down lists of the new words with their Arabic equivalents,
- students are then asked to read the text aloud in front of the class, either individually or chorally,
- teachers check pronunciation and provide corrections on it,
- students are then asked to do the comprehension questions of the text individually,
- when finished, individual students are selected to tell the answers to the class,
- teachers write up the answers on the board, and students copy these on their books.

Grammar is taught in a way known as a 'deductive approach' (Richards and Rodgers, 2001), which represents a traditional style of teaching in that the grammatical rules are introduced to the students who study how the rules are built up from individual elements and apply them to different exercises. The priority is given to building up learners' grammatical competence as the basis for language proficiency. Grammatical competence refers to

the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g., parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed (Richards, 2005: 3).

Grammar lessons usually follow these steps:

- Teachers write up a grammatical rule on the board. For example if the grammar lesson is on present perfect, the teacher would write up on the board the basic sentence structure (i.e. Subject + have/has + verb in the past participle)
- teachers read aloud the rules and then write up a typical example and make links between the two,
- teachers then explain in Arabic when the structure is used (e.g. We use the present perfect to talk about a recently finished action),
- students copy the rules and example to their notebooks, and are then asked to do exercises in the book. These may include filling gaps, completing sentences, choosing the correct verb form or making questions and negatives,
- teachers select individual students to tell the answers to the class and write them up on the board,
- students check their own answers and make amendments if needed.

Students need to review the material at home, as teachers want to check student learning of the information covered in previous lessons by asking questions and providing corrections. Accuracy in translation, pronunciation, spelling and grammatical mastery are strictly emphasised from the very beginning, since it is assumed that “if students made errors, these would quickly become a permanent part of the learner’s speech” (Richards, 2005: 7).

Students are expected to study the information to get prepared for the exam, which usually focuses on the same language information covered in their English lessons during the term. Therefore, the widely used method of studying the language information is done by rote learning (Gairns & Redman, 1986; Oxford,

1990). Lists of words that come up during the course, phrasal verbs, the conjugation of irregular verbs and grammatical rules are stored in the memory through sheer repetition to be reproduced in exams. Gairns & Redman (1986: 93) offer an accurate description of how learning by rote works in language learning:

This involves repetition of target language items either silently or aloud and may involve writing down the items (more than once). These items commonly appear in list form; typical examples being items and their translation equivalent, items and their definitions (e.g. nap = short sleep), paired items (e.g. hot-cold, tall-short), and irregular verbs. A common practice is for the learner to use one side of the list as prompts and cover the other side in order to test himself.

Richards (2005: 6) also describes how language learning is done by rote:

language learning meant building up a large repertoire of sentences and grammatical patterns and learning to produce these accurately and quickly in the appropriate situation.

In brief, English language teaching in Syrian public-sector educational system is characterised by certain common practices. It is usually focused on the teaching of reading, grammar and vocabulary, which are delivered to students through translation into Arabic. It is also strictly based on textbooks which provide exercises on reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary that students need to memorise in order to get prepared for tests and exams. The dominant interaction model between teachers and students is the IRF pattern. Grammar and reading are taught to teach grammatical structures of sentences or practise translation skills.

2.3 Emergence of the private sector in Syria

As the above account shows, public-sector education in Syria is characterised by traditional notions of teaching represented in the 'transmission' model, lecture-format and teacher-centred styles of instruction. Learning is mostly based on memorisation techniques, and teaching is directed towards helping learners pass their exams. Teachers act as authorities for the power and knowledge they possess, and discipline is seen as an essential requirement for learning. For the

English language subject, teaching is mainly focused on reading, vocabulary and grammar, and Arabic is used as the language of instruction. Learning of new words and grammatical rules is mostly achieved by rote to be retrieved and reproduced in exams.

At the beginning of the new millennium, the Syrian Ministry of Education introduced a new English language syllabus in public-sector schools, *English for Starters*, which came with a set of learning objectives:

“*English for Starters* has a comprehensive language syllabus, presenting and reviewing contextualised grammar, and providing systematic practice. The skills syllable provides regular, carefully-staged practice in reading, listening, speaking and writing, where the emphasis is on practice and production of language. There are also plenty of opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and express their own opinions through every unit, and especially in the project at the end of each module” (Kilbey, 2000: 1).

The author continues that this new textbook series has been designed to provide a wide range of topic-based content according to modern teaching methodologies aiming to meet the educational needs and interests of students in Syria. The course also builds on and broadens students’ general knowledge, through text-based work within the topics, and vocabulary development. However, as Gharib (2009) observes, the new syllabus did not change teachers’ methods of teaching, and the English subject continued to focus on reading, vocabulary and grammar with no attention paid to listening or speaking. School teachers are not trained to perform all new tasks introduced in the new syllabus, and the teaching process was still directed towards exams, in which students were not tested for their speaking, listening or critical thinking.

The Syrian society has been aware of the limitations of the school-based teaching methods. Iman refers to this fact asserting that,

“The student is escaping from the school [teaching] and from memorisation .. The student wants to learn how to speak. Parents tell us ‘we want our son to speak English’” [SS11 (Arabic) 186-8].

Public-sector school teaching models have been providing little help to learners. Against this backdrop, the Syrian society started to witness a rapid growth in the private sector – represented in private schools and private language centres – as a consequence of the perceived failure of public-sector schools to provide students with the English language skills that can enable them to use English in real-life situations and cope with the growing demands of the 21st century.

Private schools have been spreading widely in all Syrian cities and districts. There were about 1700 private schools which have been licensed and opened between 2006 and 2011, when the Syrian Civil War started. Private schools operate with a number of assumptions such as terminating corporal punishment, meeting periodically with parents to discuss children's problems, effecting low teacher-student ratios in classroom and giving special attention to the English subject, allowing it more weekly sessions than in public-sector schools and using different textbooks. However, as Mansour (2010) argues, private schools charge high tuition fees compared with public-sector schools where education is provided almost free of charge, and learners do not seem to get better results in subjects other than English. The other subjects in private schools follow the same syllabus and teaching plans as in public-sector schools and, together with the English subject, need to follow the same exam system suggested by the Ministry of Education. Parents seem to have perceived the private schools' limitations to provide better education than their public-sector counterparts, the fact that has led to the rapid emergence of private language centres which aim to provide language courses only. Students' parents now do not have to pay high tuition fees to private schools in order to improve their children's English.

2.4 Private language centres

Private language centres are business enterprises. Their students are either school children, whose parents wish them to develop their English language skills without needing to enroll in private schools, or adult learners who need English for their study, work or travel. Managers of private language centres are aware of the needs of students and parents, so they try to counter traditional teaching methods

prevalent at public-sector schools to attract student customers. Private language centres operate with a number of common practices:

- recruiting 'native-speaker' teachers from the UK and USA or Syrian teachers with native-like accents of English,
- using English as the only medium of instruction in (and sometimes outside) the classroom,
- importing the most recent textbook series from the UK or USA and ensuring that these are constantly updated,
- learning is 'instrumental' (Holliday, 1994: 12); there is a clear contract between the managements of private language centres and students, who come specifically to learn English, or a special type of English such as Business English. So, teaching is targeted towards meeting students' needs,
- attempting to focus on learner-centred approaches to teaching and on the practice and production of English, which is missing at public-sector schools,
- introducing modern teaching resources and technological equipment such as OHPs (Overhead Projectors), computers and well-equipped laboratories with sound technologies for listening practice.
- giving less importance to exams; teaching is directed towards improving students' language skills, and usually all students attending the course pass their exams, and
- opening for long hours (e.g. 14 hours in Bright Future) to allow students to choose the periods that suit their schedules.

2.5 The BANA/TESEP dichotomy

A useful concept to highlight the difference between the public and the private sectors in terms of approaches, status and methods of pedagogical implementations is the BANA/TESEP distinction, first introduced by Holliday (1994). Holliday (1994) uses the term BANA to refer to teaching contexts, models and practices that can be found in the private sector and emerge from teaching ideals in **Britain, North America and Australasia**. On the other hand, he uses the

term TESEP, from **t**ertiary, **s**econdary, **p**rimary, to define “state education in the rest of the world” (Holliday, 1994: 12). According to Holliday (1994), these two settings present a contrasting picture to each other in that, while students in public-sector institutions (i.e., TESEP settings) are “largely passive and behave like an audience watching the spectacle of the teacher’s teacher-centred performance” (Holliday, 1994: 36), English language teaching in private-sector institutions (i.e., BANA settings) operates within a “process-oriented, task-based, inductive, collaborative communicative ... methodology” (Holliday, 1994: 54). Another aspect of the BANA/TESEP distinction that Holliday highlights is the difference in status. He continues

Because of the hegemony of the received BANA English language teaching methodology, and because there are few examples of high-status methodologies grown from the TESEP sector, the latter sector automatically becomes second-class in that it is forced to make difficult adaptations of methodologies which do not really suit (Holliday, 1994: 12–13).

The private language centres in Syria operate within a set of BANA ethos and beliefs, and some of them are affiliated with institutions in one of the BANA countries (e.g. Bright Future being an American brand) or managed by people who were educated and qualified in one of the BANA countries (e.g. Pioneers).

The private language centres are the immediate context of the present study. Participant teachers had prior learning experiences in TESEP state school settings where most of their beliefs originated, and are now teaching in new commercially-based teaching contexts that operate within BANA private-sector set of beliefs and ethos. This transition from a TESEP context to a BANA context can have significant implications for their early experiences as beginning teachers while they learn to teach in the first year.

2.6 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described the common practices and approaches adopted in Syrian public-sector educational system. The chapter has shed light on the distribution of power in Syrian schools. It has also described the dominant models

of teaching and learning in Syrian schools and the kind of relationships between teachers and learners. The chapter has also outlined the local practices of English language teachers in public-sector schools in Syria and how English language teaching is typically practised in the language classroom. The chapter has also outlined how the private sector emerged in Syria with special attention to private language centres and their beliefs and practices. This background information is intended to help readers interpret and make sense of the judgments made in the following data analysis chapter and also to evaluate participants' accounts in light of the details presented.

Chapter Three

Review of Research on Learning to Teach for Beginning English Language Teachers

In this chapter, I offer a discussion of the relevant and important literature on my research area, namely how beginning teachers learn to teach. The aim of this chapter is to situate my research focus within the context of the wider academic community in the field of learning to teach. It also establishes a theoretical, conceptual framework within which I present and analyse my findings in subsequent chapters. The chapter also aims to identify a gap in our present knowledge of the process of learning to teach which my study will attempt to address.

The chapter consists of four sections. Section 3.1 provides a brief account on the importance of research on learning to teach in the first year of teaching and how it has emerged as an independent field of inquiry. This involves a discussion of why we need to understand how beginning teachers learn to teach and how research on learning to teach can provide insights based on the experiences of first-year teachers. In section 3.2, I provide an overview on the paradigmatic development of research on learning to teach. The section includes a description of the different paradigms and perspectives within which learning to teach has been viewed and studied over the last 4 decades. In section 3.3, I review prominent studies on learning to teach and discuss the most important recurrent themes which characterise this body of research and which will be closely relevant throughout the whole study. Finally, in section 3.4, I provide a critical overview of the literature reviewed in this chapter.

3.1 Importance of research on learning to teach in the first year

The research literature on the first year of teaching has mostly focused on beginning teachers who have attended formal teacher education programmes. Although my study investigates the experiences of first-year teachers without previous teacher education, it is important to understand how the first year of

teaching is portrayed in the literature, which sheds light on how research on learning to teach started to attract attention and why it is important to understand it.

The first year of teaching is a complex one which can influence the future careers of beginning teachers (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Featherstone, 1993; Solmon *et al.*, 1993; Staton & Hunt, 1992). Researchers talk of the first year as ‘the vision versus the reality’ experience (Johnson, 1996) and describe it as a year of ‘loneliness, fear and disrepute’ (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995), as one which causes a ‘reality shock’ (Veenman, 1984) to beginning teachers, as one which represents a ‘swim-or-sink experience’ (Varah *et al.*, 1986) for beginning teachers, as one which is ‘unpredictable and idiosyncratic’ (Farrell, 2009: 183) and as one which can be “anything but a simple topic to understand” (Bullough, 1997: 79). Looking at the content of educational journals over nearly the last two decades reveals that the experience of beginning teachers in the first year of teaching is still documented as a problematic one:

Title	Author
On becoming a teacher: They just gave me a key and said "Good Luck."	Camp & Heath-Camp (1991)
How to help beginning teachers succeed.	Gordon (1991)
The first year of teaching: It is not what they expected.	Rust (1994)
What new teachers really need.	Mandel (2006)
Supporting new teachers.	Maciejewski (2007)
Novice Teachers: Where Are They Going and Why Don't They Stay?	Joiner & Edwards (2008)

Table 1. Selected studies on the complexity of beginning teachers' experiences over nearly the last two decades.

The following is a typical comment made by Mandel (2006) to show how the stress and frustration of a beginning teacher in her first year led to her decision to completely abandon the teaching profession:

Monica quit. One year of teaching was more than enough for her. She had looked forward to teaching for years and did quite well in all of her education pre-service classes. But she couldn't take it anymore. The stress was the result of everyday frustrations associated with her first year of teaching. No one seemed to understand what she was going through; no one was there to help her survive that first year (Mandel, 2006: 66).

Recent research on the complexities and complications faced by beginning teachers suggest that these teachers perceive high degrees of stress when they start their work in the first year. This perceived stress is mainly attributed to feelings of loneliness and isolation in the workplace. For example, Johnson *et al* (2014) argue that, for new teachers, the first years can be particularly difficult. This is especially true for ESOL teachers. The authors examine the relationship between loneliness and stress in 47 first-year ESOL teachers. The findings suggest that

“novice ESOL teachers who reported higher levels of loneliness were more likely to experience greater amounts of perceived stress than their less lonely counterparts. These results suggest that, similar to teachers’ working in traditional teaching fiends, novice ESOL teachers are likely to be adversely affected by feelings of loneliness and isolation” (Johnson *et al*, 2014: 5).

Attempts to help incoming teachers to survive their first years and cope with the reality of their school and classroom life assume that teacher education should play a vital role in preparing these teachers for their future career and addressing the challenges which they are faced with in their first year of teaching. However, teacher education is still an ‘unstudied problem’ (Freeman, 1996: 351) and the design and implementation of teacher education programmes have been the subject of so much debate over the past four decades. The assumption that providing professional preparation to prospective teachers through teacher education programmes will enable them to have the knowledge and master the skills required to face the new teaching situations in their new institutional settings seems to lose ground and is no longer a strong assumption.

Educational research has showed that teacher education programmes fail to prepare teachers for the real world of classroom teaching (Northfield and Gunstone, 1997) and seems to “set up a gap that cannot be bridged by beginning teacher learners” (Tarone and Allwright, 2005: 12). There are a number of reasons for this perceived mismatch between teacher education and real classroom experience. One reason can be that teacher education had long been emphasising ‘how to teach’ with a focus on methods which provided a rather prescriptive notions on classroom teaching, techniques and effective practices (Freeman, 1994; Richards and Nunan, 1990). Learning to teach was simply viewed in terms of putting these theories into practice. However, beginning teachers find it hard to transform theoretical notions raised in teacher education programmes into effective classroom practices. The reality of the classroom experience seems to be so demanding that teachers abandon what they have learned in the teacher education course. For example, in Johnson’s (1996) case study, a trainee teacher in a practicum is left to face the reality in a real classroom. Her experience is typical of most beginning teachers entering their classrooms for the first time. Johnson (1996: 40) observes that the classroom life seems to be beyond this teacher’s control and that the experience of the teaching in a real setting “overwhelm[ed] her to the point that she appeared to separate herself from the practicum experiences.” Although the teacher shows a tendency to adopt a student-centred approach to teaching, her initial practices are actually teacher-centred. This implies that new teachers are more susceptible to falling back on “familiar routines and practices” (Richards and Pennington, 1998: 187) which dominate the educational system where their experiences operate, a second reason why teacher education programmes are not always successful at preparing teachers adequately for the experience of real teaching and why teachers diverge from the practices promoted in these programmes. “The reality might be that teachers would continually put off introducing innovative practices into their teaching, citing the constraints of the system as working against them and their educational ideals” (Urmston and Pennington, 2008). A third reason for the mismatch between teacher education and the reality of classroom teaching can be the fact that teachers arrive at their classrooms with beliefs and conceptions about teaching which were formed during

their schooling and which seem to shape their future instructional practices even if they had been exposed to alternative notions in their preparation courses. These beliefs are so resistant to change (Kagan, 1992b; Pajares, 1992), and teachers are constantly found to revert to their early models of teaching derived during their childhood. Regardless of what has been presented in the professional preparation course, teachers “interpret new content through their existing understandings, and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know and believe” (Kennedy, 1991: 2). A fourth reason why teacher education programmes fail to address the complexity of the transition to the real teaching can be the uniqueness of every teachers’ experience of teaching and the perception that generalisations cannot be derived from teachers’ different individual experiences and the variety of different settings where they operate (Bullough, 1997). This means that “teacher education programs cannot hope to account for all the different types of settings and conditions beginning teachers will inevitably encounter” (Farrell, 2006: 2), as teachers’ early experience in the classrooms seems to be considered as a “highly situated and highly interpretative activity” (Johnson, 2002: 1).

Thus, the field of teacher education has a complex mission to achieve in order to help new teachers cope with the realities of their profession during the first year. Decisions to design and implement teacher education can no longer be based on intuition and “craft wisdom” (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997: 8). Rather, in order to best prepare teachers for the real world of teaching and address the consequences of any mismatches between the course content of teacher education programmes and the conditions of real classroom teaching, teacher education needs to obtain a fuller understanding of teachers’ work and a clearly articulated conceptualisation of the processes by which teachers learn to teach. How teachers learn to teach has to be positioned as a core concept of teacher education. It is important to understand the learning-to-teach process so that implications can be incorporated into the academic course contents of teacher education programmes. Learning to teach, thus, plays an important role as a field of study in order to provide these implications about teachers’ work, which will inform teacher education. As Calderhead and Shorrock (1997: 1) note, “How we conceptualize the work of

teachers inevitably influences how we think about their professional preparation, and ultimately shapes suggestions for the further improvement of teacher education.” The more teacher educators come to know about the beginning teachers’ experiences and how they learn to teach, the more they are able to construct and implement successful future preparation courses by providing a more realistic view of classroom life so that the experience of becoming a teacher would be less like “hazing and more like professional development” (Johnson, 1996: 48). The importance of studying how teachers learn to teach in real teaching situations stems from the fact that the amount of what they learn from their own experiences as teachers in these real teaching situations is much bigger than any course taught in an education college (Ethell and McMeniman, 2000). Research into learning to teach provides a wealth of valuable insights into the nature of teacher work which in turn can contribute to substantive improvements to teacher education and give it a more rational foundation by helping teacher educators foster more effective practices relevant to the nature of conditions that novice teachers are likely to be faced with. In brief, the importance of research on learning to teach arises from the fact that teacher education is hugely informed by the implications drawn from this research. As Freeman (2002: 12) puts it, “There is rich, varied, and complex process of learning to teach on which teacher education must build. Focusing on this learning process, ..., is changing our understanding of teacher education in important ways.”

3.2 Paradigmatic development of research on learning to teach

Research on teaching in the 1960s and up to the mid-1970s reflected the dominating Behaviourist approaches of that time, where teaching was viewed as a set of observable behaviours. This “process-product” approach (Freeman & Johnson, 1998: 399) witnessed a tendency to attribute children’s learning to teachers’ observed behaviours. Dunkin & Biddle (1974: 399) state that research within this approach

looked for the quintessential teaching behaviors that could be linked to specific learning outcomes and argued that these teaching behaviors, if

carried out effectively and efficiently on a widespread basis, would ensure student learning.

Freeman (2002) comments that this period was characterised by a dichotomy between content and process, so “Learning to teach involved mastering the specific content one was to teach and separately mastering methodologies for conveying that content to learners” (Freeman, 2002: 4). Good teaching was then measured by the extent teachers adjusted the content for the learners, and learners’ shortcomings were mostly attributed to the teachers’ lack of competence. Wideen *et al* (1998: 133) refer to this approach as a ‘*positivist tradition*’ and imply that learning to teach occurred in a straightforward, linear process in which “the university provides the theory, skills, and knowledge about teaching through coursework; the school provides the field setting where such knowledge is applied and practiced; and the beginning teacher provides the individual effort that integrates it all” (Wideen *et al*, 1998: 133). Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) describe this approach as a *technical model* of learning to teach. They argue that in this model, learning to teach is a matter of acquiring practical skills and knowledge that contribute to classroom practice.

However, this simplistic notion of learning to teach assumes that “learning is an additive process that largely bypasses person and setting” (Wideen *et al*, 1998: 133). It underestimates the personal experiences of teachers and tends to ignore the contexts where it occurs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

The extensive focus on observable behaviours to describe teaching began to change in the mid-1970s with an increasing awareness of the importance of teachers’ thinking in the act of teaching. Lortie (1975) argued for a refocusing of attention to the perspectives of teachers themselves in the process of teaching (Lortie, 1975). His seminal work, which Larson (1976: 642) describes as “some of the most trenchant, unique, and helpful research ever done on [...] teaching”, contributed to the introduction of a new position which aimed at getting a better understanding of the contexts of teaching and teachers’ life experiences (Freeman, 1996). The idea that to better understand teaching requires exploring how teachers think about their work started to gain ground and led to the emergence of a

research area known as 'teacher cognition.' 'Teacher cognition' research was characterised by a shift in the research focus from 'what teachers do' to 'why they do what they do.'

Teacher cognition research draws on tenets of constructivism. This is a theory of knowledge and learning, whose modern roots are often seen as emerging from the work of Piaget (for example 1971) and Kelly (1955). It contends that people generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Constructivist paradigms of teacher learning suggest that learning is an active, constructive process. The teacher learner is an information constructor who creates their own subjective representations of reality. New information presented to the teacher learner is linked to their prior knowledge; thus mental representations are highly subjective. Teacher learners are not thought of as blank slates but as individuals who bring with them past experiences and cultural factors to a situation. They engage in a process of knowledge formulation rather than knowledge acquisition, based on their own personal experiences and knowledge of the environment. They continuously test this knowledge through social negotiation and are always seen constructing and reconstructing new knowledge. Von Glaserfeld (1989: 11) contends that "knowledge is not passively received but actively built up by the cognizing subject." Meaning is constructed and reconstructed by teacher learners on an ongoing basis which can be idiosyncratic and personally significant (Cobb, 1996; Tynjala, 1999; Williams, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997).

In fact, descriptions of the individual perspectives and experiences of teachers as they do their job were still lacking (Woods, 1996); however, later in the decade, the 'thought processes' which teachers engaged in while they planned and gave their lessons started to be explored. Research now "showed them [teachers] constructing explanations of their own teaching and highlighted a certain amount of messiness that seems inherent in the ways in which they thought about and carried out their work" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998: 400). This increasing interest in teachers' 'mental lives' (first coined by Walberg, 1977) was particularly pronounced in the 1980s and was associated with the notion that in order to better understand

teaching it is important to study teachers and their thinking processes. This was associated with “a recognition that research must view the traditional structures of learning to teach as problematic and at times dysfunctional” (Wideen *et al*, 1998: 133). Rather, research should focus more on the “hidden side” (Freeman, 2002: 1) and “unobservable cognitive dimension” (Borg, 2003c: 81) in teachers’ work, that is, what teachers think, know and believe in order to capture a better, more realistic picture of teachers’ teaching experiences and the act of teaching.

Against this backdrop emerged research into an area known as ‘learning to teach’. This body of research investigated the work of teachers with a focus on “the cognitions, beliefs, and mental processes that underlie teachers’ classroom behaviors” (Kagan, 1992b: 129). Unlike earlier notions which focused on prescribing what beginning teachers should know and how they should be trained, this research area attempts to understand what teachers actually do know and how they actually come to know what they know. It places the teacher at the heart of analysis, and teachers’ mental lives are now put under investigation. Explorations into individual teachers’ mental lives “are needed to determine how teachers conceptualize their initial teaching experiences, interpret new information about second language learning and teaching and translate this information into classroom practices” (Johnson, 1994: 440). So, teacher cognition informs and contributes to the emergence of learning-to-teach research in that researchers cannot make sense of how teachers learn to teach without probing into the unobservable mental dimension of this learning process. Borg (2009: 163) comments,

Teacher cognition research, by providing insights into teachers’ mental lives and into the complex ways in which these relate to teachers’ classroom practices, has made a significant contribution to our understandings of the process of becoming, being, and developing professionally as a teacher.

Due to the focus on individual teachers’ experiences, the learning-to-teach research is very much concerned with teachers’ prior experiences as learners. This has invited discussions on the role of an important construct in learning to teach: teacher beliefs.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the importance of teaching contexts was highlighted when learning to teach began to be viewed from sociocultural perspectives. The impact of this sociocultural turn has created new understandings of how second language teachers learn to do their work. The sociocultural theory defines human learning as a dynamic lifelong process which takes place in physical and social contexts and is distributed across persons, tools, and activities (Rogoff, 2003; Salomon, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wretsch, 1985, 1991). Varghese (2002) suggests that “learning and understanding occur as people participate in activities where they increasingly become participants” (p. 3). Drawing on works of Chaiklin & Lave (1996), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), Johnson (2006: 237) comments that learning to teach, from a sociocultural perspective,

entails lived practices, ..., and the processes of learning are negotiated with people in what they do, through experiences in the social practices associated with particular activities.

Sociocultural theories also argue that teacher learning develops depending on the specific social activities in which teachers engage. Teacher learning is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by the individual teacher learners, which results in transformation of both the self and activity (Johnson, 2006). Teacher learning, from a sociocultural perspective, has been conceptualised as normative and lifelong, emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts, as teacher learners engage in the life of the educational institutions where they work. It is understood as socially negotiated and contingent of knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting (Cobb & Bowers, 1999). It emerges from a process of reshaping existing knowledge, beliefs and practices rather than simply imposing new theories, methods, or materials on teachers (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). For teacher learners, the constellation of activities in which they engage as learners in classrooms and schools and institutions where they work shape their thinking, forming the basis of their reasoning.

Central to the sociocultural theory are the two constructs of *internalisation* and *transformation*. *Internalisation* involves a process in which a person’s activity is

initially mediated by other people (e.g. mentors or colleagues) or cultural artefacts (e.g. textbooks or teacher guides) but later comes to be controlled by the person as he or she appropriates resources to regulate his or her own activities. This internalisation process leads to a dialogic process of *transformation* of self and activity rather than the replacement of skills (Valsineer & Van der Veer, 2002).

With the emergence of this new sociocultural turn, research on teacher cognition started to be criticised on the basis that it advocates a view of learning to teach as residing entirely in teachers' minds and adopts a simplistic notion of learning to teach which does not account for what Schön (1983, 1987) calls 'knowledge-in-practice' (Kelly, 2006). In other words, research on learning to teach undertaken within the framework of teacher cognition tends to understand the process of learning to teach by looking almost exclusively at the teachers themselves with little or no attention paid to the teaching context in which this learning process occurs.

Sociocultural perspectives extend our understanding of how learning occurs. They have given rise to the concept of 'learning through participation,' and researchers have become more than ever interested in peoples' workplaces as contexts for their learning and professional development.

Van der Zwet *et al* (2011) talk of workplace learning from a sociocultural perspective. Their study of 44 medical students shows that they need *developmental space* in the workplace in order to be able to learn and develop their own professional identities. For van der Zwet and his colleagues (2011), *developmental space* consists of two major components: contextual space and socio-emotional space. Students engage in and become more mindful of their own learning depending on the attributes of the working environment (i.e. the contextual space) in terms of material, organisational and educational elements. Such elements include the presence or absence of a special room, availability of computers, access to patients' records, time available for supervision and mutual observation and feedback. The socio-emotional space, on the other hand, embodies how students' state of mind, often originating from interactions with the social environment, influences possibilities for learning. Positive emotional

outcomes such as enjoyment and feeling respected and confident promoted learning by providing space for students to build their skills and experiences, to accept weaknesses and to feel free to ask questions.

Teacher learning does not necessarily take place in the contexts of the workplace environment. Research has also been interested in the contexts of teacher education programmes to study their impacts on student teacher learning from sociocultural perspectives. Kiely and Askham (2012) provide a new understanding, based on the sociocultural theory, of how TESOL student teachers learn in ways which translate to readiness for the TESOL work. They use the construct of *furnished imagination* as a representation of what new teachers in a preservice teacher education programme take to their future work. They suggest that teacher learning occurs when teachers' imagination is 'furnished' through the intense, iterated cycles of input, observation, performance, and feedback as well as through interactions with admired teacher educators. Teacher learning is seen to take place in terms of their understanding of key knowledge bases, procedural competence in planning for and managing lessons, a disposition characterised by enthusiasm and readiness, and a teacher identity – a sense of belonging in the world of TESOL. The authors argue that the new teachers are aware of what they should know as teachers. Such knowledge might be represented as principles or values which shape practice in TESOL. It contributes to their confidence as the result of their sense of being able to do things and also to their professional identity by imagining a future self, making sense of new knowledge and practices, and controlling latent dispositions to become comfortable with their future roles.

Contextual concerns including institutions and their environmental demands are now thought of as important factors which influence and shape the process of learning to teach. Studying and understanding these sociocultural environments, "in which some actions and ways of being are valued and encouraged whereas others are downplayed, ignored, and even silenced," (Freeman and Johnson, 1998: 409) is critical if the process of learning to teach is to be understood. Understanding how teachers learn to teach entails, in addition to the examination of their mental lives, explorations of the "hidden curriculum" (Freeman and

Johnson, 1998: 408) which involves the sociocultural values and norms encouraged in schools, which represent major influences on what teachers recognise as usual and normal when they carry out their work (Zinn, 1995). Learning to teach, from this perspective, is viewed as a process of teacher socialisation into the workplace. Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) describe such a view as the *enculturation* or *socialisation model* of learning to teach. According to them, the process of learning to teach is very much equated with the process of learning to become a teacher in the institutional teaching context. The question of 'How do teachers learn to teach?' is not only concerned with how teachers develop and acquire knowledge and skills related to the craft of classroom teaching, but rather, how teachers live the experience of being a teacher in the context of their workplace including the challenges, complications and anxieties they perceive and highlighting how they experience the reality of real-world teaching. The *enculturation* or *socialisation model* entails that

the beliefs that are not only held and valued within the institution but have become embedded within its many taken-for-granted practices, inevitably exert a powerful influence upon the new teacher, sometimes referred to as 'the wash out effect' (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981) ... In this perspective, learning to teach is viewed largely in terms of induction into the institutional values and practices, the ways of thinking and acting that predominate within the school (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997: 11).

Calderhead and Shorrock (1997: 18) talk of multiple forms of learning when describing the complexity of learning to teach and how becoming a teacher is part of the process:

learning to become a teacher contrasts sharply in its demands from learning mathematics or learning history, for example. Learning to become a teacher requires multiple forms of learning. Learning to teach the concept of ratio is different from learning to present oneself as a teacher in the classroom,...., or how to work with one's colleagues or how to cope with one's own anxieties (see Calderhead, 1991)

Thus, learning to teach seems to be a diverse research area that has evolved over a number of historical periods, each of which reflects the dominating

approaches of that time. In the Behaviourism era, the *technical model* of learning to teach was dominant in which teaching was understood in terms of observable behaviours, and learning to teach was thought of as learning the skills and knowledge related to the practice of classroom teaching per se. The cognitive turn gives rise to the role of teacher in the teaching process and entails that we cannot understand teachers' work and how they learn to teach unless we study what they know, think and believe and what kind of background experiences they bring to the profession. The sociocultural turn gives exceptional importance to the teaching context in which the process of teaching unfolds. In this view, the *enculturation* or *socialisation* model of learning to teach operates where learning to teach is viewed as a socialisation process and primarily involves learning to become a teacher in the institutional context of workplaces.

3.3 Prominent themes and studies in the field of learning to teach

This section reviews prominent themes and studies in the field of learning to teach. The review falls under two main headings. The first discusses teacher beliefs and the 'apprenticeship of observation', and the second focuses on the importance of the teaching context.

It is important to note that many of the studies reported here are not exclusively related to English language teaching because, firstly, research on the experiences of English language teaching and teachers is still immature and far from being complete (Freeman, 1996), and publications within this field have been rather limited if compared with the learning-to-teach research on general education (Farrell, 2008). Secondly, studies on learning to teach within the field of English language teaching have derived extensively from conclusions drawn by studies on general education, and thus any attempt to describe these studies would be difficult without shedding light on findings from general education research.

A final remark about the studies reviewed here is that the majority of works on learning to teach in the literature have been conducted in the context of teacher education or on teachers who have followed teacher education. Although my study

focuses on teachers without previous teacher education, I find the concepts which I will review here closely relevant to my participants too.

3.3.1 Teacher beliefs and the ‘apprenticeship of observation’

The concept of ‘teacher beliefs’ is fundamental to educational research. The understanding of how teacher beliefs operate provides insights into how teachers learn to do their work (Richards, 1998). The importance of beliefs comes from the fact that they influence decisions made by teachers when planning their lessons and also shape their instructional practice in the classroom (Johnson, 1994).

Due to its complexity, the construct of ‘belief’ poses a challenge to any attempt to define it (Pajares, 1992; Johnson, 1994). One reason why it is difficult to define beliefs in a clear, concise way is that they “travel in disguise” (Pajares, 1992: 309), as there is a wide variety of terms used when talking about the concept of ‘beliefs’: e.g. attitudes, conceptions, values, ideologies, judgements, axioms, opinions, perceptions, dispositions, personal theories, perspectives and rules of practice. Drawing on psychological research and the work of Rokeach (1968), Pajares (1992) comments that another reason for the difficulty of providing a clear definition of beliefs is that they are difficult to access, measure or observe, as they can only be inferred from people’s actions, and they are normally difficult to elicit as they are subconscious (Donaghue, 2003). However, of the many attempts to define teacher beliefs, M. Borg (2001) seems to provide a clear working definition:

A belief is a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour (2001:186).

In educational research, researchers have been particularly interested in the relationship between teacher beliefs and the process of learning to teach. There is now a consensus of opinion that teachers’ journey into learning to teach starts actually much earlier than the time when they first decide to enter the teaching profession. A beginning teacher does not enter the teaching profession as a *tabula rasa*, or ‘empty vessel’ (Freeman, 2002; John, 1996), but brings with them an

accumulation of prior experiences, notions and well-established preconceptions in the form of personal beliefs about teaching and learning (Thompson, 1992) that tend to be quite influential on the process of their learning to teach. These beliefs have been constructed as a result of being seated for thousands of hours watching teachers and forming impressions and tacit knowledge about what might be their future profession. During their years as pupils at school, prospective teachers receive a rich store of experiences of differing types of teachers, their styles of teaching, and also of various ways of studying and learning (Virta, 2002). Unlike other professions such as medicine or law whose practitioners seem to lack the skills about their future profession and workplaces (Knowles, 1992) prior to starting their job, teachers have long been exposed to what is like to be a teacher and seem to form beliefs drawing on their early learning experiences that might guide and shape their actions and behaviour. Britzman, (2003: 27) contends that

The mass experience of public education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions ... Implicitly, schooling fashions the meanings, realities, and experiences of students; thus those learning to teach draw from their subjective experiences constructed from actually being there.

Lortie (1975) calls this long period in which beginning teachers have long been watching their teachers in action the 'apprenticeship of observation.' According to Lortie (1975), this notion is actually based on the idea that "being a student is like serving an apprenticeship in teaching" and refers to the fact that "the average student has spent 13,000 hours in direct contact with classroom teachers by the time he graduates from high school" (Lortie, 1975: 61). Since then, the catchphrase "apprenticeship of observation" has been perceived as synonymous with the claim that "teachers teach the way they were taught" (Heaton and Mickelson, 2002: 51) and has also been used to explain the likely perpetuation of the models teachers learned in the past while they do their work in the present. This 'apprenticeship' is actually responsible for many of the pre-entry conceptions and beliefs which teachers hold about teaching and seems to be supported by studies into children's conceptions of teaching and teachers. For example, it has been found that schoolchildren are able to construct an awareness of teacher roles, although often

at an intuitive level (Emler, Ohana & Moscovici, 1987; McCabe, 1995; Morgan & Morris, 1999).

One of the consequences of this 'apprenticeship' period is that, unlike medical or law students who are more likely to be aware of the limitations of their knowledge upon career entry, beginning teachers may fail to realise that the aspects of teaching which they acquired as students represent only a limited view of the teacher's job. Rust (1994) asserts that, in Lortie's model, students see the teachers' front stage like an audience viewing a play; they see their teachers doing things - organising activities, monitoring, correcting, lecturing, but they cannot see the 'backstage' behaviours of teachers - the thinking, planning, preparing, reflecting, selecting goals or aims and the selection or matching of activities to these aims. Consequently, it is unlikely that the students gained any real sense of the pedagogical principles underlying teacher behaviours during their 'apprenticeship'. In other words, they would not be expected to be able to analyse the teaching behaviours they observe in any detail. This means that "what students learn about teaching, then, is intuitive and imitative rather than explicit and analytical; it is based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles" (Lortie, 1975: 62). What they have acquired during their apprenticeship of observation, in other words, are the 'folkways of teaching', that is "readymade recipes for action and interpretation that do not require testing or analysis while promising familiar, safe results" (Buchmann, 1987: 161). This provides beginning teachers with default options, a set of tried and tested strategies to which they can revert in moments of indecision or uncertainty (Tomlinson, 1999b). Beginning teachers' tendency to fall back on the default position which they know very well can lead to them teaching the way they were taught even if they display a desire to act otherwise, hence perpetuating early models of teaching and rendering teaching perhaps the most conservative of all professions.

A second consequence of teachers' 'apprenticeship' period can be seen in student teachers' reported tendency to underestimate the complexity of teaching and to overestimate their own ability to start teaching straight away (Lortie, 1975). Several studies which draw upon Lortie's ideas appear to confirm that the

familiarity of the teaching profession leads student teachers to view teaching as unproblematic. For example, Book, Byers and Freeman (1983) find that a significant number of student teachers express confidence in their ability to begin teaching immediately. Similarly, Weinstein (1990) reports that 92% of teachers in one course rate themselves as 'above average' regarding their future teaching capacities. In an earlier study, Weinstein (1980: 806) refers to what he calls "unrealistic optimism" and argues that trainee teachers feel that they will have less difficulty teaching than the average first-year teacher. This finding is further supported by Kalaian and Freeman (1994) although results have showed that there is a difference between both genders; in general, females entering the course have lower levels of confidence about the complexity of teaching and in their abilities to start teaching right away than their male counterparts. Other studies on the same phenomenon include Feiman-Nemser *et al.* (1989), Lappan and Ruhama (1989) and Calderhead & Robson (1991). Calderhead & Robson (1991) note that student teachers view teaching as unproblematic and believe that 'everyone can teach' and that one does not specifically need to learn anything about teaching in order to be a teacher. In parallel with student teachers' tendency to overestimate their own abilities to teach and underestimate the complexity of teaching is a further overestimation of the performance of their prospective pupils. Holt-Reynolds (1992) comments that student teachers view themselves as the prototype for their own students and, hence, tend to generalise from their own personal experiences and overestimate the abilities of the students they will be teaching. Anderson *et al* (1995: 151) describe this overgeneralisation tendency in terms of two typical responses by student teachers: "I learned this way, so this must be the best way to learn" and "my teachers taught this way and I learned, therefore it must be the best way to teach."

To sum up, Lortie's (1975) ideas have been very influential, and many studies on teaching have built on them. These studies, including Lortie's (1975), have showed that teachers' 'apprenticeship' of observation is responsible for many of the pre-entry beliefs and conceptions that teachers hold about teaching and that there are two major consequences of this long period of 'apprenticeship' which the student teachers served during early schooling days. One of these consequences

is that teachers have constructed intuitive rather than reasoned responses from their early learning experiences because they were unable to gain access to the 'backstage' planning and decision-making processes of their previous teachers and have thus developed only readymade recipes for action which "pertain to the general milieu of teaching" (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006: 30), rather than analytical views of teaching, and to which they can revert at critical moments. The second consequence of teachers' 'apprenticeship' period pertains to a tendency to underestimate the complexity of the teaching profession as well as a feeling that they can start teaching straight away. They also tend to overgeneralise their learning experiences with their own teachers and view themselves as prototypes for their own students, and hence underestimate the learning process and overestimate their students' abilities.

Studies which examine the 'apprenticeship' period as a fundamental source of teacher beliefs have been also involved in studying the basic assumptions, properties and characteristics of teacher beliefs abstracted from teachers' apprenticeship of observation. These studies include Bailey *et al.* (1996), Brown and McGannon (1998), Calderhead & Robson (1991), Feiman-Nemser *et al.* (1989), John (1996), Joram and Gabriele (1998), Kagan (1992b), Pajares (1992), Pennington (1996), Wideen *et al.* (1998)). The following are four basic assumptions and characteristics of teacher beliefs.

(a) Teachers' beliefs influence their conceptions and guide their actions

Research on learning to teach is particularly interested in how teacher beliefs influence beginning teachers' conceptions of teaching and guide their actions in the classroom. In the field of second language teaching, Borg (2003) comments that

Teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching during teacher education, and which may continue to be influential throughout their professional lives (p. 88).

In fact, teachers' beliefs play a critical role in how they learn to teach, how they interpret new information about teaching and learning, and how this can be

translated into classroom practices. Beliefs guide teachers' conceptions of the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and roles and inform the many decisions they make every day in their classrooms. Uncovering teachers' beliefs contributes to our understanding of teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning, their decision-making processes and their classroom practice. The close link between beliefs and actions is suggested by research which shows that the beliefs held by teachers about teaching, learning, subject matter, students and the classroom affect teachers' overall action and classroom instruction. A number of studies (Bailey, *et al.* 1996; Calderhead and Robson, 1991; John 1996; Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996) discuss the relationship between teacher beliefs formulated during their prior learning experiences and their conceptions about teaching and classroom practice. These studies, which will be outlined below, suggest that what teachers bring to the classroom is the major factor that shapes their approaches and teaching philosophies, and that teachers "prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs .. inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in the classroom (Freeman & Johnson, 1998: 401).

Although Lortie's 'apprenticeship' model and the inferred notion that 'we teach as we were taught' have been so influential that they have been cited time and again in studies on learning to teach, the model rarely demonstrates how views of teaching are replicated or countered. In particular, the 'apprenticeship' model fails to specify how students construct beliefs from their own positive experiences as school learners to shape their teaching practices, nor does it clearly explain how teachers draw upon beliefs abstracted from negative experiences derived from their past schooling to transform them into positive teaching practices. To address this shortcoming, a few studies have developed the concept of remembered 'images' of teaching and teachers, which are expected to influence teachers' conceptions and classroom practices. Based on their early experiences with former teachers and their teaching styles, beginning teachers construct particular images of what 'good' and 'bad' teachers are like, who can also be referred to as positive and negative 'role models' (Ross, 1987; Knowles, 1992) or what John (1996) calls the 'significant other,' which refers to any person or persons who have special influence on an individual's self-concept. Images of teachers and teaching from

beginning teachers' prior experiences seem to manifest themselves in beliefs which exert influences on teachers' preconceptions and shape their instructional practices.

John (1996) discusses the impact of prior beliefs and early learning experiences on teachers' conceptions of history teaching and history teachers. He observes that teachers' intuitive past models of what is like to be a teacher and what makes a good or bad teacher shapes most of his participants' conceptions and beliefs about teachers and teaching. Based on images of their past teachers, teachers in this study reveal their conceptions of good teachers: "A good teacher is one who shares their enthusiasm with the children, who knows what they're talking about and who is passionate about their subject" (p. 94) as well as bad teachers: "they were always dominant and didn't really care that much about you as a person. They just delivered the material, usually badly, and then left." (p. 95).

Negative images of teachers and teaching events also tend to inspire student teachers to be willing to compensate their own students for the poor teaching they had received during their schooling. While Lortie (1975: 62) suggests that "students are undoubtedly impressed by some teacher actions and not by others, but one would not expect them to view the differences in a pedagogical, explanatory way," Zeichner and Gore (1990) stand in stark contrast with Lortie's claim and suggest that student teachers' intentions to create a positive atmosphere in their classrooms drawing upon negative images of their experiences as learners indicate that they "focus more directly on their own learning as pupils and deliberately seek to create in their own teaching those conditions that were missing from their own education" (p. 333). Calderhead and Robson (1991) show how teachers, based on negative images of past teachers and their teaching, tend to counter negative practices in their prior learning experiences and try to transform them into more positive ones. For example, one teacher holds many negative images of past teachers who were impatient, intolerant and failed to explain things to her. She can recall feelings of embarrassment and being ridiculed when she asked for help or more explanations when she could not understand. Drawing upon her negative experience, this teacher explains that her major contribution to

teaching lies in her creative endeavours to be the model of a teacher who makes learning interesting for children and who is patient and tolerant with young children when they struggle to understand.

With regard to English language teaching, a number of studies (Bailey, *et al.* 1996; Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996) also shed light on how prior learning experiences and the formulated beliefs during them shape teachers' conceptions of teaching and contribute to their decision-making and behaviour in the classroom.

Johnson (1994), also using the construct of guiding images, examines the beliefs of four teachers and argues that "Images of formal language learning experiences proved to have a powerful impact on the ways in which these teachers described their own beliefs about second language teachers and teaching" (Johnson 1994: 443). Johnson (1994) also finds out that teachers recall both positive and negative images based on their own prior experiences as learners which seem to have a powerful impact on their conceptions of themselves and their classroom practice. For example, one student teacher describes her beliefs as solely based on images of her past teachers and her positive reactions towards the way they taught her. She describes her experience as one in which learning was about a teacher asking questions and students giving answers and where language use was completely missing; the learning process consisted merely of doing the exercises in the book, listening to the tape and completing the dialogues. These images from her past teachers' ways of teaching seem to shape her disposition and conception of teaching and learning; she comments "I loved it. I was really good at it. It was pretty easy for me to do well..." (Johnson, 1994: 443). Another student teacher strongly believes in creating opportunities for students to learn on their own by generating discussion in the classroom; however, images of teacher-fronted classes during his learning experiences where he also enjoyed teachers' ways of teaching and learned a great deal seem to influence his practice in real teaching: "I desperately need to become a better listener, but my problem is that these experiences are so new to me that my first reaction is to just jump in and tell them what I think without waiting to hear what they think" (Johnson, 1994: 447). Images of past teachers and classes seem to overcome his new beliefs about

encouraging classroom discussions, which indicates the power of those early models and the robustness of the relevant constructed beliefs based on images of these early models.

Informal learning experiences also appear to exert an influence on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning – a fact which seems to be absent in Lortie's discussion which concentrates on formal school-based learning experiences and their impact on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. The four teachers in Johnson's (1994) study (3 native speakers and 1 non-native speaker) had lived abroad and had significant language learning experiences outside the classroom that seem to shape their notions of effective English language teaching. The non-native speaker teacher, for example, was of the opinion that teachers should not "just pour grammatical knowledge into students' heads, but to enable students to learn by themselves and assume a more active role in their own language learning process" (p. 444). Johnson (1994) argues that the past informal experience of this teacher with learning English in USA for 2 years has left a powerful impact on her belief of how second languages ought to be taught.

Bailey *et al* (1996) investigate the influence of their own prior experiences on their conceptualisations of teaching and their beliefs about the kind of teachers they wanted to be. Findings suggest that there are several factors related to their prior experiences which are expected to have an impact on their teaching philosophies and practices in the future. These factors include maintaining their students' motivation, creating reciprocal respect with learners, being good models of the behaviour they would like to encourage and creating a positive environment to foster student learning and ownership. Thus, they argue, by looking back at their own histories as learners, they were able to value both positive and negative learning experiences and realise that their teaching styles will be expected to evolve based on successful learning experiences and the best traits of those teachers whom they admired most.

Numrich (1996) describes how teachers appear to adopt practices drawing upon their positive or negative experiences as learners. She finds out that teachers either replicate some particular practices in their teaching or purposely rejected

others based on the positive or negative impacts these practices had made on their L2 learning. More specifically, those teachers who had positive learning experiences in studying culture were motivated to integrate elements of the US culture in their teaching of ESL. One teacher reports "Just as my teachers showed cultural aspects of the culture in order to make the language learning come alive, so I wanted to do the same for my students .." (p. 138). Similarly, giving students opportunities to communicate was one of the positive learning experiences for the teachers in this study. One teacher commented that she was motivated to learn Japanese because she learned it in a communicative way when three of her Japanese friends sometimes spoke Japanese in her presence. In contrast, error correction was a technique that teachers most tried to avoid in their teaching depending on their negative experiences as learners with teachers correcting them. A student teacher comments "Why I avoided error correction was a reflection upon negative experiences I had as a language learner when I was made to feel 'bad' about making mistakes." (p. 140). Another technique that they consciously rejected to incorporate in their teaching was grammar teaching based on their experience with learning grammar. One teacher argued: "I've also never taught grammar before. Forget teaching grammar, I've never really learned grammar. How am I going to teach grammar?!?!" (p. 140). Hence, based on their prior experiences as learners of English, teachers in this study either replicated or avoided some teaching practices depending on how good or bad they thought those practices had been during their learning experiences.

Thus, "the general picture to emerge here, then, is that prospective teachers' prior language learning experiences establish cognitions about learning and language learning which form the basis of their initial conceptualizations of L2 teaching .." (Borg, 2006: 54). Teachers hold vivid images of teachers and teaching from their early experiences as learners which influence interpretations of classroom practices and play a powerful role in how they decide what practices to employ in their classrooms. These images contribute to the construction of beliefs about teaching and learning and what makes a good or bad teacher and seem to form a lens through which beginning teachers interpret new information and

evaluate past experiences or provide a default position for teachers to fall back on even when they display a desire to act otherwise.

(b) Teachers' beliefs act as 'filters' and are usually resistant to change

Teachers' prior beliefs constructed during their apprenticeship of observation and drawing heavily on images of past teachers and teaching events create "intuitive screens" (Goodman, 1988: 130) through which incoming information and incidents are 'filtered'. These 'filtering effects' of beliefs help beginning teachers make sense of any new information, and either accept it or reject it. Teachers are typically found to interpret incidents and tasks through the lenses of their existing beliefs. This is indicated by Johnson's (1994) comment that

Our belief systems, [...], have a filtering effect on our thinking and information processing and play a critical role in shaping both our perceptions and behaviors ... teachers' beliefs appear to be instrumental in shaping how teachers interpret what goes on in their classrooms and how they will react and respond to it (p. 440).

Pajares (1992: 324) also contends that teacher beliefs act as filters and screens through which new information, events and perceptions are "sifted." Not only do teachers absorb information that matches their beliefs, but they also appear to build explanations around their pre-existing beliefs, regardless of whether these explanations are accurate or mere inventions (Johnson, 1994; Pajares, 1992). Nisbett and Ross (1980) confirm this claim commenting that teachers use whatever justifications are necessary to appear congruent with their beliefs, turn conflicting evidence into support for their beliefs, even when beliefs appear to be contradictory. This 'filtering effect' of beliefs has also been commented on by many researchers such as Tillema (1994), Nisbett and Ross (1980), Weinstein (1989; 1990), Pennington (1996), Goodman, (1988), Anderson & Bird (1995) and Zulich *et al.* (1992).

In their review of the learning-to-teach literature, Wideen *et al* (1998) argue that such works as Pajares' (1992) and Weinstein's (1990) have also confirmed that

“beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student reaches college, that changes in belief during adulthood are quite uncommon and that such prior beliefs are fairly robust and act as filters through which teacher education programs are viewed” (Wideen *et al*: 142).

Teacher beliefs appear to be powerfully ingrained and resistant to change. This resistant-to-change feature of teacher beliefs has repeatedly been used as a justification for the lack of change between pre-entry and post-entry beliefs of preservice teachers (Almarza, 1996; Weinstein, 1990, Urmston, 2003). Pajares (1992: 317) explains why beginning teachers seem to reject new information in favour of their own beliefs abstracted from their own prior experiences as learners:

the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, for these beliefs subsequently affect perception and strongly influence the processing of information. It is for this reason that newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable.

Kennedy (1990: 17) attributes the fact that pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teaching remain unchanged to their prolonged past engagement in the learning process: “What could possibly happen during these 75 days [of teacher preparation] to significantly alter the practices learned during the preceding 3,060 days?” Farrell (1999) notes that the beliefs of beginning teachers are resistant to change because these teachers are inflexible due to their lack of knowledge about how to adjust their beliefs to serve teaching purposes. Urmston (2003) ascribes the resistance of teacher beliefs to change to the depth and perceived familiarity of the surrounding educational system which creates a conflict between the training programme and what teachers know through experience as students and as student teachers to be the teaching norm in that context and which does not allow teachers to view alternative views of teaching and learning. He comments: “Knowing the education system so well already, it is unlikely that their opinions are going to be changed significantly after just three years of a teacher-training course” (Urmston, 2003: 122).

However, the assumption that beliefs are resistant to change is subject to scrutiny. Recent research on teacher beliefs suggest that beliefs should not be treated as the private realm of the teacher mind, but rather as products of social interaction. Li (2013) posits that, instead of viewing teacher beliefs as static traits of a person that remain constant and unchanged across situations, they should be viewed as entities that may be transformed by or even emerge as a result of the teachers' interactions with their students. His case study of one experienced Chinese teacher teaching in China, Yuan, shows that teacher beliefs and their relationship with practice can be understood in terms of two types of theory: espoused theories and theories-in-use. These two theories held by teachers may or may not align with each other. Yuan's espoused theories reveal his tendencies to encourage communicative skills and abilities of his students. His classroom practice shows a clear alignment between his espoused theories and how he gets students to participate and engage them in spoken interaction. However, other extracts of his classroom practice show authoritative, traditional pedagogy overriding his espoused theories. Yuan seems aware of this divergence but argues that the profound influence of his classroom context, especially students' needs, (i.e. theories-in-use) take precedence over his espoused theories. His focus on language areas and pronunciation corrections are given priority to serve short-term educational goals such as improving students' linguistic knowledge because of the approaching tests.

(c) Teachers' pre-entry beliefs are inappropriate, unrealistic and naïve

Teachers' limited access to their former teachers' 'backstage' processes and their concentration on the observable, accessible practices leads them to embrace unproblematic, imitative and intuitive views of teaching. Thus they enter the teaching profession with beliefs that are unrealistic, straightforward and overly simplistic about teaching based on what they have seen their teachers doing. These beliefs may not be well adapted to teaching and have been extracted from teachers' experience as students. Wubbels, Korthagen & Broekman (1991), Calderhead (1991) and Calderhead & Robson (1991) explain how teachers view teaching as telling and learning as memorising. Joram and Gabriele (1998: 180)

show another example of the simplistic, optimistic beliefs adopted by teachers. They comment that “preservice teachers often assume that once classroom management is taken care of, students will automatically learn.” This belief, they argue, is linked with the transmission model of learning in which a teacher imparts knowledge to learners through telling or showing and entails that this process of transmission cannot be guaranteed unless the classroom is quiet and orderly. Although educational psychology research has showed that classroom management is necessary but insufficient (Weinstein, 1993); student teachers in Joram and Gabriele's (1998) study still view classroom management as both necessary and sufficient in order for learning to take place. Urmston (2003) reports similar findings on student teachers' idealised and oversimplified beliefs about teaching. Most of teachers in this study suggest that teaching is simply about liking children and transmitting knowledge and that teachers should be friends with their learners. Similarly, Brown and McGannon (1998) have also showed that teachers have beliefs that are unrealistic, limited and too simplistic to be the basis of effective second language teaching. Teachers, in their study, believe that errors occur mainly due to first language interference and that languages are learned mainly by imitation. John's (1996) study similarly shows student teachers adopting straightforward, idealised beliefs tending to equate learning with the acquisition of subject matter knowledge, and hence likely to view teaching as a simple process of providing knowledge to their learners with the teacher deciding what and how things should be taught. Feiman-Nemser *et al.* (1989: 7) found that beginning teachers assume that teaching is straightforward; teaching is telling and that “to be a teacher, one need only *act* like a teacher.” Other studies on this idea include Posner (1982) and Brookhart and Freeman (1992). Explaining why teachers adopt idealised, unrealistic beliefs about teaching, Mewborn and Tyminki (2006: 30), using Lortie's ‘apprenticeship’ idea, suggest that

students are not privy to their teachers' reasons for and reflections upon their actions. Rather, students are on the receiving end of what teachers do and are therefore only in a position to notice teachers' actions and their influence on them as students. They are not in a position to be reflective and analytical about what they see, nor do they necessarily have cause to do so.

The authors continue that students fail to assess the quality of their teachers' teaching thoughtfully and tend to focus more on affective responses towards a particular teacher or practices and are thus likely to express appreciation, pleasure or dislike. This is another feature of teachers' pre-entry beliefs – that they centre around affective attributes of teachers and tend to be focused in the teaching process on the teacher factor rather than methodology.

(d) Teachers' pre-entry beliefs focus on affective, personal characteristics

Teachers tend to focus on the personal attributes of their past teachers and construct beliefs based on these attributes. John's (1996: 94) finds that when describing good teachers, the participants tend to concentrate heavily on "personal characteristics such as enthusiasm, charisma, warmth, likability and good subject knowledge." One of the teachers in this study notes that "The good teachers I had, had powerful personalities – not in an evil sense – but had a sense of humour, were quick witted and lively" (p. 94). The teacher continues that "He taught traditionally but was also a character with it – I'm not sure if I have such a persona – he was able to enthuse through the sheer force of his character" (p. 95). Beginning teachers also draw upon these personal characteristics as well as their successful experiences with past teachers when considering entering the teaching profession (Hayes, 2008; John, 1996). Bailey *et al's* (1996) study yielded similar results. They comment that "We also saw that in our data the 'teacher factor' was considered to be more important than methodology. [...] when teachers cared about their students and communicated high expectations, the language learning experience was judged to be successful" (p. 21). A further example can be found in Hayes' (2009) study in which a student teacher reports certain personal affective features of her teachers that made her learning experience successful: lovely personality, walking around the classroom, loud voice, active and enjoying teaching. The extensive focus of teachers' beliefs on personal characteristics of teachers indicates yet another common belief – that teachers were born, not made. Many teachers hold strong beliefs that teachers come to the teaching profession with inherent attributes which were born with them. (Bailey *et al*, 1996; John, 1996; Ross, 1987). In Ross' (1989) study, for example, a teacher assimilates teaching to

music and assumes that not every teacher has the talent for the teaching profession: “I don't think you can totally learn to teach, I think that a lot of people just couldn't do it” (p. 237).

3.3.2 The importance of the teaching context

As section 2.2 above shows, the relationship between the teaching context and learning to teach has been emphasised within a sociocultural perspective. Teachers are seen as active members who make decisions in relation to the teaching context where they work. The teaching context derives its importance from its potential to transform how teachers' work is conducted. The notion of transformation is commented on by Eraut (1994) and Valsineer & Van der Veer (2000). Eraut (1994) argues that any new concepts or ideas brought to a new context undergo some transformation in order to become acceptable and applicable in contextually appropriate ways and that this transformation is a learning process in itself. He asserts that it is unlikely that learning to use one same idea can happen in two different contexts and that any transfer from one context to another entails that further learning should take place with the idea being transformed in the process (Cranton & Carusetta, 2002; Eraut, 1994). Pennington *et al* (1996) refer to this fact indicating that the teaching context where teachers' work operates exerts strong influences on their experiences of learning to teach in that, having to resolve conflict between who they actually are and who they are required to act as and adjust approaches to fit in with the teaching context where they work involves them having to construct and re-construct many new values and perceptions and enact new practices. Cranton and Carusetta (2002: 168) also observe that

We teach in a context. We work within a programme or department which is a part of a community, country, political system and a culture. The decisions that we make about our teaching need to be conscious and consciously related to the context within we work.

Studying the influence of the teaching context on learning to teach entails understanding how teachers are socialised in their workplaces. The *socialisation* model (Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997) examines the process of becoming a

teacher and how this process involves challenges, complications and dilemmas while teachers are required to embrace the rules and culture of the workplaces and respond and act upon influences that come from different sets of contextual factors around them. Studies on learning to teach for beginning teachers highlight how these teachers face a 'reality shock' in the teaching context where their personal theories and beliefs are compromised and challenged and where learning to teach for them becomes a process of learning to adapt and survive in the new teaching culture. Studies on learning to teach and the influence of the teaching context reveal three levels of contextual influences. These are (a) the wider educational system, (b) the educational institution as a workplace and (c) the classroom.

(a) The wider educational system

Contextual factors influencing how teachers learn to teach include the educational system and prevailing common teaching practices of a certain society. Many studies on second language teaching show teachers adopting practices that respond to the normative ways of teaching and learning which are historically embedded in their local contexts (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Li, 1998, Probyn, 2001 and Simon-Maeda, 2004). For example, Johnson (2006) sheds light on the experience of South Korean teachers when the South Korean ministry of education suggested that Communicative Language Teaching should replace the prevalent traditional methods of grammar-translation and audiolingualism through language tasks that encourage more student involvement in English language use. However, with the central role played by final examinations which extensively focus on language as structure, teachers and students are seen to continue with their old traditional ways of teaching and learning affected by the washback effects of examinations, and grammar-translation, non-communicative methods continue to persist, as Kim (2005) and Li (1998) confirm.

A similar situation is found in Urmston and Pennington's (2008) study on beginning English language teachers in Hong Kong. Participant teachers have articulated a desire to enact innovative, communicative teaching practices, but find themselves constrained by an achievement-oriented, examination-driven

educational culture where they have to teach for the test and where students tend to focus on getting high grades in the learning process. Accordingly, teachers seem to be locked into a transmissive system to better respond to their students' product-oriented aims, which runs against their opportunities to adopt communicative or innovative practices as a result.

Hayes (2009) talks about a similar situation. He asserts that his informants do value the general principles of Communicative Language Teaching approach; nevertheless, there are certain situations where teachers refrain from adopting it due to influences coming from the wider educational context which gives priority to the examination in the learning process. One teacher in this study believes that the approaching school semester examination makes her revert to traditional methods of teaching characterised by intensive focus on grammar and the use of L1 to explain grammatical points.

(b) The educational institution as a workplace

The educational institution as a workplace including the codes of conduct and norms of behaviour can also be an important contextual force shaping teachers' experiences while they learn to teach.

Hayes (2008) describes how first-year Thai teachers become socialised into the teaching environment and how the informal induction they receive early in the new teaching context influences their attitudes. For two participant teachers, the induction is not more than an initial meeting with the school head and being introduced to fellow teachers. These two teachers have to follow a 'sink or swim' approach by taking the full responsibility to find out what they need to know during socialisation into the life of the school. One teacher emphasises that it is the new teachers' responsibility to find somebody as a guide or informal mentor, as the school does not help assign mentors to new teachers. She describes her induction as "They just come, say you are a teacher, you get appointed and then you have to find your own way" (p. 62). Further, the only guide to the curriculum in this school consists merely of giving textbooks to these two teachers, which leads one of them to adopt the following attitude and teaching strategy: "I don't know what the

curriculum was and I don't care. I follow the book and I think the book is the curriculum" (p. 63). This teacher further indicates that knowing how to become a teacher in her school sometimes entails saying things counter to her beliefs in order to maintain group harmony. She continues: "but now sometimes I speak what I don't think. You have to learn. [...] I don't agree with some things but for peace I have to be silent" (p. 63).

Farrell (2006; 2008) presents a similar picture when he narrates the experience of a beginning teacher newly appointed in a neighbourhood secondary school in Singapore to teach English. The teacher appears to experience a set of challenges and complications due to some contextual constraints pertinent to the school policies and expected norms. Although he believes in the efficacy of learner-centred approaches to teaching represented in pair work and group work in class which, he assumes, lead to effective learning, he expresses a difficulty to enact such practices because the school encourages a different tradition that is more teacher-centred. The conflict arises between what he wants to do and what the school, including colleague teachers and students, expect him to do. Assigning pair and group work creates high levels of noise, is recognised as bad teaching by other colleague teachers, leads to losing control over the class and is not very well perceived by students. The teacher maintains that he still believes in the importance of learner-centred approaches and cannot adopt a teacher-centred approach regardless of what the school expect him to do. This has left him with an unresolved conflict throughout the first year. What is perceived as normative in this school also influences his planning for lessons. He believes in the importance of using new teaching ideas in class and prefers to teach using supplementary materials from sources other than the department-produced materials, but realises that his students are so concerned about the relevance of these extra materials to the examinations which they will face. Thinking about his own current situation, he seems to find balance; he continues to provide his students with extra materials, especially on reading comprehension, based on his prior assumption that students "needed to be educated rather than just prepared for the tests .." (p. 49) paying equal attention to covering the materials required by the department due to their relevance to final examinations and their significance for students' futures.

Borg. M (2008) describes the first year of teaching as experienced by native speaking teachers who have completed a CELTA course and started teaching English in a variety of settings around the world. One teacher holds certain affective beliefs of teacher roles and asserts that teachers should treat students as equals, respect them as individuals, encourage the use of humour and fun to create a relaxing atmosphere, avoid dominating the class or lecturing students and build students' confidence. Finding herself in a private school in Southern Europe, she is faced with a number of challenges which make her abandon using many of the techniques raised in the CELTA course. Her classes consist of monolingual children who she felt are unmotivated, do not pay attention and lack interest and enthusiasm in learning English. She describes her first-year experience as traumatic and asserts that her major problems lie in her relationship with the school owners who suggest that she scream at the children to maintain discipline in the classroom, which appears to be incongruent with her view of teaching as fun. As she refuses to conform to the ways of teaching suggested, and due to the isolation and lack of support she feels in this school, she stops seeing herself as an English teacher and decides to return to the UK after a year of work completely disappointed

Shin (2012) explores the reasons why South Korean novice teachers abandon using English as the main medium of instruction in their English classrooms and tend instead to use Korean with their students. On top of these reasons come a set of institutional and administrative constraints as well as others pertinent to the general school culture. Shin (2012) argues that teachers find themselves in schools that lay particular stress on the necessity of covering the same amount of coursebook material at the same progress rate across each specific grade level. In other words, each grade is divided into several classes, and teachers have no choice of determining the material to be covered or the pace of instruction; rather, the same achievement test needs to be taken by all students belonging to the same level on the same date. This exerts pressure on the novice teachers to conduct their classes in the same way as the old teachers and relinquish their preferred ways of delivering English classes using English in order to cope with other teachers' pace of instruction. Further, novice teachers are made to teach in

the same ways as existing teachers because they need to prepare students for the exams, which are believed to measure students' language knowledge, and avoid complaints from students in case they have skipped certain activities. Consequently, they give up using English because there is no time to cover the huge amount of material, in which case using Korean is a more guaranteed way to save time and better prepare students for the exam.

Workplace environments can impact significantly upon teacher learning; they can either inhibit or promote teachers' opportunities for professional development. Atwal (2013) provides a review of approaches to workplace learning, drawing on his own professional learning, and concludes that there are important institutional factors influencing teachers' access to teacher learning opportunities. These include the quality of working relationships within individual subject departments; where there is a high degree of collaboration and mutual support, this is seen to be an influential factor in promoting learning opportunities for teachers as part of their daily lives through such informal activities as advice or occasional instruction. The author continues that institutions can either be expansive or restrictive learning communities depending on the extent to which the workplace can impact positively or negatively on the formal and informal opportunities available to support teacher learning. An expansive learning environment presents wide-ranging and diverse opportunities for teacher learning not only in terms of collaborative work and mutual support, but also in terms of support for teacher learning as an embedded feature of classroom practice, support of opportunities to learn out of the workplace and enhancement of working in different teacher groups. Restrictive learning environments, on the other hand, are usually characterised by teachers working in isolation with no explicit focus on teacher learning and few expansive learning opportunities provided for teachers whether in or out of school.

(c) The classroom

The classroom context exerts influences on teachers in that they are seen to adjust their approaches and previously held assumptions to fit in with the context of their classrooms, particularly the students making up their classes, leading teachers to

either experience trauma due to their resistance to conform or consider alternative options that best respond to the new situations.

Borg's, M (2008) study narrates the experiences of three teachers in new teaching contexts. One teacher starts teaching in one of the independent republic of the former Soviet Union where she faces a monolingual student population. Although she believes that teachers need to have a sense of humour and lessons need to be light-hearted, she now has to teach students who have a tendency to repeatedly switch to their first language, which eventually leads her to adopt a stricter attitude in the classroom trying to get them to use English.

In Flores and Day's (2006) study, teachers change perspectives about learning and teaching and accordingly adjust actions based on some contextual factors: mainly the characteristics of their learners in the classroom. In this study, new teachers are confronted with classes where discipline and classroom control problems arise. Although they believe in the importance of providing students with a pleasant learning environment and that flexibility and responsiveness are important attributes of good teaching, "Concerns with student control in the classroom gave rise to the shift from a more inductive and student-centered approach to teaching towards a more teacher-centered and task-oriented one, in which routine prevailed.." (Flores and Day, 2006: 227).

The influence of learners' characteristics is also seen in Burns' (1996) study in which a participant teacher constructs a new understanding of what should be planned in her lessons when she is assigned to teach a withdrawal group from a bigger core class who are thought to be slow learners. Conscious of her learners' characteristics as having low proficiency, the planning priority of this teacher has become building the learners' confidence and focusing in her teaching on increasing their talk especially about things they do everyday, and hence extending the potential for them to communicate with native speakers. The influence of learners' characteristics is clear in the way this teacher wishes to move away from her "more traditional, structured models and written practice" (Burns, 1996: 161) of the core class and focus instead, in the small group, on getting the learners more

active attempting to cater for their needs by aiming to focus on their everyday lives and get their talking increased.

Graden (1996) describes how the classroom context leads six language teachers to compromise their prior beliefs about reading instruction based on the proficiency level of the students making up their classes. All teachers hold prior beliefs about the importance of conducting reading lessons in the target language; however, observation data show them using students' L1 during oral discussions of the reading texts as well as in its translation from the target language. Their decisions to use L1 come as a result of their frustration with student performance and the need for comprehension checks. Further, another teacher shows feelings of frustration when her students fail to understand the meaning of the reading text, which leads her to reluctantly focus on form rather than meaning due to her students' incomprehension of what they read.

A similar situation is found in Hayes' (2009) study in which a teacher stops using English and prefers to use Lao, a dialect used by her pupils, as a way of catering for their needs, given that they have low proficiency levels of English, as most of them come from farming communities for whom English has little importance for their present or future lives. On her using of Lao, the teacher comments: "Some students remember a lot and learn when we compare with the meaning of Lao; and some students don't understand English (p. 5). Hayes (2009), hence, notes that this teacher resorts to Lao as an aid to her pupils' learning and observes that this is particularly evident in the way she uses Lao to make a joke when the children feel 'sleepy' or bored.

Shin (2012) also describes why teachers give up using English as a medium of instruction in the classrooms and states that students' beliefs about the best language teaching and learning methods contribute to teachers' decisions to relinquish the use of English and keep conducting their lessons in ways that cope with students' expectations. Students, Shin (2012) comments, are accustomed to conventional teaching methods and "Having always been taught in Korean, students are socialized to believe that the traditional method facilitates language

learning. They cannot be expected to suddenly accept instruction in English, and it is only natural that many will find it tough and will complain” (Shin, 2012: 555).

Uysal and Bardakci (2014) conduct a study with 108 EFL teachers at the elementary level in Turkey, using questionnaires and focus-group interviews, to show the influence of the teaching context at the classroom level on teachers’ conceptions of the applicability of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with their students. The results suggest that time constraints, crowded classes, students expectations and the textbook taught are the major factors for continuing teaching in the traditional, grammar-translation methods and overlooking the CLT principles suggested at the national level. Some participant teachers argue that they cannot create situations for CLT practices or use visual aids in their classrooms because this is time consuming. They need to cover the entire book because students will have questions from the book in the central standardised exams by the government, in which case teaching grammar explicitly offers a working solution to save time and meet the national educational goals. Other participant teachers state that it is not possible to get 40 students to participate in communicative activities in a 40-minute class. The textbooks also imposed a difficulty for enacting communicative practices. One teacher notes that she wants to implement CLT in her classroom and she followed the communicative textbook suggested to her in the school and has recently stopped teaching grammar topics and explicit rules, but the textbook was not helpful and her students did not seem to learn English any better. Another teacher says that she strongly supports CLT and believes that grammar could be learned implicitly, yet she finds the textbook “inadequate to realize this goal as the books are very poor in terms of communicative activities and visual materials” (Uysal and Bardakci, 2014: 9).

The general picture to emerge in these studies is that learning to teach consists of learning to become a teacher in the context of the wider educational system, institutional workplaces and classrooms and knowing how to respond to the surrounding normative practices and influences coming from these contexts, as these variables usually have impacts on how teachers formulate new understandings to conform to the different forces around them. The contexts within

which a teacher works are influential on how they become teachers in that they constitute important factors in shaping teachers' perspectives towards teaching. Realisation of these forces have impacts on teachers' philosophies and priorities as well as on the ways they are expected to teach and act.

3.4 A critical overview of the literature reviewed in this chapter

This review of the literature indicates that research on learning to teach has developed significantly over the past two decades. However, much more research into this phenomenon is still needed to address certain considerations that appear missing or with limited influence in the field.

First, in the ELT world, the relationship between teacher beliefs and learning to teach still needs deeper explorations particularly when the focus is on the 'apprenticeship of observation' framework which, to date, still represents an example of 'snark syndrome' (first coined by Byrne, 1993), i.e., a notion which "takes on the air of authority through repetition, instead of empirical evidence" (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006: 30). There is much scope for expansion in the ELT literature on teachers' prior beliefs and whether and how these are translated into actions in classrooms.

Second, most of studies undertaken within the 'cognitive' model focus on descriptions or origins of prior beliefs, usually with an over-reliance on a single research tool, tending to ignore the complex and multifaceted nature of the concept of 'belief' by focusing more on self-reported data such as interviews, but much less on observational 'teaching' data. Little effort has been made to investigate teacher beliefs using multiple research methods to better attend to the complexity of the concept of 'belief' as a proposition that teachers hold either consciously or unconsciously and that cannot be understood by merely relying on what teachers say.

Third, most of learning-to-teach studies in the existing literature have been carried out with participants to address a transition either between their schooling and teacher education or between the latter and their actual teaching in their educational institutions. Very little is known about the experiences of beginning

teachers who 'jump' straight to the teaching profession without the intervention of any teacher education programmes. Vast numbers of teachers around the world (recognised by UNESCO as a key problem in trying to improve education internationally) begin their teaching career 'in the deep end.' Exploring the experiences of such teachers can provide interesting insights into the power and intensity of the relationship between their prior beliefs, which appear to be fairly undisturbed by any intervention, and their current experiences of learning to teach.

Fourth, research on life histories and teachers' lives provides real world evidence, while the essentially cognitivist work on beliefs does not. The 'cognitive' model of learning to teach can no longer stand on its own; notions drawing upon the 'socialisation' model of the learning-to-teach process also need to be taken into consideration in order to complement our one-sided view of the process and provide a more synthesised, more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences of learning to teach. Borg (2009: 166-7) argues that "context is a fundamental variable in understanding teaching; research into language teachers' cognitions and practices that does not attend to the context in which these cognitions and practices unfold is, I would argue, conceptually flawed."

Fifth, on the 'socialisation' level, very few studies, especially in the ELT domain, have attempted to show how contextual forces such as the common educational beliefs of the wider community, the school culture as a workplace and the classroom as an immediate instructional setting of teachers' practices can influence and shape teachers' learning-to-teach experiences. Particularly, research on learning to teach, which has been predominantly documented within a 'cognitive' model, shows how teacher beliefs can guide teachers' experiences of learning to teach but discusses, to a much lesser extent, how these early experiences in the teaching context can also contribute to the formulation and reformulation of new beliefs, thoughts and assumptions which lead teachers to act in ways that are situationally accepted in the workplaces rather than in ways congruent with their prior beliefs. Without considering the contextual forces of teachers' work, our understanding of the learning-to-teach process would be rather limited. Borg (2006) points out that research on teachers' beliefs is lacking

substance, and needs to be 'tested' by evidence from real teachers' experiences. The belief theory is very 'cerebral' (i.e. residing inside peoples' heads), whereas learning-to-teach is a social and cultural process, highly influenced by contexts. Studying teachers' in their own workplaces offers insights into understanding how their beliefs are translated into actions and whether this process is facilitated or hindered by contextual factors. Research on workplace learning has been discussing two kinds of workplace cultures: expansive and restrictive, to explain the extent to which a workplace can impact positively or negatively on the formal and informal opportunities available to support teacher learning in the workplace. I believe that we know very little about whether teachers have just one style of teaching or they display differing styles while they make decisions in relation to the context of their own workplaces. The learning-to-teach literature in the ELT domain also appears to say very little about the role of the socio-emotional space (van der Zwet *et al*, 2011) in learning to teach and to what extent positive or negative emotions contribute to teachers' opportunities of professional learning and their teaching performance in the workplace.

Sixth, our existing knowledge is still limited of how non-native English speaking teachers begin to teach in their educational institutions that are located within their educational systems. As Hayes (2009: 1) argues: "the experiences of NNESTs [non-native English speaking teachers] working within their own educational systems remain seriously under-investigated" when we consider the numbers of teachers involved. In fact, we still know relatively little about the careers and classroom lives of EFL teachers in countries such as Syria from their own perspectives and how this can contribute to an understanding of the many and varied locally-based practices of English Language Teaching whose practice appears to have long been defined and dominated by native speakers (Hayes, 2009; Holliday, 2005).

In brief, there appears to be a scarcity of studies which take a multi-layered approach to exploring how beginning teachers learn to teach, and this is primarily due to an extensive focus on one particular way of understanding the process. In order to understand the complexity of how teachers learn to teach, we need to look

not only at what beginning teachers say and do but also at what is happening around them on the wider context of workplace and society. We need to focus on the process of learning to teach in all its richness, both the more individually-centred processes and the social and cultural factors which are part and parcel of the general picture. In order to do this, we need to take a more 'synthetic' stance of learning to teach which accepts ideas both from 'cognitive' and 'socialisation' models of the learning-to-teach process.

3.5 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the relevant and important literature of research on learning to teach. The chapter has discussed the significance and emergence of research on learning to teach with particular reference to the first year of teaching. It has also showed how this body of research has evolved and outlined the major themes characterising this research field. This discussion included the impact of two prominent paradigms and perspectives: 'teacher cognition' research and 'sociocultural' perspectives. The chapter has also reviewed recurrent themes and prominent studies in the field of learning to teach. This review has highlighted the central themes of 'teacher beliefs' and 'the apprenticeship of observation' and the related descriptions, features and characteristics of teacher beliefs. It also dealt with studies that emphasise the role of teaching contexts and their importance in teachers' early experiences of learning to teach. Finally, I provided a critical overview of the literature reviewed in this chapter and identified a number of considerations that appear missing or with limited influence in our knowledge of the field of learning to teach.

The next chapter describes the overall research design I have chosen and the research process I have followed in my fieldwork to make my investigation into this study in relation to the research question with its two dimensions.

Chapter Four

Design, Methodology and Implementation of the Study

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology used for this study and how it has guided my choices regarding the overall design of the study and the implementation processes. The chapter provides an overview of the rationale for the general research design which I have selected to conduct this study and which outlines how the investigation into the research topic has taken place. The chapter will also offer an account of the research process including how data was collected with the instruments that were employed and the process of data analysis with the relevant approaches utilised in it. There are two major sections in this chapter. Section 4.1 provides a description of and rationale for the research design of this study, and section 4.2 offers a detailed account of the research process including data collection and data analysis. Finally, section 4.3 discusses the limitations of the study design and the difficulties experienced during the research process.

4.1 Research design: description and rationale

The research design of the present study consists of the underlying research approach that has shaped my decisions regarding the kind of data needed for this study. It also involves the data collection methods I decided to use for this study and the rationale for using each method.

4.1.1 The underlying research approach

This study is focused around one main research question which seeks to explore how beginning teachers without any previous training learn to teach during the first year of their teaching experience. There are two sub-questions involved in this main question:

- a) What is the influence of prior learning experiences on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?
- b) What is the influence of the teaching context on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?

So, the study requires a research design which can best address the nature of its scope of focus, i.e. how teachers learn to teach and the different sets of influences involved while they learn to teach. The research design also needs to account for the multi-dimensionality which the study attempts to capture, i.e. the role of teachers' previous learning experiences as well as the role of their teaching context where they currently work.

Thus, such explorations entail studying the participant teachers in their natural settings and delving into their personal experiences –past and present– trying to get inside them and understand them from within focusing on the meanings and views they use to describe their own experiences. To do this, the study adopts a naturalistic approach, i.e. studying people as they do their work and events as they happen in their natural settings (Punch, 2009). The data will be collected in the field where teachers work in order to allow ordinary events and behaviours to be studied in their everyday context.

The study also operates within a qualitative perspective to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings participants bring to them (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) taking into account their individual everyday experiences as well as personal lives and beliefs (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Qualitative research approaches offer an important contribution to the ways in which we can understand our social world. The power of research with a qualitative nature lies in its potential to better understand aspects of the lived work and study human actors in natural settings and in the context of their ordinary, everyday world. It seeks to explore the meanings and significance of actions from the perspective of those involved. It is often described as a naturalistic approach, concerned with exploring phenomena 'from the interior' (Flick, 2009) and taking the perspectives and accounts of research participants as a starting point. Such an approach helps "preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations" (Miles and Huberman,

1994: 6). The words that the informants produce will “have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often prove far more convincing to a reader [...] than pages of summarized numbers” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 6). Qualitative data will help focus on participants’ actions and delve into reasons and meanings that these actions imply. Meaningful actions appear as informants interact with the world around them (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

From an epistemological point of view, qualitative research is largely associated with interpretivism, which claims that

“natural science methods are not appropriate for social investigation because the social world is not governed by regularities that hold law-like properties. Hence, a social researcher has to explore and understand the social world through the participants’ and their own perspectives; and explanations can only be offered at the level of meaning rather than cause” (Ormston, Barnard & Snape 2013: 24).

The present study is interpretive in nature. It seeks to understand the participants’ lived experiences with a concern with ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions rather than ‘how many’. With such an interpretive focus, the study aims at penetrating deep into people’s actions, personal lives and social world in a way that more quantitative methods do not. Although quantitative approaches are able to explain phenomena and provide valuable information and insights in certain kinds of research, “they are not designed to explore the complexities and conundrums of the immensely complicated social world that we inhabit” (Richards, 2003: 8) in which case a qualitative approach offers the best source of illumination. Achieving a better and deeper understanding of ‘practice’ requires researchers’ immersion resulting from actually being there in the fieldwork, and thus more qualitative designs are needed for this kind of research. Eisner (2001: 137) puts it this way:

... scholars have become attracted to the idea of getting close to practice, to getting a first hand-sense of what actually goes on in classrooms, schools, hospitals and communities. That kind of knowledge takes time. The one-shot commando raid as a way to get the data and get out no longer seems attractive. You need to be there. A clean research design with tight experimental controls might be right for some kinds of research, but not for all kinds.

In addition, a qualitative approach is “a person-centred enterprise and therefore particularly appropriate to our work in the field of language teaching” (Richards,

2003: 9). Quantitative approaches cannot fully describe the complexities involved in this field, as Peshkin (1993: 27) notes: “most of what we study is truly complex, relating to people, events, and situations characterized by more variables than anyone can manage to identify, see in a relationship, or operationalize.” Teachers’ work operates in a professional context that is loosely predictable, which is why a different sort of investigative approach is needed in language teaching research, one that seeks to understand the patterns and purpose in teachers’ behaviour and provide insights that enrich our understanding.

Qualitative investigation depends on engagement with the lived world, and the place of the researcher in the research process itself is something that needs to be addressed. Based on the notion of ‘researcher engagement’ in research, the present study derives elements from ethnography. Ethnography fits well into the description of qualitative research outlined above. It seeks to describe and understand the behaviour of a particular social group, and to do this, researchers try to see things from the perspective of members of the group. This requires extended exposure to the field (Richards, 2003). Adopting such a perspective enables the researcher to move from outsider to insider status, although “the aim is not to become a complete insider because this would mean taking for granted the sorts of beliefs, attitudes and routines that the researcher needs to remain detached from in order to observe and describe” (Richards, 2003: 14-15). In this study, an ethnographic perspective offers insights into the learning to teach experiences, especially as a means of understanding the professional world of teachers and how they perceive their own experiences in the context of their own workplaces.

A key concept related to ethnography is *emic* stance, that is sometimes used to refer to an insider’s perspective on events, as opposed to *etic* that describes an outsider’s view. The literature of naturalistic inquiry talks of the importance of adopting an *emic* insider stance if a researcher wants to understand individuals and behaviour, rather than an *etic* outsider one. Morris *et al.* (1999) explain that *emic* researchers often express preference to use observation as a major data collection tool and immerse themselves in the setting while developing relationships with the informants. Questionnaires, therefore, are criticised because

they have an *etic* rather than *emic* perspective on human behaviour, in that they do not provide individuals with opportunities to show their own ideas or beliefs, as the researchers' ideas are provided instead (Munby, 1984). The *emic* perspective is not simply a matter of choosing the data collection method, nor is it a choice to be made only at the data collection phase in the fieldwork, but rather, it is actually an issue to be taken into account in the data analysis, especially with reference to making sense of the transcribed texts and categorising themes based on the meanings brought by the informants. Drawing on Pike's (1967) work, Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003: 522) comment that "Etic refers to a trained observer's analysis of 'raw' data, whereas emic refers to how those data are interpreted by an 'insider' to the system or organization.

4.1.2 Overview of the data collection methods in this study

A close look at the data collection methods used in learning-to-teach studies in the literature, particularly with reference to teacher beliefs, indicates that, although quantitative methods, such as questionnaires and surveys, can be used, as noted by Basturkmen *et al.* (2004), Borg (2006) and Oppenheim (1992), they are still insufficient to fully understand teacher beliefs based on the assumption that these methods "may not cover the full range of beliefs that respondents have or want to talk about; additionally, teachers' responses may not reflect their own beliefs, but those which they have chosen from amongst those identified by the researcher" (Borg, 2006: 185). Many studies drawing on the concept of beliefs employ research methods approached qualitatively such as interviews and observation. Examples include Borg (1998b), Calderhead and Robson (1991), Farrell and Kun (2007), Fang (1995), John (1996) and Johnson (1994). On the use of qualitative methods, Borg (1998b: 34) comments that they allow large amounts of descriptive data to be collected and that this "Descriptive data allow phenomena to be analysed and represented in a form closer to participants' perceptions of reality than quantitative data do." In this study, in order to understand teachers' prior learning experiences, interviews were chosen to gain access to teachers' personal beliefs formulated in their previous learning experiences.

However, due to the complexity of the concept of 'belief' and the assumption that beliefs may be held unconsciously and can be understood through actions and behaviour, it was also necessary for this study to observe teachers in action. This facilitated gathering data on how people act rather than relying exclusively on self-reported data, as

“investigations into teachers’ beliefs entail inferring beliefs not only from the statements that teachers make about their beliefs, but also by examining teachers’ intentionality to behave in a particular way and, then of course, what they actually do” (Johnson, 1994: 440).

So, I also decided to use observation as another data source in this study. Observation data was expected to shed light on interview data and thus serve to increase the validity of the data sets. It was also expected to provide more details on beginning teachers and the teaching context as a whole. The instructional data obtained through classroom observation is valuable because it helps capture practice as it is done in its natural setting, as it is less likely to be influenced by interaction with the researcher than interview data, although this influence can sometimes exist.

Autobiographical accounts to be written by participant teachers were also chosen in this study as a further data source. The aim was to understand their personal learning experiences and help them recall in narrative form their past teachers and their experiences with them in retrospect.

Thus, by using these three methods to collect data for this study, I opted for a multiple-design research approach, which is a well-known approach in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007) and is commonly referred to as *triangulation* (Bassegy, 1999; Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Robson, 2002), which is mainly used in order to enhance the validity or credibility of a study (Angouri, 2010; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Orum, Feagin & Sjoberg, 1991; Silverman, 2000; Snow & Anderson, 1991; Sturman, 1997; Yin, 1994). *Triangulation* refers to the application and combination of several research methods and perspectives in studying one same phenomenon. It can also be defined as an “attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint..”

(Cohen & Manion, 2011: 195) in order to obtain “a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation” (Altrichter *et al.*, 2008: 147).

The use of multiple research methods for data collection was not only desirable but also necessary for the purpose of this study in that the investigation of teachers and their beliefs and how these have impacts on the process of their learning to teach entails gathering data on the teachers individually to see how their beliefs, which are highly subjective and personal (Grossman, 1991), contribute to their experience of learning to teach. It also requires data on what they do in the teaching context of classroom and institution to capture the influence of these structures on how they learn to teach. Thus, such a multi-level study requires a multiple-design research approach which utilises interviews and observation as the most important methods. These two methods are typically used in teacher cognition research and the learning-to-teach studies (Borg, 2009). Borg (2009: 168) comments that “observations on their own can tell us nothing about what teachers think, believe or know; thus, they are typically used in conjunction with interviews,” which also, if conducted on their own, cannot provide any direct evidence of what teachers do; they only produce reports of what teachers say they do. Interviews and observation do not only complement each other to provide details of the studied problem, but also provide different kinds of data to highlight different information, which, in turn, contributes to the overall construction of a richer picture of the learning-to-teach process. With the additional use of autobiographical accounts as a third data collection method used in this study, the study opted for a multiple-design research approach to help obtain more credible findings (Brown, 2001) and a richer description of the phenomenon under investigation, that is the process of learning to teach.

4.1.3 Rationale for the data collection methods used

This section discusses in more detail the different research methods used for the data collection process in this study and the rationale for using each method and its relevance to the study. As the above section shows, three research methods were used in this study: autobiographical accounts, interviews and classroom

observation. The rationale for employing each of these will be discussed in detail in the sections below.

4.1.3.1 Autobiographical accounts

An autobiographical account is a reflective narrative technique that can be typically used as a research tool for studies with a teacher cognition focus.

Autobiographical accounts, such as those used in this study, “are a form of reflective writing which examine the writer’s own professional and broader life experiences” (Borg, 2006: 257). Typically, autobiographical accounts consist of narratives, in the form of texts, with one shared focus. Borg (2006) notes that, although this technique has been used in teacher cognition studies in general education (e.g. Carter & Doyle, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cooper, 1991; Knowles and Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Thomas, 1995b), there are not many examples of studies with autobiographical accounts as research tools in the domain of English language teacher cognition.

The decision to use autobiographical accounts with the participant teachers in my study comes from their potential, as portrayed in belief studies in the literature such as Bailey *et al* (1996), John (1996), Numrich (1996) and Tsang (2004), to help teachers reflect on their prior learning experiences and help understand how such prior experiences can exert influences on what teachers know and believe in terms of English language teaching, as noted by Carter (1993). John (1996: 92–93) comments on such a position stating that “Exploring the implicit theories of beginning teachers requires a journey into their biographical experiences so that one can understand something of the contexts that have shaped their beliefs and viewpoints.” These contexts can be the historical lives of these teachers spent in classrooms (Britzman, 1988). Hence, the aim of these autobiographical accounts in my study was to elicit information about teachers’ prior learning experiences at schools and university, the teachers who had taught them, successful and unsuccessful incidents in their past and the influence of these incidents and teachers on their current thinking. I assumed that recalling their former teachers would be facilitated by creating a ‘biography map’ for each teacher. Details on how this works appear in the section on research process.

The reason behind using autobiographical accounts was that, drawing upon the 'apprenticeship of observation' construct (Lortie, 1975), teachers' previous learning experiences would have an influence on their beliefs and practices. Examining teachers' autobiographical accounts in this study was, thus, intended to provide insights into the relationship between teachers' prior experiences as English language learners and their current beliefs, thinking and practice. My motivation to use autobiographical accounts was also triggered by Numrich (1996: 133) who notes that the purpose of such accounts is for beginning teachers to "recall the teaching/learning techniques and methods that had been most and least successful in their own learning of an L2 and to begin to identify some of their own values about teaching and learning." Another important assumption behind using the autobiographical accounts in my study comes from Bailey *et al.* (1996) who imply that this sort of reflective autobiographical accounts help teachers rediscover memories that they had almost forgotten and that until they begin writing these accounts, they do not realise the importance of their prior learning experiences in moulding their conceptions of language teaching and teachers. In my study, data from these accounts was also expected to be used as a springboard for the interviews conducted with teachers at a later stage.

4.1.3.2 Interviews

The aim of qualitative research is to capture aspects of the social world. This is done in numerous ways that do not rely on numbers as the unit of analysis. Kvale (1996: 1) says that: "If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them." Our epistemological stance and philosophical understanding impact on what we believe can be known, and this understanding then influences how we gather and make sense of information. Commenting on the importance of interviews as research tools and how they suit the research purpose of understanding the social world, King & Horrocks (2010: 10) comment:

"if we believe that genetic inheritance determines behaviour, we would not use qualitative interviews to investigate this explanation. Conversations and words do not provide the kind of data that would be required to explore the genetic transmission of behaviour. However, if we subscribe to a social and interactive explanation for behaviour, then

speaking with people in order to explore their social experiences would be consistent with our ontological position.”

Interviews are important research techniques, especially in paradigms which study people and social processes (Dyer, 1995; Fontana & Frey, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Yin, 1994). In qualitative studies, interviews as research tools allow the researcher, through interaction with respondents, to gain access to their perspectives and understandings, which helps “to understand the world from the subjects’ [informants’] point of view” (Kvale, 1996: 1).

The focus of this study is to uncover how people feel about the world and make sense of their lives from their particular vantage points. Therefore, qualitative interviewing fits; actually conversing with people enables them to share their experiences and understandings. Rather than knowledge being conveyed in conversation, the strength of interviews as research tools lies in their potential for participants to actively construct knowledge through social interaction while making sense of their experiences (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003).

The specific nature of this study as being interpretive in approach requires such a powerful, flexible tool for data collection which enables the participants to discuss, share and reflect on their own conceptions of the world as they see it. Delving into teachers’ personal beliefs and early experiences as well as current experiences in the teaching context of their workplaces and classrooms entails using a research method that provides them with opportunities to reveal and talk about these experiences as they have lived them. Following Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007), it was decided that interviews be used in my study to facilitate probing into the participant teachers’ beliefs and experiences, since “Interviews enable participants ... to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 349).

Due to the complexity of the construct of ‘belief,’ as travelling in ‘disguise’ (Pajares, 1992) and sometimes being unconsciously held (Borg, 2001), teacher beliefs particularly need a powerful tool to elicit, one which allows exploring these unobservable aspects of participants’ lives by ‘digging’ deep in the participants’ minds in search for hidden meanings that the participants themselves might be

unaware of. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) imply that interviews have the potential to achieve this purpose. Their striking metaphor of the interviewer as a 'miner' explains how knowledge resides in the minds of participants waiting to be uncovered by the skilled interviewer:

In a *miner metaphor*, knowledge is understood as buried metal and the interviewer is a miner who unearths the valuable metal. The knowledge is waiting in the subject's interior to be uncovered... The interviewer digs nuggets of knowledge out of a subject's pure experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 48).

Looking at the literature of language teacher cognition and learning to teach, one can frequently see interviews being used as research tools (e.g. Basturkmen *et al*, 2004; Borg, 1998b; Calderhead, 1991; Johnson, 1994; Warford & Reeves, 2003). A particular attention is given to semi-structured types of interview as a more widely used technique in learning-to-teach research than structured or unstructured types of interview.

Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer a chance of planning ahead the questions to be asked and, at the same time, maintaining flexibility about their wording and sequence and an ability to amend or change them and integrate any new emergent issues. In this way, the interviewing process becomes more like a normal conversation with a certain amount of freedom in terms of the direction the interview might take, and respondents are likely to have the chance to feel at ease, talk in an open-ended manner and be more open and more responsive. This type of interview, when conducted in depth, are referred to as 'qualitative interviewing' (Mason, 1996) which is favoured and adopted by many researchers working within naturalistic paradigms (Mason, 1996).

There are three types of interview used in my study. These are (a) main semi-structured interviews, (b) repertory grid interviews and (c) stimulated recall interviews.

(a) Main semi-structured interviews

The purpose of these main semi-structured interviews in my study was to elicit more information on the participants' beliefs as well as current teaching experiences in the workplace through conversations that allowed greater freedom on the participants' part to talk about their own teaching. By conducting these main

semi-structured interviews, detailed profiles of each participant's beliefs and teaching experience was intended to be obtained before starting the observation process. Based on the perceived focus on the use of semi-structured interviews in the learning-to-teach literature as well as the advantages such a type of interviews can provide, it was decided that the most appropriate interview type for this study would be a semi-structured interview which was hoped to provide teachers with "opportunities and time to detail fully and freely the bases for their approaches to teaching, without the constraints of a set schedule of invariant questions" (Mangubhai *et al*, 2004: 294). Moreover, this type of interview, congruent with principles of interpretive research, "allows prominence to be given to the voice of teachers rather than that of researchers" (Mangubhai *et al*, 2004: 294). In this study, semi-structured interviews provided opportunities for a balance between getting a number of questions prepared and organised in advance and allowing flexibility to the interviewing process by allowing all themes emerging from the interview to be followed and other follow-up questions to be raised by the researcher. The pre-planning and careful phrasing of a set of questions in advance was thought to avoid situations where respondents might misunderstand the questions due to their immediate articulation on the spot. Pre-planning also facilitated the process of covering all the main issues needed to be investigated in the interview sessions.

With the interpretive orientation maintained in this study, semi-structured interviews were favoured "where a smaller number of respondents [were] interviewed in-depth and where the interaction between researcher and respondent aim[ed] to capture some elements of natural conversation" (Borg, 2006: 190).

Despite their many advantages as data collection tools, the main semi-structured interviews were only one source of the data gathering process, though a major one. However, they were not expected to constitute a full articulation of participant teachers' beliefs and teaching experiences and it was, hence, decided that they be combined with other sources so that a richer, fuller picture would be provided.

(b) Repertory grid interviews

Repertory grid interviews are a structured approach to eliciting verbal commentaries from participants. The repertory grid is a data collection strategy based on Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory. The primary focus of this theory lies "on the way individuals perceive their environment, the way they interpret what they perceive in terms of their existing mental structure, and the way in which, as a consequence, they behave towards it" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007: 435). Borg (2006: 194) explains that "in essence it is a personality theory which accounts for the way individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences." Individuals make choices in a process of assigning meanings to their lives and these meanings are manifested in *personal constructs*, i.e. adjectives, characteristics or attributes elicited from the participants when they talk about *elements* such as events, ideas, objects, people, institutions, courses, etc that are relevant or important to them. The basic assumption of this theory if applied to education is that understanding teachers entails studying their personal constructs, and the repertory grid interviews are one strategy to achieve this aim.

Because this study has a major aim of portraying participants' experiences of learning to teach in terms of the entry beliefs they bring with them to the profession with a considerable emphasis on their former teachers and previous role models, repertory grid interviews were chosen to further and develop the limited picture obtained from the written autobiographical accounts that had a similar scope of focus. More specifically, as the written autobiographical accounts rely on retrospective recall, I was aware of the fact that the participants might limit the number of former teachers they wished to talk about. They might not write down the required range of experiences with all their former teachers; they might forget or fail to notice particularly important events and potentially significant incidents and might not be aware of how these had influenced their conceptions. They might not want to write their experiences with former teachers in sufficient detail or might choose to write about those teachers who jump first to their memories. Repertory grid interviews, thus, were used in this study to help participant teachers uncover their own impressions about every single teacher that have met in the past; each of their former teachers was entered in the grid as an *element*, which assisted the

participant teachers in deliberately identifying and explicitly stating their understanding or perception of their own experiences with each of their former teachers due to the richness of interpretable material they were expected to provide. Due to the importance of studying the participants' early experiences as English language learners to understand their prior beliefs, these repertory grid interviews were useful in the richness and abundance of descriptions of participants' recalled images of former teachers and how these seemed to influence their conceptions of language teaching. The *personal constructs* elicited were used in order to shed light on the importance of early role models in moulding teachers' conceptions and teaching philosophies.

Repertory grid interviews hold great potential in describing participants' latent models that have been instilled into their belief system, and these are uncovered when participants talk about the *constructs* that are generated in the repertory grid. It is important to note that repertory grid interviews are no longer identified exclusively in quantitative research approaches. Hinkle (2009), Alexander, *et al.* (2008) and Murray (2003) assert that rich qualitative data can be obtained through repertory grid interviews, and it is mainly the researcher's focus that determine how these interviews are to be analysed.

(c) Stimulated recall interviews

The purpose of stimulated-recall interviews in this study is to understand the participants' thinking processes while they comment on their own teaching in retrospect when they were engaged in classroom teaching. Stimulated recall interviews are a technique for eliciting verbal information from participants on their beliefs and practice. Gass & Mackay (2000: 17) define this technique as one that is used "to prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event." In the context of teacher cognition, this kind of interview involves using a stimulus (most often a video recording) to elicit information about teachers' thought processes in which they were previously engaged in the classroom. Teachers, then, watch themselves in action on the video and comment on their own thinking or practice in retrospect.

Stimulated recall interviews can be implemented in various ways in terms of structure and researcher's control. Clark and Peterson (1986) argue that

researchers can either suggest questions to be commented on or encourage open-ended commentary by participants. They can also either select specific episodes or leave participants to watch the whole recorded lesson. Further, they can either decide to pause the video for comments or leave the participants to choose when to pause it. Borg (2006) argues that in interpretive studies, less controlled interviews are favoured where teachers are provided with opportunities to talk about their thinking in a free and more open-ended manner.

Stimulated recall interviews are an established technique in studies of language teacher cognition. Researchers working within this field are frequently seen to draw on data collected through this kind of interviews (e.g. Breen *et al*, 2001; Burns & Knox, 2005; Golombek, 1998; Mangubhai *et al*, 2004; Woods, 1996), though various stimuli such as video, audio or printed transcripts have been used.

However, stimulated recall interviews are not unproblematic in terms of validity. The biggest threat to their validity is the fact that participants may make up explanations at the time of the interview rather than accounts that reflect their actual thinking processes underlying the events they are required to comment on. Carefully structured designs, however, can reduce this threat, although there is no clear explanation in the research methodology literature showing how such designs can be conducted effectively. Another threat to the validity of stimulated-recall interviews appears when teachers are asked to reflect on their thought processes when they no longer have them in memory. Therefore, a generally accepted procedure to deal with this issue is for researchers to keep the time interval minimised between the events and the stimulated recall interviews as much as they can.

In my study, stimulated recall interviews were chosen as a data collection technique due to their potential in eliciting classroom-related thought processes at the time when teachers were engaged in them. By focusing on how teachers perceive their own practice, rather than how the researcher looks at it through observation, these interviews were expected to help capture teachers' experiences from their own points of view, which in turn contributes to the overall interpretive picture of learning to teach which the study attempts to obtain. Further, these interviews were hoped to provide insights into the influence of contextual factors

(e.g. constraints) that teachers were experiencing in their classrooms and trace in what ways such an influence could shape teachers' classroom practice.

4.1.3.3 Classroom observation

Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of human groups in social settings and the meanings that emerge from them. It aims to obtain a better understanding through participants' firsthand experience, truthful reporting and accounts of actual practices. Observation, as a research tool, generates in-depth, rich data on events and human experiences that is inaccessible by other research methods.

Observation methods have a long tradition in educational research. They serve to create a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of what people actually do as opposed to what they say they do. Observation is an increasingly common data collection strategy in studies attempting to understand people's cognition and behaviour.

Observation, as a data collection technique, was considered crucial for this study because it is a very direct method for portraying human behaviour. It provides ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings and describe behaviours, intentions, situations and events as experienced by participants' in the natural settings of their classrooms. Observation can offer insights into what teachers do as opposed to what they say they do. Due to the cognitive dimension which this study seeks to explore, I opted for employing observation as a data collection method supporting Borg's (2003c: 105) scepticism:

Can language teacher cognition be usefully studied without reference to what happens in the classrooms? Personally I am sceptical .. Ultimately, .., we are interested in understanding teachers' professional actions, not what or how they think in isolation of what they do.

For my study, the complexity of the construct 'belief' as one which guides conception and action necessitated a process of studying it in more than one dimension. Observation was thus expected to assist this task; it was chosen to help consider potential congruence or differences between stated beliefs expressed narratively in an interview or autobiographical account and classroom actions in real teaching. Whether or not teachers act upon their beliefs in their classroom was expected to provide insights into the overall aim of this study, i.e.

the learning to teach experience of beginning teachers, which cannot be understood without referring to what teachers do, through observation. Further, observation, by producing situationally generated data and especially when followed by post-observation verbal commentaries (which are used in this study in the form of stimulated recall), also assisted in understanding why teachers did what they did in the classroom, which can inform the aim of the study regarding the influence of contextual factors on the process of learning to teach.

As for the level of participation, I decided to adopt a non-participant observer role, “where the researcher in the classroom typically sits at the back, makes notes and avoids interacting with teacher or students during the events being observed” (Borg, 2006: 231). Borg (2006) continues that studies attempting to understand beliefs and practice tend to opt for non-participant observations where researchers attend lessons and take notes but avoid any interaction with teachers or students. Examples of such a non-participant observation process can be found in Bailey (1996), Borg, (2005b), Richards and Pennington (1998), Tsang (2004) and Tsui (2003).

In terms of observation structure, unstructured observations were chosen – ‘unstructured’ here does not mean the absence of an objective behind the observation, as it is unlikely to carry out a classroom observation without having in mind some themes to explore. Rather, ‘unstructured’ here means the absence of concrete pre-specified categories on an observation schedule sheet to be ticked during the observation like those used in positivistic approaches which aim at deciding whether or not a teacher has done something rather than describing what they do in a more open manner. The unstructured observations were intended to help capture the classroom events following an *open* approach (Everston and Green, 1986) so that unanticipated, but potentially insightful instances and behaviours cannot be missed. Examples of learning-to-teach studies using unstructured observations include Borg (1999a) and Phipps and Borg (2009).

The *open* approach was facilitated in my study by the use of video rather than audio, recording, which was believed to apply the principles of ‘thick descriptions’ and help uncover the reality of the classroom life and track the contributions of teachers and students in the classroom, particularly in terms of who is speaking at

any one time. Videos were also thought to be more useful than audio for teachers when they watch themselves in action during the stimulated recall sessions; it was assumed that videos would enable participants to 'relive' (Calderhead, 1981: 212) the episode on the video, which helps them provide more accurate accounts of the thought processes underlying their actions in the classroom. The recorded videos were expected to offer a richer, more detailed picture of the teaching observed and allow more categories to emerge in the analysis process, thanks to the built-in 'saving' feature associated with camcorder.

I also decided to take fieldnotes about what I thought could be relevant to the study, especially in terms of questions like 'why did you do what you did here?' Such fieldnotes were intended to assist in raising this type of questions during the stimulated recall sessions. I also wanted to take fieldnotes on issues which cannot be captured due to the limited angle of focus of the camera lens (e.g. number of students and their gender, OHP, wall posters, computers and sound amplifiers).

4.2 The research process

This section describes the research procedures followed in this study. These procedures involve selecting the participants, collecting the data, analysing and presenting the data, achieving research trustworthiness and attending to ethical considerations.

4.2.1 Selecting the participants

Researchers working within naturalistic and qualitative fields of inquiry often opt for a 'purposive sampling' strategy involving the selection of people in conjunction with the proposed research questions of the study (Bryman, 2008) based on a consideration of which case is most likely to meet the requirement of the phenomenon being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, 1998b; Silverman, 2000; Stake, 1995).

The rationale behind the choice of sample in a qualitative, interpretive study like the present one is goal-oriented. While the goal of quantitative approaches can be stated as 'empirical generalization to many', seeking to infer from a sample to a population, this qualitative study, on the other hand, started with a specific group or

type of individual or process that were chosen very purposefully to be included in the study only because they had particular characteristics. Although generalisation can be made, this is not generally the main goal, which can alternatively be stated as 'in-depth understanding.' I did not intend to make external statistical generalisations because my aim was not to make inferences about the underlying population of teachers, but rather to attempt to obtain insights into particular educational and social processes and practices that exist within a specific location and context. Thus, 'random' or 'probability' approaches to sampling were disregarded. Although random samples provide the best opportunity to generalize the results to the population, they are not the most effective ways of developing an understanding of complex issues relating to human behaviour. I was minded to adopt 'qualitative sampling' approaches, which aim to draw a representative sample from the population. I developed a framework of the variables (outlined below) that might influence an individual's contribution, and these were based on my practical knowledge of the research area studied and the available literature. Then I actively selected the most productive sample to answer the research question following an approach called 'judgement sampling' (Marshall: 1996). I was aware that some teachers within the Syrian educational system were 'richer' than others and that these teachers were more likely to provide insight and understanding for me as a researcher.

Thus, based on notions of purposive sampling, teachers were selected to meet certain criteria in my study; all participant teachers in this study were beginning teachers for whom English is a foreign language, and whose learning-to-teach experiences were intended to be captured in the first year of their teaching careers. They all came to the teaching profession without any sort of previous formal teacher preparation. Although teachers had taught for few months before they were involved in the data collection process and might hence have been influenced by their workplace and developed some new experience, they were still assumed to be beginning, novice teachers in the '*career entry*' (Huberman, 1989; 1993) phase of teaching experience, as Farrell (2012) notes.

Sampling does not only pertain to participants but also involve sites of fieldwork. Schofield (1990) writes of sampling as site selection proposing that deciding on a

site based on typicality may be more useful and relevant to the aims of the study than on grounds of convenience or ease of access. The fieldwork was conducted in private language centres, in which participant teachers started to teach immediately after their graduation from the Department of English Literature. These language centres are found in large numbers in every Syrian city and district and are typical sites of workplace for the majority of new graduates.

In this study, data was collected from three participants, whose names are pseudonymised as Husein, Munzir and Iman. Although I met three other teachers in two other language centres, I could not obtain from them what I thought was sufficient data needed for a qualitative study with an interpretive focus like this. That was due to a number of challenges that I encountered in the fieldwork. The manager of one language centre decided to shut down during the Holy month of Ramadan until the end of the Eid Al-Fitr festival, and hence my data collection plan was disrupted. So, I could not make more than a brief introductory interview with the teacher as well as a short classroom observation that was interrupted by an electricity cut-off. As for the other two teachers, their manager did not allow for more than one 10-minute interview with each teacher. With all these three teachers, unfortunately, information about their prior learning experiences and images of former teachers at school and university, which was intended to be obtained through autobiographical accounts and repertory grid interviews, was missing, and so was the stimulated-recall interview after that short incomplete classroom observation. The very small amount of data obtained did not give a sufficient picture of teachers' individual experiences nor about their instructional practice. As for Husein, Munzir and Iman, I was lucky to be given the opportunity by them and their managers to collect as much data as I thought was needed for my study. The data obtained from these three teachers, I believe, was quite revealing and valuable to be the basis for an in-depth qualitative, interpretive study.

The focus on a small number of participants to obtain a rich, in-depth picture is a common practice in studies on learning to teach within a qualitative approach. For example, Elbaz (1983) offers a 170-page analysis on the experiences of one high school teacher in terms of her practical knowledge and classroom practice. Farrell (2006; 2008) also conducts interpretive studies on the experiences and

development of one participant during his first year as an English language teacher in a Singaporean context.

Husein, Munzir and Iman are all graduates of the Department of English Literature, University of Aleppo. The following table summarises the personal information I obtained from them prior to the fieldwork. The table includes information on their age, gender, pseudonymised names of their workplaces, EFL teaching experience and EFL learning experience (how long & where).

Name	Gender	Names of workplaces	EFL teaching experience	EFL learning experience
Husein (22 yrs)	Male	Bright Future	(3 months)	(12 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syrian public-sector schools • University • Private language centre
Munzir (22 yrs)	Male	Bright Future	(3 months)	(12 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syrian public-sector schools • University • Private language centre
Iman (23 yrs)	Female	She had worked for 2 weeks in a private language centre then left and moved to Pioneers, where data collection took place.		(12 years) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi public-sector schools • Syrian public-sector schools • University • Private language centre
		Pioneers	(4 months)	

Table 2. Participant teachers: personal information, workplaces and teaching and learning experiences.

Based on the notion of ‘triangulation’, I decided to triangulate not only the research methods, but also people and context (Denzin, 1989). I decided to carry out the fieldwork in more than one language centre. I was also willing to conduct interviews with the managers or supervisor teachers of the language centres where these three teachers worked. While the manager of Pioneers refused to participate, the supervisor teacher in Bright Future, whose name was pseudonymised as Malek, agreed to take part in this study. Malek is also a graduate of the Department of English Literature, Aleppo University. He had 4 years of teaching experience at the time of data collection. In Bright Future, he is responsible for selecting teachers and organising periodical meetings with the teaching staff. He teaches EFL and TOEFL courses when his schedule allows and selects coursebooks to be taught in Bright Future. His participation in this study, coming mainly in narrative data, i.e. interviews, was highly significant in terms of the issues he uncovered about the

policies, regulations and codes of conduct followed in Bright Future. He was quite open and responsive to my questions about these issues.

4.2.2 Data collection

This section explains how data was gathered for this study. The section includes a description of how I gained entry to the research sites as well as a discussion of the steps and procedures of the data collection process with reference to each data collection instrument.

4.2.2.1 Gaining entry to the research site

The data collection process took place in the summer of 2010 in Bright Future and Pioneers, located in the city of Aleppo, Syria. Gaining entry to these language centres was facilitated by a letter written by my PhD supervisor and its authentication and translation into Arabic by the Syrian Embassy in the UK (see Appendix I & II). The process of gaining entry consisted of a brief meeting with managers in which I introduced myself and briefly explained the purpose of my research, the data collection procedures and instruments required for my study. The managers were shown the facilitation letters which revealed my identity and purpose of my visit. Based on the managers' approval, I was made to see the secretaries in order to arrange meetings with the teachers.

The meeting with the teachers consisted of making them aware of my research purpose and the methods of data collection in which they would be asked to take part. Then, they were given a consent form (see Appendix III) to sign, in which I made clear the participants' right to withdraw at any point as well as their confidentiality and anonymity. After getting the teachers' approval and signature on the form, I obtained some biographical information from them (see Appendix IV) which included questions about their age, graduation year, learning experience, teaching experience and whether they attended any previous training. After that, I arranged with them the time to start the process of data collection in the schedule which I had previously planned.

The following are the phases of the data collection process with reference to each data collection method.

4.2.2.2 Phase one: the autobiographical accounts

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of these accounts was to help teachers describe their previous language learning experiences and recall important successful or unsuccessful events as well as teachers who were perceived as positive or negative role models in their learning experiences at school and university. The following steps describe how teachers were asked to write these accounts:

- Each participant was encouraged individually in a private meeting to recall and write down on a 'biography map' the names of their school teachers and university professors (see Appendix V). This gave them the opportunity to recall as many of their former teachers as possible.
- The 'biography maps' were also useful for the later undertaking of repertory-grid interviews which had participants' former teachers as their primary focus.
- Each participant was then given a copy of the questions that they were required to answer in detail for the autobiographical account (See Appendix VI). These questions were preceded with a set of instructions to facilitate the process of writing and ensure that participants would have a clear understanding of the task. The instructions were adapted from Bailey (1990).
- Participants and I agreed that this task should be done in a maximum of one week. I did not wait until these were ready, but, to save time, I started the second phase of the data collection process.
- All participants completed the task in one week and chose English as the language of their accounts. They sent me their accounts by email in Microsoft Word format.

4.2.2.3 Phase two: the main semi-structured interviews

The second phase in my data collection process was conducting the main semi-structured interviews with each participant. This interviewing process followed these steps and considerations:

- At the beginning of every interview, I made clear to the participants the purpose of the interview, how much time it was expected to take and the language of interaction they could use.

- The questions designed for these main semi-structured interviews aimed at creating a 'belief and experience' profile for every participant by eliciting information about five different areas: early learning experiences, becoming a teacher, personal conceptions of EFL teaching and teachers, classroom teaching approach and the language centre as a workplace (see Appendix VII). These questions were selected based on my own teaching and learning experience and my reading of studies in the literature.
- The durations of these interviews varied widely because teachers worked in tight schedules. Some interviews were conducted during breaks. Table 3 below shows the durations of each main semi-structured interview.

Participant	Number of interviews	Duration	Language
Husein	Interview 1	47:59	English
	Interview 2	1:33:43	Arabic
	Interview 3	1:4:19	Arabic
Munzir	Interview 1	56:40	Arabic
	Interview 2	1:12:36	Arabic
	Interview 3	1:23:21	Arabic
Iman	Interview 1	1:12:07	Arabic
	Interview 2	1:10:06	Arabic
Supervisor			
Malek	Interview 1	45:49	English
	Interview 2	1:28:53	English

Table 3. Main semi-structured interviews: number, durations and language.

- As for the language of interaction in the interviews, teachers were made clear that they had freedom to maintain either Arabic or English for the whole interview or code-switch between Arabic and English. Overall, participants opted for Arabic in the majority of interviews (see table 3), but these contained many English words, phrases and statements.
- Covering all questions in one interview was not possible; hence a number of interviews were conducted with each participant. Table 3 shows the number of semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant.

- Two semi-structured interviews were also undertaken with Malek, the supervisor in Bright Future. These included a different set of questions (see Appendix VIII).
- All interviews were recorded digitally using Panasonic MP3 recorder.
- I was aware of the interactive nature of interviews as social events. So, both the participants and I were involved in the co-construction of the interviews and equally contributed to the creation of the data. The interviews were conducted in a conversation-like setting rather than an interrogative one. A relatively informal style was maintained as much as possible in an attempt to win the participants' trust, openness and responsiveness during the data construction process. The conversation-like style of interaction was also adopted as an indication of respect for the participants as equal individuals, who played a major role in constructing the data, rather than ones who are questioned and interrogated in a process of top-down power relations. My questions during interviews did not follow the same rigid form and sequence as they appear in the appendices, and I was also tempted to follow up any new themes that emerged in the conversation. The following two extracts illustrate some questions I asked and show how the dialogues developed:

EXTRACT 1

Q: So tell me, what did you learn from your experience as a learner in his [a former language teacher] class?

A: He has a very good teaching style. He was very *active* in the lesson. You feel he's like a TV presenter. He was always like yes, hooray, Bravo. ... He was very *friendly*, very tolerant with students. These things affected me a lot, *friendly* and tolerant. They affected me a lot, a lot.

Q: And by tolerant you mean?

A: Ah slow learning for example. He tried to explain a lot. He explains new words and gives examples and uses his hands [motions]. I think I've been influenced by him. He puts a lot of effort, I mean, even if it is at the expense of the lesson time. We are so much alike. I do that. I waste a lot of time without a purpose sometimes.

Q: I think you mean you don't follow the exact timing in your lesson plans. Is that what you mean?

A: Well, yes I waste time sometimes, but we're engaged in speaking in English. At the end of the day, we're practising speaking. Maybe I over-explain the new words. Or sometimes you have silly and chatty students ...

[Interview with Husein]

EXTRACT 2

Q: So what do you think has been done successfully in this lesson in your opinion?

A: Well, the interaction was very good, both student-student and teacher-student. Students had some good time talking to each other, and I also talked to them, but student talk was more this time than teacher talk. That was a good thing, a perfect thing.

Q: Right, and I think the materials you used this time – you seem to have spent a lot of time preparing them. So, what do you think of the materials and teaching aids in this lesson?

A: Yes, they were very appropriate in this lesson. I brought suitable stuff and also my rapport with students was excellent. For me, the most important bit was that the students had fun. And that was done really successfully. The letters I used – I think students loved them.

Q: Right, but do you think these letter took a bit long time?

A: It doesn't really matter. In my opinion, if students are engaged and speak English, so what's the problem if they took their time? It's fine. For me they are here to practise and speak English and have a little bit of fun. I can't imagine myself following strict teaching plans. I've tried that in the past. It didn't work.

Q: Okay, this is a good point. Can you remember another point that has also been done successfully?

A: Well, everyone was engaged in that activity, so no one was really dominant this time. Everyone was working at the same time. I also used authentic input.

[Interview with Iman]

4.2.2.4 Phase three: the repertory grid interviews

These are the steps and considerations followed for conducting the repertory grid interviews:

- Repertory grid interviews were conducted with teacher participants to supplement their autobiographical accounts by the richness of information they could provide especially regarding former teachers in their prior learning experiences due to the importance of these as positive/negative role models for teachers' prior conceptions and beliefs.
- Participants' former teachers were used as *elements* in the repertory grids and were copied from the 'biographical maps' that were previously created for the autobiographical accounts (see Appendix IX).

- Due to the potential differences between teachers' school and university experiences in terms of the teaching styles they received in these two stages, two repertory grids were designed for each participant: one had school teachers as elements and the other had university teachers as elements (Appendix IX). Table 4 below shows the details of the repertory grid interviews in terms of number of interviews, duration and language.

Participant	Number of interviews	Duration	Language
Husein	Interview 1	40:22	Arabic
	Interview 2	1:07:51	Arabic
Munzir	Interview 1	52:10	Arabic
	Interview 2	28:48	Arabic
Iman	Interview 1	1:06:06	Arabic

Table 4. Repertory grid interviews: number, durations and language.

- During these interviews, *elements*, i.e. former teachers, were selected randomly in groups of three, and one or more personal constructs were generated for every group of elements, as Appendix IX shows.
- These emerging constructs were the basis for further probing questions. These questions and teachers' responses and comments were recorded into an ongoing tape recorder. For example, when a construct such as 'friendly\unfriendly' was generated, questions about it were asked such as 'what do you mean by a friendly teacher?', 'Do you consider yourself friendly with your students?', 'How far do you think can a teacher be friendly with learners?', etc.

4.2.2.5 Phase four: the classroom observations

Observations were important to capture teachers in action, which was expected to shed light on their beliefs, based on Borg's (2001) notion that beliefs guide actions, and other contextual factors that influenced their practice and shaped it into the way they did what they did in the classroom. Classroom observations were conducted in the fieldwork following these steps and considerations:

- It was decided that 3 classroom observations be conducted with each participant. It was hoped that this multiplicity would reduce chances for participants' 'procedural reactivity' (Foster, 2006: 87) caused by my

presence in the classroom and help obtain more reliable data by observing teachers performing a variety of tasks and activities; over these multiple occasions, each teacher was observed teaching a number of lessons on each of these components and activities: grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, speaking, listening and doing workbook. Table 6 below summarises the number of observations for each participant with their durations.

- Before the first observation with each teacher, I briefly familiarised them with the purpose of conducting observations with them. However, minor details were not made explicit, as this might have been counter-productive. For example, teachers were not told that their grammar lessons would be investigated to see whether they would be carried out inductively or deductively, as this might influence their behaviour. Teachers were simply told that the observation will capture them in action with the purpose of understanding English language teaching practices in Syrian private-sector contexts.
- During observations, and as part of my non-participant role, I sat on a desk of my own, often towards the back of the classroom, and took fieldnotes on aspects of teaching that were thought to be relevant to the research aims (e.g. how grammar, speaking and listening were taught, language of instruction, elicitation techniques, interaction with learners, error correction, etc). Based on these fieldnotes, I also prepared questions to be asked in stimulated recall sessions (e.g. why did you take notes of students' errors on a piece of paper rather than directly correcting them? [question asked to Husein]).
- As for recording, I used my camcorder (SONY HDRXR105E HD – 80 GB built-in hard drive) that was set up on a tripod at the back of classrooms to obtain as wide an angle as possible. Contextual descriptions (number of students, their gender, OHP, wall posters or computers) that the camera could not capture were recorded as handwritten fieldnotes.

Participant	Number of observations	Duration
Husein	Classroom observation 1	1:39:38
	Classroom observation 2	1:41:12
	Classroom observation 3	1:38:56
Munzir	Classroom observation 1	1:38:55
	Classroom observation 2	1:41:18
	Classroom observation 3	1:31:14
Iman	Classroom observation 1	1:08:30
	Classroom observation 2	1:17:38
	Classroom observation 3	1:26:30

Table 5. Classroom observations: number and durations.

4.2.2.6 Phase five: The stimulated-recall interviews

The purpose of the stimulated recall interviews in my study, which was explained more fully in the research design section, was to prompt participants through providing them with a stimulus (i.e. video) to recall their thoughts while they had been teaching and think about these in retrospect as they were watching themselves in action. The following steps and considerations were followed for the stimulated-recall sessions:

- I was aware of the importance of conducting stimulated-recall interviews immediately after the observations. However, this was not always possible due to teachers' tight teaching schedules and heavy teaching load. Thus, the time span between the two events ranged between 2 and 5 days.
- Each teacher was made clear about the purpose of these sessions, my role in the process and how they were expected to handle the video watching and when to provide their comments in the video watching process. I followed Gattbonton's (1999) way of conducting stimulated-recall interviews; participants were encouraged to view their own lessons, select the fragments they wanted to reflect on and recollect aloud into an ongoing tape recorder what they were thinking while teaching the particular event they were watching. I watched the videotape together with the participants.
- However, I was aware that teachers vary in the extent to which they can take the initiative of identifying aspects of their own teaching and commenting on them, as Woods (1996) remarks; therefore, I had the

tendency to provide the teachers with prompts during video watching in the form of 'what were you doing here?' and 'why did you choose to do this here?'

- My prompts were mainly initiated at those events that stood out in the participants' teaching. Lefstein and Snell's (2012; 2013) works, which are based on teachers' video recall of a number of selected episodes, offer a helpful guide, though I followed a more 'open' approach to avoid the limitation of having a wide gap separating the analysis of selected segments from their experience in real time. Lefstein and Snell (2012) suggest a number of characteristics that help them decide why a particular video segment can stand out in terms of how it can address the argument developed in their study, i.e. dialogue in literacy lessons. Inspired by their framework, I was inclined to develop a set of questions asked to the participants during the video-viewing sessions about those classroom events that stood out by being most related to my research questions. These included such questions as 'Why are you teaching every single activity from the coursebook?,' 'What makes you warn this student not to use Arabic?,' 'Do you think you're giving sufficient time for speaking here?,' 'Why are not providing direct translations in this vocabulary activity?,' 'Where do you think you learned this method of grammar presentation?,' 'What influenced your decision to use songs here rather than sticking to the coursebook exercises?,' 'What does it mean for you here to insist on students' silence when they start to speak with each other?' etc.
- Following Lefstein and Snell's (2013) study, my questions were developed through my intense process of immersion in the classroom and recordings when I developed a good sense of the different teaching practices in each classroom. They were also partly informed by my knowledge of the language centre including the rules and regulations and partly by my emic, insider position as a Syrian teacher who had previous experience of teaching in private language centres.
- I also followed and probed into any new emergent themes during the conversation and was also tempted to raise a number of additional

questions, based on my fieldnotes during the classroom observations which had been carried out previously. Table 6 provides information on the number of stimulated recall interviews, duration and language of communication.

Participant	Number of interviews	Duration	Language
Husein	Interview 1	1:32:32	Arabic
	Interview 2	1:41:32	Arabic
	Interview 3	1:45:43	Arabic
Munzir	Interview 1	1:18:40	Arabic
	Interview 2	41:13	Arabic
	Interview 3	35:12	Arabic
Iman	Interview 1	1:05:19	Arabic
	Interview 2	1:23:36	Arabic
	Interview 3	48:47	Arabic

Table 6. Stimulated recall interviews: number, durations and language.

4.2.3 Analysis and presentation of data

4.2.3.1 Data analysis

Prior to reporting what the data collected for this study has revealed, it is necessary to outline the approach and procedures which were followed in analysing this data. This section discusses these procedures and shed light on the rationale for the choices made in terms of the implementation of the data analysis process.

Unfortunately, there is no general consensus among qualitative researchers in terms of how data can be analysed. Therefore, to analyse my data, I consulted the learning-to-teach literature (e.g. Farrell, 2003; John, 1996; Johnson, 1994) to get oriented in terms of the most helpful choices to make regarding the analysis of the data obtained for this study.

As outlined above, multiple sources of data were used for this study. These can be grouped around two main types: verbal commentaries and video-taped observation.

Verbal commentaries consist of the autobiographical accounts and the interviews. Autobiographical accounts were already typed by teachers and were thus ready to be examined and analysed straight away. Interviews, however,

needed to be transcribed verbatim for accurate interpretation of emergent patterns and themes before the analysis process started. During transcription, I immersed myself in the data by reading it through, while listening to the audio recordings concurrently. This allowed opportunities for "analysis and contemplation of the data" (Janesick, 1998).

Taking each interview and each autobiographical account in turn, I developed a broad set of categories which facilitated the process of data reduction to be carried out (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Huberman & Miles, 1998). These broad categories were overarching and reflected the study research question and its components. It was intended that these broad categories would be useful for moving between the transcripts across participants. These categories were 'the influence of prior learning experiences' and 'the influence of the teaching context.' For example, when Husein talks about teachers as providers of knowledge, this goes under 'the influence of prior learning experiences' category. Similarly, when he talks about the importance of using English as the only medium of instruction as emphasised by his supervisor in Bright Future, this goes under 'the influence of the teaching context' category.

Before the actual data analysis process started, I was not sure how many primary themes would emerge from the analysis, nor was I sure what these themes might be. I had some expectations, though, based on my reading of previous research and my own previous experience of learning to teach as a beginning teacher. Based on the qualitative, interpretive position that I adopted throughout the study, I approached the data mainly inductively and remained 'open' throughout in order to explore further what it would reveal and whatever themes might emerge from it, rather than fitting it in predetermined categories. In terms of teacher beliefs and their 'apprenticeship of observation,' as we shall see in the next chapter, five major themes emerged as the result of reading and re-reading the transcribed texts, making notes, identifying key phrases, and then assigning categories. For example, it was only after going through these stages that I found the theme 'Beliefs about the roles of EFL teachers' shared by the teacher participants when they talked about their prior learning experiences as well as their own former teachers. Similarly, following the same process and stages concerning

the second component of the research question, I was able to identify two major themes running across the participants related to the contextual influences both on the institutional and instructional levels.

The labels used for these emergent categories were derived from the literature (e.g. the influence of a positive former role model on teachers' conceptions), the participants' specific experiences (e.g. coursebook-based instruction as an institutional policy) and my own insights, construction of meaning and theoretical understanding (e.g. tendency to focus on English as structure rather than function).

In brief, my categorical analysis was initially guided by my research question already set for this study as well as my own insights and reading of previous research, while allowing new categories to emerge in a grounded manner which enabled me to come up with ideas from the data. After identifying the two main categories in relation to the research question with its two components, more detailed categories were also developed. For example, talking about the influence of the teaching context at the institutional level, two sub-categories were used to describe 'the institutions' preferred models of teaching' and 'the institutions' collegial relationships.'

The following are extracts from the data analysis process that show how the two research questions guided the initial coding stage and how further categories and sub-categories emerged:

Husein, 1st main semi-structured interview

- 43 A. ...And sometimes I know that he doesn't know about it very well. Yes okay. The first
44 time was emm he said "you don't need to be very nice with the students. You're too nice,
45 why is that? They don't deserve it. Students just don't deserve it. They don't deserve this.
46 Be tough." I thought that I've never spoiled my students. They do their homework. They
47 come on time. I mean being nice to them didn't harm the education or the teaching. I just
48 was surprised like if he was feeling that I might like take popularity just because of being
49 nice or there are other reasons and he is the only he's kind of the fun person who strikes
50 jokes and
51 ببمزح كثير مع الطلاب و ببمزح بطريقة كثير
52 Tough. Hey Youuuuu. Work on this. But I can't say this is the reason. I mean jealousy is
53 always there. It's never been out of any place. But I know the general feeling is that he
54 really likes me.
55 Why does he want you to be 'tough'?
56 A. I really don't know.
57 ...
58 **Q. Right, let's move now to the English teaching trends and methods in Syrian**
59 **schools across different levels. How do you describe English language teaching in**
60 **Syrian schools?**
61 A. At the public schools, it's very very very disappointing and we cannot identify any
62 trend or method whatever. They just have to explain the grammatical rule and then apply
63 them using some exercises. At private schools it's really changing now. It's revolutionary
64 now. Dozens of private schools now there are in Aleppo. Emm teachers are using various
65 methods. They're kind of like we see on TV, the American schools. The teachers feel free
66 to speak with their students. They ask them freely. They interact. They talk about different
67 things. They have curricula to follow or syllabi to follow probably it's more toward the
68 communicative methods but I can't be sure that it is applied properly or that it is at the
69 first place applied coz I haven't seen them. This is just about what I hear from my
70 colleagues.
71 ...
72 **Q. What is your conception about the successful teacher?**
73 A. ahh of English?
74 Me: yes.
75 A. Probably in the first place I don't know why like he or she should be good in English in
76 general and emm should have a good personality, if he didn't that's not a good teacher a
77 very good one, but anyway I'm very okay with other types of teachers, unattractive
78 teachers, unlike my friends.
79 حكالي عن 3 شعب في المدرسة و شلون شعبية من مدلل كثير و بفضلوا المدرس الجذاب
80 Anyway of course I like attractive personalities but I respected other teachers and I tried to
81 listen.
82 **Q. What do you mean by 'a good personality'?**
83 A. attractive. He should be outgoing, ahh kind of ahhh not funny, not funny in the
84 negative way as much as in a way that makes the students smile at least in the class.
85 Sometimes these teaches are serious are very serious and they achieve their tasks. Yeh so
86 attractive in the way he delivers the knowledge they have. For example the teacher of
87 biology he used to be a kind of well-informed, a well-informed teacher so we used to ask
88 him different things. As for English we didn't use to ask I mean to go very deep into
89 relationships with teachers. It was just a lesson we have to take and that's it. Successful
90 teachers whom the students liked were in the 11th grade and the baccalaureate emm Amina
91 Sryo, Majd's mother, I think I can tell you key words about why she was successful about
92 why she was adored by the students or liked. Probably she's got good ways in trying to
93 make students understand. She explained a lot. She got a very good English. Yeh.
94 **Q. Now that you are a teacher, what's your current conception about the successful**
95 **teacher?**
96 A. He should be effective, effective. He should do what he has to do.... He is a person
97 who had the ability or the magic to do all the things that he wanted to do or the syllabus
98 designers wanted to do. The outcome. Is he able to achieve that outcome? Yeh

RQ2
Influence of
teaching context
Workplace
Regulations
Conflict with
beliefs

Competitiveness

RQ1
App. Obs.
EFL teaching
at public-sector
schools
RQ2
Description of
private sector
BANA - TESEP

RQ1
App. Obs.
Teachers
as humans
Attractiveness

Role of EFL
teachers
knowledge
transmission
Ts as explainers
of subject
matter
Ts should
teach by the
coursebook

153 أنا شخصيا بس أنا وحسين و مالك متساعد بعضنا
 154 س. خلتنا نحكي ع النواحي الاكاديمية بينكن انتوا الثلاثة. اشو نوع ال assistance بللي بتأخذه من بعض؟
 155 ج. ممكن كتاب. يعني هديك المرة شفت كتا teaching games and puzzles و هيك شغلات. عطيتو لحسين
 156 و لمالك بس ما عطيتو لغيرهن لأنو ما في تعامل بيني و بينهن. مثلا ال link بيعدلي ياه اميل لشي شغلة... مثلا
 157 عندو فيديو هات بيعدلي ياه. عندي فكرة بقلو ياهها عندو فكرة بقلو ياهها. بس بحياتو ما صار نقاش بيني و بين
 158 مثلا علي درويش. بينو بين مس زهرا لا. منحكي بس ما صار هالشي تعاون يعني.
 159 س. طيب اذا صار معك مشاكل بالدرس أو حسيت أنو هاد الدرس انا ما عملتو صح وشلون يدي اعمل ال
 160 warm-up لهادرس بتدخل بهيك تفاصيل معين؟ ولا بتفضل درسك انا بدبرو؟
 161 ج. لا مع حسين و مالك ايه. مثلا والله ال lead-in لهادرس بايخ. طيب اش راينك غير هالشي. شلون انتوا عم
 162 تعطوه... يعني فعلا احيانا بتشوف lead-in سخيفة الطلاب ما رح يفهموه. يعني مرة في درس بييدا بالله اكتبلو
 163 ع اللوح Yellow submarine. بضل الطالب ساعة وما يعرف. بتطلع اغنية لـ coldplay. مين
 164 coldplay. هي مالها lead-in بدنا نغيرها يعني هي. يعني اش رايك اذا عملنا هيك. اذا عملنا هيك.
 165 س. طيب ما حاولت تبني صداقة مع هدوليك؟ بللي ما بتتعامل معين.
 166 ج. هلق شوف ليش انا ما بتتعامل معين. لأنو هون بالمعهد يعني ممكن نكون انا و انت نضل ندرس في المعهد
 167 خمس سنين ها. اتاننتا بلشنا بنفس اليوم و ضلينا خمس سنين بس لا انا يعرفك و لا انت بتعرفني. لأنو ما في
 168 دوام. يعني ممكن انا عندي درس من ال 2-12 بدين عندي break للساعة 8 بالليل من ال 8-10. طيب بهال
 169 break انا ممكن اروح ع البيت ممكن ابقى هون انت عندك بهالوقت اي ما منلتقي. وبالتالي ما في دوام. و انا
 170 والله كل ياتنا عنا دوام من ال 8-12 كل يوم عنشوف بعض و بنفس الوقت لا يعني ممكن انا اصل 3 ايام ما
 171 اشيوف مس زهرة 3 ايام ما اشيوف استاذ علي. هيك. وبالتالي بتعرفوا بعض و بتسلموا على بعض بس ما في.
 172 هيك.
 173 س. بس اكدت انت اخذ فكرة عن هدول انا ممكن يكونو approachable او مو approachable احكيكنا عن
 174 هالشغلة؟
 175 ج. في شخص ما يدي اسمي اسماء انا قلتك مستحيل اتعامل معو.
 176 س. ليش؟
 177 ج. انا بدو يفهمك انا يعني انا وبس. وانا بفهم بكل شي و انت ما بتفهم. (هون فيك تذكر انا تصحيح الأخطاء
 178 شغلة غريبة في ثقافتنا و مثال على ذلك حادثتي مع الدكتور ظافر بللي صلحلي غلط اول ما وصلت عن الفرق
 179 بين طرائق و طرق). ما يحب هيك. انا بس عفوا مخربط انت هون. هاد الشخص انا ما بتعامل معو ابدأ. في
 180 شخص ثاني فيما يخص أي idiom بتقلو ياه مثلا لا لا هادا مو مستخدم. طيب ليه؟ مو مستخدم انا سألت فلان و
 181 هو هيك قللي. مين هو بيطلع واحد استرالي. طيب اوك ما اختلفنا يعني سألتو قلك هيك بس مو يعني انا صح
 182 دائما. يعني بتعرف عنا بالعربي في شغلات انا بستخدمها بالعربي انت ما بتستخدمها. احيانا انت بتقول شغلات انا
 183 ما بفهم اش قلت؟ والله احيانا في idioms بالعربي ما عيفهمها.
 184 س. لك اهل الفرقان بيحكو غير اهل قهوة الشعرا
 185 ج. اي غير. طبعاً. حتى هدول ما بجهين. اجانب. اي هلق هدول معين البلد انكليز و اميركان و استرالية وكندية.
 186 اي مالهن علاقة بالتدريس و عيجوا بدرسو. طيب انا هلق ما يعرف بعطي عربي. رح افض. انا هلق مالي
 187 native-speaker عربي؟ حطني باميركا ما رح احسن ادرس عربي. يعني في هاد الشخص هو يعني كثير
 188 مخالط معين. لا لا لا هي ما بتتقال هيك. هي بتتقال بحالة وحدة و بس. كأنو انت عشت هنيك. طيب انت ما
 189 عشت هنيك. Sorry منك يعني. اي ما يحب اني اتعامل معو. بتجنب.
 190 س. طيب عبيعملوك meeting و عبتشوفوا بعض؟
 191 ج. اي طبعاً
 192 س. وبتم انت فلا صديقي I stick together
 193 ج. هلق بال meeting ما ف مجال انك تناقش شي شخصي. يعني بال meeting انا في عنا مشكلة ولازم
 194 مناقشها مثلا انا عم اعاني من مشكلة في الدرس يا جماعة بدكن تحلوي ياهها. مو اكايدمية انا عندي مشكلة
 195 يهدك الدرس شلون ننحلو لا لا. مثلا بالنسبة للدرس الطلاب صابرين عندهن هالظاهرة. في ظاهرة ليش ما
 196 منحلها. ادارية ادراية. مو اكايدمية. يعني قد تكون بتغيير كتاب. يعني انا اول ما جيت غيروا just right غيروا
 197 just right لبين ما تغير. اي مالي حابو وما عجبني. وضليت فعلا لحتى اقعنتهن. يعني شغلات ادارية
 198 بخصوص الغيابات و بخصوص هيك وبالتالي ما رح نلجا بخصوص الحكي العربي يعني مرة صار meeting
 199 انا اشخاص ضروري يحكي بالعربي بالصف ببعض الاشياء يمكن عندهن they have a point يمكن بس ما
 200 يعرف يعني. وقتها انقسمنا كتا 3 ما بدنا نحكي عربي. انا و مالك و زهرة. انا ضد هالشي. والباقي لا انا
 201 طيب انا بحس هيك كل بللي ايدوا فكرة اللغة العربية ال L1 يعني كانوا دارسين طرق تدريس. وبالتالي عم اقلك
 202 they may have a point in this
 203 س. ملاحظة حلوة
 204 ج. عم اقلك ممكن. انا نحنا المصريين مالنا دخل بطرق التدريس.
 205 س. مالك و زهرة مالن من جماعة طرق التدريس.
 206 ج. لا لا مس زهرة دراسات ادبية انا دراسات ادبية. مالك ترجمة.
 207 س. ما يعرف اذا سألتك انتوا بتعملوا شي test لل speaking بس حكينا عنو من قبل

RQ2
Teaching context
collaboration
within a clique
Professional
sharing

Discussing
classroom activities

RQ2
Teaching context
Lack of
collaboration
Distribution
of teaching
schedules
competitiveness

showing-off
and arguments
over linguistic
knowledge

RQ2
Teaching context
Lack of
collaboration
topics discussed
in meetings

208 ج. اي بالبداية كنا نعمل بعدين بطلنا بعدين ارجعنا.
 209 س. الـ English file ايجابيات سليبات. اي شي.
 210 ج. ايجابيات اولاً موضوع الـ theme لكل درس في الـ theme معين. بتبدأ و بتختم بنفس الـ theme بتحس
 211 فدت الطاب. اما just right مشكلتو انا مفرطعة لا ما في شي. وبالتالي صار مشتت اما new English File
 212 بتحس في هيك قصة للدرس. الطالب بتحسو دخل بسياقها و بتريح الاستاذ ببني و ببنيك. ثاني شي في
 213 organised كثير كثير. يعني انا مثلاً بالدرس بخص هالصفحتين. يعني هي مصممة تخلص بدرس واحد. في
 214 موضوع انا بالـ elementary A في دروس عن الـ music وما يعرف ايش. وممثلين و هوليوود. طيب
 215 بالنهاية هاد الكتاب international صح ولا لا؟ شلون انا بدي اعرف Fredi Mercury مين هاد
 216 Mercury مين هاد. بيجيك انا هاد طلع يعني بالـ scorpions. طيب انا الـ scorpions مالي سمعان عن
 217 بحياتي. اي بتشوف درس كامل عم دور حول هالشخصية. اي بتحس حرقك الـ درس. بصير بكب الـ
 218 teacher's guide على جنب لآنو الـ teacher's guide بيشلك كيف بدك تسمع غنية و الطلاب اي ما رح
 219 يعرفه. ما يعرفها (للغنية).
 220 س. انا ما يعرف ولا غنية اجنبية؟
 221 ج. ولا انا. انا ما بسمع ولا غنية. انا بسمع موسيقا فقط.
 222 س. هلق مثل هيك درس انا طالعتي برا. يعني صرت excluded انا
 223 ج. يعني على فكرة انا ما حبيت هداك الـ درس ها. بس في listening اش بدي اعمل. كانت بتجي بعدو. (يعني
 224 معتمدة عليه فلازم يعطيه). اي بس يعني لا بد من التنوع. اي ما حبيت العمى اش هاد. لآنو ما بسمع اغاني
 225 اجنبية مثلاً بسمع beetles كنت. اي هي الايجابيات. في مشكلة بالـ writing. قليل. لآنو كل خمس دروس في
 226 activity واحد للـ writing. اي هاد الضعف. هاد ضعف اي just right اقوى بالـ writing صراحة.
 227 اقوى بالـ grammar. Just right الـ غرامر كثير معتد. كثير. يعني ابيني اش صار. يعني لازم يتدرس لطلاب
 228 انكليزي على فكرة. الـ Upper intermediate لازم يتدرس لطلاب انكليزي. General English بس الـ
 229 writing قوي كثير. ويعطيك هيك افكار وشغلات. هون الـ writing ضعيفة. هي النقطة الوحيدة.
 230 س. topics؟ غزارة الـ activities؟
 231 ج. غزير. يعني بيشغل الصف. بحب قسم الـ communication كثير بحبو.
 232 س. workbook
 233 ج. عادي متلو مثل غيره. الـ grammar bank ما بحبو. لآنو بحس هيك الـ grammar ملازم يتدرس بشكل
 234 مباشر (ملاحظة: الاساتذة مقيدون نفسهم بالكتاب بشكل مو طبيعي. بيشكروا حوا وشغلات وما بيعرفوا بلغوها). لما
 235 حطيت الـ grammar bank صار مباشر. يالله روح ع الصفحة 140 و يالله rules هاد ما بحبو. هاد. ضعف
 236 بالـ writing والـ grammar. مو ضعف بالـ grammar. الـ grammar كثير حلو. بس مشكلة بالـ grammar بنك.
 237

RP 2
 Teaching content
 Preferred models
 of teaching
 (coursebook-based)

inappropriate
 topics

too complicated
 content

Boring parts

With regard to the interpretation of the participants' statements, the approach to data analysis was based on the principles of ethnographic semantics (Spradley, 1979; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972). Ethnographic semantics is the study of how certain aspects of a culture are talked about and conceptualised by the participants involved, from a totally emic perspective. It studies those aspects of meaning that are culturally revealing with a goal to understanding the evaluations, emotions and beliefs that lie behind the participants' accounts. It is a way of learning and understanding how an individual or a group perceives their environment and how they adapt to and personify this environment, reflected in their own words and actions. It thus assists the ethnographer with an emic stance to understand how a culture sees itself through its own language. Such an understanding of the cultural language allows the ethnographer to have a deeper and more intimate understanding of the culture itself.

In this study, during the data analysis stage, the meanings which participant teachers brought to their experiences were the primary focus of investigation. My

emic, insider position helped me interpret many incidents from the participants' perspectives depending on the words they said and how they used their mother tongue, Arabic, to express their thoughts and beliefs. I was able to recognise from the participants' words and the way they used these words whether they were talking about their beliefs and experiences or actually defending their opinions and practice as if they had been threatened by the questions asked to them. This awareness of how the participants used language helped me take decisions about choosing the most accurate categories during the data coding stage, for example, whether the categories were related to the participants' values and beliefs or to their own practices in the classroom. Another example from the data is concerned with certain concepts that were highly embedded in the Syrian Arab culture and that would have probably made little sense without understanding the cultural language as used by its native participants. Munzir, in his second main semi-structured interview, mentions some good teachers in his past learning history describing them as 'tough characters.' For me as an insider researcher who was quite familiar with the aspects of meaning that are culturally revealing, it was not difficult to understand that Munzir was actually praising these teachers for being 'tough', because being a 'tough' teacher, in the Syrian culture, is widely-understood as someone who is able to control and maintain discipline in the classroom.

An important point to note here is concerned with the literal and interpretive readings of the data (Mason, 1996). Data in the interviews and autobiographical accounts often had references to incidents and personal experiences. The categories used to describe this data were largely inferred by such incidents which are referred to by Rubin and Rubin (1995) as 'stories'. Rubin and Rubin (1995) advise that researchers should attend carefully to these stories, as they often communicate significant themes and that researchers need to work out why a story was told and what the key message was behind it. The generation of categories which are based on these stories actually involved an interpretive idea being developed from a literal one. For example, Munzir describes his experience of learning English as strongly based on informal activities outside the classroom such as watching films and listening to songs in English. His accounts involved feelings that his experience of formal learning of English at school did not benefit

him as much as other informal activities which focused on the everyday use of English. This specific and literal reading was generalised to indicate a belief about the importance of real world use of English to him together with a belief that school-based approaches to teaching English are not very useful.

Concerning the repertory grid interviews, these are usually analysed statistically using computer assisted programmes, which raises questions about the extent to which they can be compatible with interpretive research approaches; however, I was minded to stand with Murray's (2003) position that the repertory grid interview technique can be flexible and is not necessarily as rigid in implementation as is often the case. Thus, I used this tool with some adaptation.

As I mentioned earlier, the repertory grid interviews had a purpose of furthering and developing the picture obtained in the written autobiographical accounts by getting the participants to deliberately recall each of their former teachers, their experiences with them and the impression they formulated about them. The purpose was to produce verbal commentaries, rather than statistical data, as a result of participants talking about the emerging personal constructs that were used as the basis for further probing questions by the researcher. It was the interview data, rather than the repertory grid data, that was intended to be captured. This interview data was transcribed and then analysed interpretively and inductively following the same procedures outlined above; the two research questions guided the initial coding process, and then further categories and sub-categories emerged as the result of reading and re-reading the transcribed texts, making notes, identifying key phrases, and then assigning categories whose labels were derived from the literature, the participants' specific experiences and the researchers' own insights and theoretical understanding. The following is an extract from a repertory grid interview used with Husein, which shows three elements (i.e. former teachers) and the verbal commentaries produced to talk about these elements and how primary and secondary categories emerged:

Husein, 1st repertory grid interview

elements

104 4-6-7
 105 Amina-Kuds-Dakwar
 106 ج. ثلاثة من أميز الأستاذة على مستوى الشهادات. الثلاثة درسوني في مراحل الشهادات. أمينة و قدسي بكالوريا.
 107 دكور تاسع دكور بيمتيز عنن ايجابياً أنو كان جدا outgoing شخصية قوية شخصية واثقة جدا فوق ما
 108 يخطر لك وبشكل يغلب ع التنين الباقين. هلق أمينة شخصيتها قوية جدا. بس هاد بمرآل بنحسو مثل أبوك مع أنو
 109 صغير يعني شعرو كان أسود. بتذكر شغلة كثير حبيبتني فيه أنو طلاع ع اللوح في جملة غلط صلحي باها أو حط
 110 فراغ بتذكر كان فيها do/does كنت ععمل دورة قبل التاسع بشهرين في مدرسة حلب الخاصة كثير هيك
 111 حبيبي باللغة و كثير بكنلو معروف جداً. عدنان دكور. فلسطيني. وبالصادفة أحد طلابي هون كان
 112 Elementary A قللي أنو عندو بكالوريا و أنو عدنان دكور طلع استازو وقللو علي و الأستاذ اتذكرني كمان ..
 113 قلنلو قلو انت استاذ عظيم واستاذ كثير ممنون إلك و هيك
 114 س. بدك تحكيلي هلق أكثر عن ال outgoing و confident تبعو
 115 ج. شخص غير منطوي. يعني شخص شادد الضهر مندفع و attractive بمعنى بنيتو قوية. شبيب أسمر. ف
 116 outgoing كان أنو مو منطوي. He had always tried to involve all the in the lessons.
 117 students
 118 س. بأي طريقة؟
 119 ج. طلاع حل طلاع حل افتاح كتابك واتذكر تلك شغلة مثلا واحد عبيقراً evertime I go .. evertime يا كلب
 120 فلم هندي لأنو هو ما؟ فكان كثير so funny يعني. محمد جاسر هيك علي فكرة. حتى هو بجوز ما قال يا كلب
 121 بجوز هي أنا ضفتها من عندي. اي بتكسر الحواجز. بخليكي يعني اي عادية خربطت اش يعني؟ ما ضربني ما
 122 هزاني .. مزح معي وقللي لك اشو قلبتها فيلم هندي و كذا
 123 س. funny كمان معناتا
 124 ج. جدا .. اي هدوليك مو funny أمينة و قدسي مو funny
 125 س. صوتو؟
 126 ج. صوتو حلو كثير
 127 س. يعني منحسن نستنتج من صوتو أنو هو confident ولا كمان في عندك أمور تانية؟
 128 ج. صوتو مو أنو اداعي أو شي بين يعني حلو و polished
 129 س. شلون عرفت أنو هو confident بال teaching تبعو؟
 130 ج. وقتو بالصف. درسو. ديناميكية درسو. ما بتبلك. ما بهدي. ما بتأني. يعني فاتلها. كثير قوي كثير قوي

RQ1
 App. Obs.
 Former Teachers
 Focus on
 Personal attributes
 T likeability and
 attractiveness
 Ts' styles
 Ts' sense of
 humour
 Ts' voice

1-2-5 elements

132 1-2-5
 133 Luska Khorshid-Miss attractive
 134 ج. خورشيد is more mother-like طبعها هي كان عندها ابن من عمرتا. يعني جدا caring. يعني كونها
 135 متزوجة و كان عندها ابن من عمرتا يعني بجوز لما كانت تدرس كانت تقارن بينا و بين ابنا تحط ابنا محلنا أنو
 136 هي شلون كانت درست لو ابنا كان بالصف فكتير كانت وجدانية في تدريسها و كذا كثير قلبها علينا و هيك بس
 137 كان عندها ربع عدم ثقة أنو الطلاب ما بحبوها شوي مع أنو هي ما فيها شي بينكره أبدأ. لوسكا و مس اتركتيف
 138 متعجرفات أكثر يعني خصوصي لوسكا من النوع بللي عندها انوثة و وثيقة من نفسها و اللي ما بتطلع على حدا
 139 س. وثيقة من نفسها بشكل ايجابي ولا سلبي بالنسبة إلك يعني متعجرفة؟
 140 ج. هلق سلبي شوي
 141 س. اش منسيميا متعجرفة؟
 142 ج. arrogant شوي هيك. لوسكا أكيد كانت arrogant بس مو معي
 143 س. بدك تحكيلي هلق انت اش شعورك تجاه ال arrogant teacher as opposed to the caring one
 144 ج. ما بحبو ما بحبو طاول حتى أنا لما جيت هون قللي الأستاذ محمد جاسر أنو لما بدك تدرس دك تكون عتية
 145 تحت ال arrogant يعني بحيث إذا زودت شوي بينقال عليك انت arrogant انت لا. لما بتدرس ادخول ع
 146 الصف عطى ثقة لنفسك لدرجة أنو إذا زدتها شوي بتصير arrogant يعني ثقة بس تحت ال arrogant بتكرجة
 147 . أنا حاولت و بعرف الفكرة شقد جذابة معروف انو اللي بينفئ حالو الناس بتعجب فيه بكون عادي الناس بنحسو
 148 شغلة
 149 س. culture .. حاولت انت تاخذ بالنصيحة؟
 150 ج. لا ما عجيني. لو عجيني ما بعملو. يعني أنا نفسي تلقانيا ما بتعملي. ما بتظبط معي. مي شخصيتي طاول مي
 151 شخصيتي. ف لوسكا مثل عادة بيخطر لي جرحت زملائي بتذكر رفيقي همام أنو بنظر أو كل بهدلة هما
 152 حتى مرة اتسخرت عليه ليش صحة وكذا. فما حلو. يعني هي attractive وحلوة و درسها كان حلو وممتع
 153 إلي و علمتنا غنية if you're happy clap your hands بس مع ذلك هالشغلات كر هنتي فيها. شي طبيعي
 154 كانوا رفقاتي بشكل عام ما بحبوها
 155

RQ1
 App. Obs.
 Former Teachers
 Relationships
 with students
 Positive vs.
 negative role
 models.
 arrogance
 ridiculing her
 students

As for the video-taped classroom observations, the number of studies in the literature which use qualitative analysis of video-taped classroom observations is actually very limited, and when these exist (e.g. Johnson, 1994), clear detailed procedures are not made explicit. Given this limitation, I approached the analysis of video-taped classroom observations in light of descriptions of audio-taped observations available in the literature as well as information provided by research methodology manuals on interpretive approaches to visual data analysis such as Knoblauch and Tuma (2011).

An important point to note here is that researchers do not normally approach any classroom observation without having in mind some particular themes which they wish to observe. However, a common practice in qualitative interpretive approaches suggests that researchers should not restrict data to these themes, but remain open to establish further themes in the process.

Taking each classroom observation in turn, I used the same broad categories which I used for coding the transcribed interviews and which reflected the specific research question of this study with its two components: 'the influence of prior learning experiences' and 'the influence of the teaching context.' For example, when Husein conducts grammar in a deductive way, this was entered under the 'the influence of the prior learning experiences.' It was intended that these categories will serve as an analytical framework expected to facilitate moving between the videos and help decide which parts of the video-taped observations would produce particularly interesting data relevant to the study. The use of such an analytical framework to analyse classroom observations is common in studies on learning to teach (e.g. Borg, 2003a; Farrell, 2003). For example, Farrell (2003) uses an existing framework derived from Pennington and Urmston (1998) which initially guides his data coding process. Although Farrell's analytical framework is derived from existing studies, I was tempted to be guided by my research questions to initially code my observation data in terms of broad categories. However, this coding process also involved further codes to emerge in a grounded manner and which were developed from the existing literature [e.g. teaching English through English (TETE), Shin, 2012] or from the observation data in retrospect (e.g. using supplementary materials). These codes were then entered

into a content log describing the unfolding events by reference to the video time code which can facilitate finding the video fragments referred to (see Appendix X). These codes were tentative at the beginning, but in a process of iterative analysis, better understanding of situations was achieved and codes were accordingly established and crystallised.

The interpretation of classroom situations was based partly on my own insights as an EFL teacher who learned English in the same public-school contexts as the participants' and partly on the participants' views raised in their verbal commentaries, i.e. interviews and autobiographical accounts. For example, I used my own insights based on my own learning experiences in public-sector school contexts in the interpretation of situations where participants were drawing on images of traditional teaching prevalent at schools (e.g. conducting reading aloud to test and correct students' pronunciation). I also used the interview data to inform my interpretation of classroom situations which could not have made sense without reference to teachers' commentaries. For example, it was only when I probed into teachers' verbal commentaries that I started to make sense why teachers in Bright Future, influenced by institutional policies, were using only English as the medium of instruction in their classrooms.

4.2.3.2 Presentation of data

This short section explains how data will be presented in the following data-based chapters.

Each verbal commentary made by teachers will be put between two quotation marks and will be followed by two square brackets which contain information about in which event this comment was said (e.g. 2nd stimulated-recall interview), the language in which this comment was originally said (e.g. Arabic or English) and the line number on which this comment appears on the written transcript of these verbal commentaries. An example is provided below.

With regards to the event in which comments are said, I have chosen to refer to each event by using the initials in an acronym-like style. Thus, a Stimulated-Recall Interview will be referred to as SRI. This can be followed by the number of the

event. Hence, SRI2 refers to the second Stimulated-Recall Interview. The following table presents the different acronyms and what they originally refer to:

Autobiographical Account	AA
Semi-Structured Interview	SSI
Repertory Grid Interview	RGI
Stimulated Recall Interview	SRI

Table 7. Conventions for the presentation of data

As for the language in which comments are said, I have chosen to put the original language of the interview between brackets. However, when participants code-switched between Arabic and English, these code-switched parts will be italicised in the quoted comment.

For example, this is a comment made by Munzir when he defines ‘effective teaching’ as one in which teachers

“lead students to use the *theory* given in the lesson and transform it into *practice*” [SSI1 (Arabic) 262-3].

Readers will now realise that this comment has been said during the first semi-structured interview which has been conducted mostly in Arabic and that the comment appears on lines 262 and 263 on the written transcribed text, and the words ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ were said in English by the participant.

Similarly, classroom observations will be also indicated in square brackets and referred to as CO, followed by the number of the event and the specific time interval over which the relevant segment has run. Thus, [CO1 (min: 06:40-08:16)] indicates that the segment is taken from the first classroom observation between the given two time intervals.

A final point is concerned with the amount of data that appears in the analysis chapters from each of the different data sources. Readers might see more of interview data than other data forms throughout the data-based chapters. The reason for interviews taking dominance is that they proved to be powerful tools for obtaining different kinds of data needed for this study. Before getting immersed in the data collection process in the fieldwork, I was not completely sure which data set would be primary and which would be secondary. Although the repertory grids,

for example, were necessary tools to elicit rich information about participants' former teachers, the participants were less forthcoming than expected with the early information entry stages, so it proved in the field to be more effective to conduct interviews with them than merely filling the repertory grids. The participants' classroom practice, too, would not have made any sense without them commenting on their own practice and classroom decisions and explaining verbally in face-to-face interviews why they chose to do what they did in the classroom. So, interviews were used for multiple purposes to obtain data on different aspects of teachers' work. These included teachers' cognitions, past experiences and current workplace experiences obtained through main semi-structured interviews and repertory grid interviews. They also included rationale for classroom practice obtained through stimulated recall interviews following the observation recording sessions. Thus, interviews emerged as primary data during the fieldwork, with other data becoming secondary sources complementing the primary source, which might explain why the amount of interview data might appear bigger than other kinds of data in the data-based chapters.

4.2.4 Ensuring research trustworthiness: Credibility, dependability and transferability

Credibility, dependability and transferability are three constructs used in qualitative research to increase the research trustworthiness.

Credible findings are produced when two major research activities are employed: prolonged engagement and triangulation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define prolonged engagements as "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the 'culture,' testing for misinformation introduced by distortions whether of the self or the respondents, and building trust" (p. 301). As the fieldwork for the present study took place over a whole course that each participant teacher was teaching, with multiple classroom observations and multiple interview events before and after each observation, this was hoped to constitute prolonged engagement.

As for triangulation, I collected data through multiple approaches and instruments on the phenomenon in question. As explained in the research design section, these consisted of written autobiographical accounts, semi-structured,

repertory-grid and stimulated-recall interviews and videotaped classroom observations.

Dependability of research is another term for reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Brown, 2001) which depends on whether the findings would be repeated if the study was carried out in similar conditions including participants and contexts. However, ensuring the research dependability poses a difficulty in qualitative research due to the specific nature of its focus and the data produced that are highly subjective. Following Creswell (1994), I have made clear my position as a researcher and the central assumptions of data collection tools and procedures and the selection of participants in order to increase the chances as much as possible of someone else wanting to replicate the study in another setting.

Transferability, which can sometimes be termed as generalisability (Guba and Lincoln, 1995; Richards, 2003), is defined as the extent to which a study findings can be generalisable to other participants in other contexts. I am apt to stand with Creswell (1994) who argues that qualitative research does not aim to generalise findings, but rather to form “unique interpretation of events” (p. 159). Lazaraton (1995) also asserts that findings obtained in a qualitative study are not generalisable to other contexts. Borg (1998b: 26) also confirms that interpretive qualitative investigations are “idiographic” in approach and tend to focus on understanding what is particular rather than what is generalisable. My present study aims to understand the learning-to-teach experiences of beginning teachers without any kind of previous formal teacher education and whose teaching is documented specifically during the first year of their careers in private language centres. These descriptions are not typical of other ELT contexts worldwide and make my study fairly unique in its scope and focus. However, to the extent that other contexts and participants are similar to those in my study, the findings might be also relevant.

4.2.5 Ethical considerations

Birch *et al.* (2002: 1) contends that “Researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena” places complexities on the part of the researcher. These

complexities and challenges are maximised for studies with a qualitative nature of inquiry due to the sensitivity of getting immersed in people's lived experiences and workplaces, as Stake (1998: 103) writes: "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict."

Central to the complexities of research ethics are issues related to researchers' behaviour during fieldwork in terms of the treatment of participants and people in charge who control access to fieldwork locations.

Research ethical conduct attends to two major issues related to dealing with participants and people in charge. These are participants' voluntary informed consent and protection of participants and their data (BERA, 2011; TESOL, 2002).

4.2.5.1 Participants' voluntary informed consent

Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2006: 158) argue that research ethics is about "being clear about the nature of the agreement you have entered into your research subjects and contacts." Thus, any ethical research should involve obtaining the informed consent of those involved in the research (Bell, 2005), which can be defined as the "procedure in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions" (Diener & Crandall, 1978: 34).

Before the actual fieldwork commenced, I had to obtain the consent of the managers of the language centres. This procedure consisted of showing them a letter from my supervisor and its authentication by the Syrian embassy, outlining the purpose of the project as well as what the involvement of the teacher participants would be. I met the managers and clarified my role as an assistant teacher at the Higher Institute of Languages, University of Aleppo and explained briefly the scope of my PhD project done at the University of St Mark & St John in partnership with the University of Exeter, UK. I made it clear that I needed to collect data from recent university graduates in the first year of their teaching experience to support my findings on how these untrained beginning teachers learn to teach in the first year. I made it known that the data consisted of written assignments, interviews and classroom observations. Not every manager was excited about the

idea. For example, a manager of a reputable language centre was hesitant and thus requested a private informal meeting with me before he could decide whether or not I could gain access to his place. Although he was shown confirmation of my role, identity, my field of study in the UK and my expected data collection locations and time commitment all explained in my supervisor's letter, he did not allow me to undertake my investigation because he had doubts about the purpose of my research, fearing that the information to be obtained in his language centre might be passed on to other language centres where my fieldwork was taking place around the same period of time.

As in *Bright Future* and *Pioneers*, I was allowed to carry out my fieldwork and was made to book a preliminary appointment to see the teachers.

I was aware that my role as a researcher might be misconstrued by the teacher participants at the beginning; I was conscious that they might think that I was there to evaluate their teaching and discuss it with their managers or school mentors and that their management might compel them to take part in my research. Therefore, following the guidelines of BERA (2011) and the principle of *voluntary participation* (BERA, 2011: 5), certain necessary steps needed to be undertaken prior to the research getting underway to ensure that teacher participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged, the extent to which they had choice in taking part and why their participation was necessary (BERA 2011: 5).

- To avoid any misunderstanding about my role or the research process in which the participants were to be engaged, I asked the managers in both language centres to attend my first informal briefing with the participants to clarify any points the participants might make, such as their level of freedom to participate and who would get access to their information. Although these details were clarified in written form in the consent forms I provided at a later stage, I orally explained to the participants, using their mother tongue, Arabic, what they should know before the fieldwork commenced. That was done in order to avoid any confusion resulting from misinterpreting the written forms and be able to answer whatever questions the participants might have.

- I introduced myself to the participants as a teaching assistant at the Higher Institute of Languages (HILs) at the University of Aleppo and informed them that my research was part of a PhD project being done at the University of St Mark & St John and University of Exeter in cooperation with the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education.
- I explained to them that the aim was to collect information from them about their prior learning experiences as well as current teaching experiences at their own language centres to understand how they learn to teach as beginning teachers without any previous formal preparation for the profession. I made it clear that the investigation would be done through multiple research tools including a number of interviews, written autobiographical accounts and classroom observations.
- I told them that my data collection would span the EFL course they were teaching. Although the time frame allowed by the University of Aleppo was 6 weeks, I assured the participants that I was quite flexible in conducting the fieldwork at the time of their convenience, even if that went beyond the time frame. This was done to “minimize any impact of the research on the normal working and workloads of the participants” (BERA, 2011: 7).
- I also explained why their participation was necessary in a study like this in order to help them obtain a full understanding of the research process. I clarified that the purpose of the investigation was to understand the process of becoming EFL teachers in the private sector in Syria without any kind of formal teacher preparation and that this kind of investigation needed to go deep into the past and present lived experiences of first-year Syrian teachers, who had received their education in public-sector schools and universities and who were now teaching in private language centres. I explained that obtaining information through the research tools mentioned would contribute to an in-depth picture of what it is like to begin to teach in Syria without any previous training, which the research was seeking to capture.
- Consistent with the principle of *voluntary informed consent* to be “the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation

without any duress, prior to the research getting underway” (BERA, 2011: 5), I assured the participants that they had complete choice and freedom in participating in my research and that their participation would never be regarded as part of their job or employment at their language centres. I also clarified that their managers, who were attending the briefing too, did not have the right to influence their decisions to take part in the research and that they should not be judged negatively in any way by anyone in the institution if they decided not to take part.

- The manager of Pioneers refused to participate in my investigation after my meeting with him citing that I might be expected to raise some sensitive questions about the internal private policies followed with his teachers and that he did not want to uncover the hidden ‘ideology’ of his institution. He agreed to let me conduct the collection of data with Iman, though.
- Related to the principle of *voluntary participation* is the participants’ *right to withdraw*, as BERA (2011: 6) guidelines suggest: “Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right.” I made it clear to the participants that there would be no contractual obligation to participate. I assured them that, should they wish to withdraw from the research process at any stage, they were completely free to take such a decision and would never be asked to mention the reasons behind their decision to withdraw. I asserted to them that I would respect and accept such a decision and would not take any step to persuade them to re-engage in the research process.
- All classroom observations which I intended to conduct reflected the policy of overt research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). That is, the participants did know that they were going to be observed, which also acknowledges the principle of informed consent.

4.2.5.2 Protection of participants and their data

Ethical practice draws on principles for the protection of participants and their information which can be understood in terms of three connected issues: confidentiality, anonymity and consequences.

Bailey (1996) indicates that participants should be made aware of the confidential factors in the research process. The main reason why the participants' statements should remain confidential is to protect their privacy, which, if ensured, can help protect participants' held values (Diener & Crandall, 1978). Confidentiality in ethics refers to the question of "*what information should be available to whom*" (Kvale, 2009: 72) as well as how their participation and information would be used and stored (BERA, 2011). In this study, certain procedures were taken to address the confidentiality issues in terms of data usage and data storage:

I explained to each participant that their statements and classroom action would be used exclusively for the purpose of my PhD research. I also assured them that their lessons would not be watched or listened to by any of their supervisors or managers at their language centres. I asserted that any data obtained either for this research or any future publication would be exclusively used for illustrative purposes; participants' written or oral statements as well as records of classroom behaviour would only be used to support and clarify the findings, ideas and themes rather than to identify a certain person. This is done in accordance with the University of Exeter's Data Protection Act (updated in 2015) which stresses that "Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes" (Data Protection, 2015, University of Exeter Website, Accessed 13 April, 2015 <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection/summary/>).

As for data retention and storage, I complied with the regulations set out in point 7 of the University of Exeter's Data Protection guidelines (updated in 2015) which suggests that researchers are responsible for ensuring that "any personal data which they hold are kept securely and not disclosed either orally or in writing, accidentally or otherwise to any unauthorised third party" (University of Exeter: Data Protection Policy, 2015: 4). To ensure this, I stored the data collected from my participants including written information, audio files and classroom observation

videos on the N: Drive of the University of St Mark & St John's Intranet System. This is a secure encrypted server and is password protected. No one except myself could get any access to the contents of this drive. I also ensured that any paper records of any part of the data would be shredded or destroyed using the University of St Mark & St John's approved confidential waste contractor and that any electronic equipment used for storing the data would be wiped before disposal. I confirm that that data will never be transferred, and that any data on the University's secure server will be wiped confidentially after the completion of this project.

Confidentiality in research entails anonymity, which is "the process of not disclosing the identity of a research participant, or the author of a particular view or opinion" (ESRC, 2006: 4). King & Horrocks (2010: 117) comment that "Anonymity refers to concealing the identity of the participants in all documents resulting from the research, therefore actively protecting the identity of research participants."

Although there are views suggesting that anonymity is not always the correct policy in social research on the assumption that some research participants prefer that their real names are used in order to retain a sense of ownership of their data and experiences (Grinyer 2004), I was minded to maintain the anonymity of my participants, complying with BERA Association (2011) and the University of Exeter's ethical regulations in their official consent form. The participants in this study willingly waived this right orally; nevertheless, I decided to adopt an anonymous treatment of the participants' data to preserve their privacy and confidentiality, especially when the thesis is put in the public domain either by publication or as a hard library copy in the Higher Institute of Languages, University of Aleppo. The participants' real names were substituted with pseudonyms that have been used throughout this study, and so were the names of the private institutions at which participant teachers worked.

A final issue regarding the notion of protection is concerned with the consequences of qualitative research, which refer to the potential harm caused to the participants by taking part in research.

All three teacher participants were over 23 years old at the time of the research. So, the consent issues were not as complex as they would have been with younger

participants; the study participants were capable of making their own decisions and there was no constraining legislation with regard to obtaining their consent nor was there any risk of any maltreatment.

As for the nature of research, it does not involve particularly sensitive topics or a particularly intrusive method. The participants were informed of the research design and the kind of information the research was seeking to gather, i.e. information on their learning histories and current teaching experiences. A conversation-like style of interviews was maintained throughout to minimise any possible feelings of intrusion into their private lives, or emotional distress, or feelings of embarrassment. Furthermore, to put them at ease, I clarified to them that if they felt the conversation was touching any particularly personal or sensitive issues, I would desist immediately from any actions that might cause emotional harm or distress. I made it known that, should they experience these feelings, they were free to choose to stop and change the subject. Besides, to avoid the research impacting on their self-esteem, I was careful about not confronting the participants with any discrepancies between their statements and practice. So, questions like 'why did you do this in the classroom after saying something else in the interview?' were carefully avoided.

The kind of questions asked in the interviews did not involve any sensitive social hints that might cause feelings of discomfort. The questions asked did not refer in any way to any gender issues nor did they even seek to compare between male and female teachers. Almost the same set of questions were used with all three participants.

As the fieldwork took place prior to the Syrian political conflict, the questions asked did not invite the participants in any way to share any political views that might cause them harm if such views were put in the public domain.

To ensure that the questions were appropriate and involved no harm or distress to the participants, I piloted the questions with two colleagues in the 2010 MA TESOL programme at the University of St Mark & St John, Abdullah and Miguel. I also discussed the questions with my PhD supervisor before I left for Syria for the fieldwork.

Prior to my initial meetings with the school managers, I was aware that they might ask me for information about their teachers or wish to get access to what was

going on in their premises, especially in terms of the participants' performance in the classroom and my own impression about their suitability for the job. I knew that if I agreed to provide such information, this would cause harm to the participants and affect their employment or payment. So I was clear from the beginning that I would not reveal any issues related to the participants during the data collection process.

At the end of the data collection process, teacher participants reported that their participation added a lot to them in terms of practical knowledge and reflective thinking. They particularly enjoyed the idea of watching their own videos and talking about them. All three teachers were quite responsive and even curiously enthusiastic about the process. They saw it as an opportunity to broaden their views and enrich their teaching experiences.

4.3 Limitations of the research methods and research process

There are a number of limitations in terms of both the study design and implementation described above, which have impacts on the conclusions and implications of this study.

One of the limitations that need to be discussed is concerned with the role of the researcher in the research in terms of issues of subjectivity and objectivity. The study is undertaken by a Syrian researcher who has taught in Syrian universities, institutes and private language centres and who shares the informants the same educational, linguistic and cultural background. Banner and Tolhurst (2002) argue that such an 'insider' stance help obtain a greater understanding of the culture in which research is undertaken. Smyth and Holian (2008, cited in Unluer, 2012: 1) argue that

“insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it “really works”. They know how to best approach people. In general, they have a great deal of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire.”

So, in this study, being an insider-researcher is likely to lead to a greater understanding of the process of learning to teach than if it were conducted by an outside researcher.

However, Although there are various advantages of being a researcher with such an emic stance, there are also downsides associated with being an insider in this study. One of these can be my 'great amount of familiarity' with the processes and practices studied and observed, which might lead to a loss of objectivity. As an insider researcher with shared learning and cultural experience with the participants, I probably know 'too much' about their early experiences of beginning to teach as well as their instructional practices in the classroom; I went through more or less the same processes in the past when I began to teach in private language centres without any previous formal preparation for the profession. Looking at the participants' teaching styles through my eyes as an insider researcher might have involved me in unconsciously making wrong assumptions about their practices based on my prior knowledge, which can lead to potential biases and subjectivity in my interpretation of their observational data. Such biases and subjectivity can be the result of too much expectation set forth in the research process and data analysis that might lead me to overlook important information.

Another major limitation comes from the methodological approach employed. The present study provides in-depth portrayal of the perspectives and experiences of three teacher participants and captures a rich and thick description of the workplaces where they work including the workplaces' norms, policies and internal cultures. However, the study only focuses on two language centres. Whilst there may be grounds for claiming that beginning teachers who received their early education in public-sector schools and are currently working in the private sector may have similar experiences in different language centres, this would be an oversimplification of human experience. Other young teachers who begin to teach EFL courses in the private sector may, of course, have similar experiences to those of the participants in this study, but they may also differ in perhaps significant ways. Similarly, although the study shows common themes running across the participant teachers in terms of their beliefs and prior learning experiences, the background knowledge which the participants have brought with them to their early teaching experiences may not be typical of the life histories of other beginning teacher candidates. It would have probably been more enlightening if the study had

captured the early teaching experiences of more than three beginning teachers and in more than two private language centres.

A third limitation of the study comes from the intense nature of the fieldwork and of the participants' teaching schedules during the fieldwork. Although I believe that the data I collected was revealing and compelling, I would have liked to have conducted more and longer interviews and obtained longer autobiographical accounts. Also, I would have wanted to carry out a more long-term study, but, unfortunately, time was severely limited. One reason for the limited time was that the University of Aleppo, which is the research sponsoring body, do not allow the fieldwork to go beyond a period of six weeks, otherwise they would stop the scholar's salary. They seem to look at research fieldwork as a simple matter of distributing and collecting questionnaires. They fail to realise that studies with qualitative, interpretive nature like this one may require much more time than their suggested time frames. However, although I took an additional period of six weeks beyond their time frame, I still believe that it would have been more insightful if I had studied teachers' first-year experiences in a more long-term fashion. In the learning-to-teach literature, studies on first-year teachers usually focus on the whole first year (e.g., Farrell, 2006; 2008). In my study, it would have been more enriching and interesting to see whether the beginning participant teachers could resolve their own complications and dilemmas in their workplace settings and what they would learn in terms of beginning to teach, being a teacher and new classroom techniques at the end of the first year.

Also, in this study, I have provided detailed background information about teachers' prior learning experiences to show how these have contributed to their current beliefs. However, there is always a risk in claiming that participant teachers' beliefs have originated during their 'apprenticeship of observation' because these teachers had been in the profession for 3-4 months when I met them and might have developed a wide range of beliefs and assumptions about teaching on the job.

During my fieldwork, participants were highly cooperative, but due to the lack of time on my and their part, we had to conduct the interviews at specific times of the

day, usually during their break times. However, late starts sometimes affected the number of questions needing to be asked in the interviews or the pace at which these questions needed to be asked. I have perceived this problem particularly during my interviews with Malek, who gave me an appointment for two interviews just two days before my flight back to the UK.

A further difficulty encountered was associated with the nature of stimulated recall interviews. This type of interviews depends on a stimuli, which is video in my case. However, I could not always keep short the interval between the observation and the stimulated recall interviews. Although teachers did not report any problem re-living and describing the classroom situations they were watching, a risk exists that they might have probably forgotten why they did what they did and might have therefore made up some stories or justifications rather than telling the reality of what was going on in their observed lessons.

As for classroom observation, the main difficulty was associated with the use of the camera in the classroom. Not every student, especially females, was happy about it. Although it was made clear at the beginning of every classroom observation that students could choose to change or exchange seats, I was still uncomfortable about the whole situation and felt like an intruder. The limited angle that the camera lens could capture posed a further limitation. This did not only limit my access to the wide range of classroom events but might have also constrained teachers' behaviour. Recording the videos was also affected by the sound of the air-conditioning units at the back of classrooms, which posed a difficulty during listening and transcribing the classroom events. In some videos, I had to use special media software to adjust the sound settings to allow a clearer listening. Probably, it would have been more useful if video recording had been combined with audio recording for which the audio recorder could be placed somewhere nearer the teacher and students.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has introduced the research methodology used for this study and how it has guided my choices regarding the overall design of the study and the

implementation processes. The chapter has shed light on the overall research design with the underlying research paradigm as well as the data collection methods and the rationale for using each method in this study. The chapter has also described the research process including how the participants were selected, how data was collected, how data was analysed, how research trustworthiness was ensured and how important ethical considerations were attended to.

The next chapter will provide some contextual background information about the Syrian educational system and teaching culture, which will function as a basis for the interpretation of the data and accounts made in the following data-based chapter.

Chapter Five
The Influence of Participants' Prior Learning Experiences
on their Experiences of Learning to Teach:
The 'Apprenticeship of Observation'

This chapter discusses the influence of participant teachers' apprenticeship of observation on their current experiences of learning to teach. The chapter will shed light on various aspects and instances of participant teachers' early experiences as learners at school and university and show how they have developed a set of personal beliefs drawing upon these experiences, which seem to channel their current learning-to-teach experiences.

Beginning teachers in this study enter the teaching career based on their graduation certificates from the Department of English Literature, university of Aleppo. Their learning-to-teach experiences are portrayed without any previous professional preparation prior to their career entry, and hence the influence of their beliefs formulated during their apprenticeship of observation will appear uninfluenced by any intervention (e.g. teacher education) between their graduation and initial employment in their respective educational institutions. These beliefs represent 'folk pedagogies' (Bruner, 1996); that is, they are constructed by teachers based on their own personal experiences, usually learning experiences, and cultural beliefs about EFL teaching and learning, their students, their roles, how they teach and the kind of teacher they want to develop.

Husein, Munzir and Iman approach their EFL teaching career with a well-developed set of beliefs which derive from their prior learning experiences at public-sector schools and university and which have impacts on their early learning-to-teach experiences as EFL teachers in the first year. These beliefs influence their judgment and perception which, in turn, affect their classroom practice. There are five common themes that characterise participants' early learning-to-teach experiences in relation to their beliefs and practices. These are:

- beliefs and practices about the process of EFL teaching,
- beliefs and practices about the use of coursebooks,
- beliefs and practices about the role of EFL teachers,
- beliefs and practices about the teaching of grammar, and
- beliefs and practices about student-teacher relationships

In discussing these themes, a reference will be made either to specific instances and events in participants' prior learning experiences when they were students at public-sector schools and university and/or to the discussion made in the previous chapter on the educational system and common teaching practices in the public sector in Syria. This is followed by a description of participants' beliefs and classroom practices.

5.1 Husein

Husein's early experience of learning to teach as a beginning teacher in the first year of teaching is shaped by influences coming from his learning history as a former student during which he observed many teachers and teaching styles. He has thus constructed generalised beliefs based on his own prior learning experiences that seem to guide his current experience of learning to teach in his first year of teaching.

5.1.1 Husein's beliefs and practices about the process of EFL teaching

As chapter 2 shows, EFL teaching in public-sector schools is characterised by certain 'traditional' notions that view teaching as a process of transmitting information to learners. Husein holds certain beliefs about the process of EFL teaching that appear to draw upon these notions prevalent in public-sector schools.

Husein describes how English was taught in his school:

“although we were given very important ideas, we weren't given much chance to practice and experiment” [AA (English) 128-9].

He also comments that the amount of student talk was limited and minimised, and it rarely served any real communicative purposes. He continues:

“All we had to do was to guess the missing words at schools or put the verb in the correct form in the sentence” [SSI1 (English) 151-2].

He further points out that when students spoke, it was in response to teachers' requests and mainly comprised supplying answers, repeating grammatical rules or reading texts aloud from the coursebook. He states that

“there [at schools], *speaking* was not required from you at all. Only answers were required .. You raise your hand and say the answer in English .. but communication in English was absent” [SRI1 (Arabic) 411-2].

He continues that the school teaching model was based on teachers' explanation of grammatical rules and asserts that English must be seen as a means of communication which cannot be taught in terms of merely grammar explanation and doing exercises. He also appears sorry for his former teachers following this model commenting that:

“I feel pity for them. I pity them. They don't know what they have to do, and their view to teaching is a way different from the way it should be taught” [SSI1 (English) 154-5].

Husein does not seem to be satisfied with his early learning experiences with the transmission model of EFL teaching that was based on teachers explaining grammatical rules and students doing exercises. He seems to have constructed a set of beliefs that run counter to this model. He asserts that his teaching is different from that of his early school teachers in that:

“I teach the language communicatively” [SSI1 (English) 145-6].

Explaining this position, he contends that teaching should be more directed towards encouraging language use. He also points out that, for him, teaching is different from lecturing and that the teacher's job is to teach the information rather than merely display it, by interacting with learners and creating opportunities for classroom discussions. However, Husein's teaching actually presents a different picture from how he describes it as 'teaching communicatively.' Extract 1 below from Husein's teaching is a typical example of the interaction type and student talk in his classes.

Husein reads the instruction of a coursebook exercise which asks students to form negatives of some given positive sentences. The interaction for this exercise runs as follows:

EXTRACT 1

- T: Form negatives. I like New York. I don't like New York. Wael [a student]?
- Wael: She doesn't work in the city.
- T: That's right. She doesn't work in the city... They have lunch at 1:00. Iman [a student]?
- Iman: They don't have lunch at 1:00.
- T: Very good. He has red hair. Nour?
- Nour: He doesn't have red hair
- [the activity continues in this pattern for 8 student turns]
- T: [finishing and starting a new exercise] Exercise B. Complete the questions with *do* or *does* [CO2 (min 06:40-08:16)].

In another exercise in the coursebook, the students are required to provide the missing preposition from a given list of prepositions:

EXTRACT 2

- T: Page fifty one. We'll try to do it as quickly as possible. Yes, Alaa. Number 2.
- Alaa: There's a small table *next to* the door.
- T: *Next to* the door. Very good. You have the words. Don't ask me how we write them. They're in the box. right? Next. Nour.
- Nour: There's a black book *under* the table
- T: Excellent. *Under*. Shadi
- Shadi: The cat is sitting *between*
- T: emm
- Shadi: *in front of, in front of* the fireplace
- T: Right. *In front of. In front of*. Mahmood.
- Mahmood: There's a ghost sitting *opposite* the woman
- T: Excellent. *Opposite*. Ammar. ... [CO1 (min 28:20-29:34)]

This pattern of student-teacher interaction in Husein's lessons is clearly an IRF sequence which typically characterises teaching models within a transmission approach, as Lyster (2007 :89) observes: "The IRF sequence is seen as the quintessence of transmission models of teaching and typical of teacher-centred classrooms" and is described as "engaging students only minimally." Such a classroom exchange pattern runs noticeably over Husein's lessons observed

[CO1], [CO2] and [CO3]. Student talk is rare; students mainly provide short answers with Husein being the dominant participant, as he reads the instructions, re-explains them, reads prompt sentences from the coursebook, elicits a response from students, usually in turns, and then gives feedback. In fact, Husein's conception of 'teaching language communicatively' seems simplistic. It appears to be enacted in light of his unconscious beliefs that have been grooved into him by his prior learning experiences where teaching was 'transmissive' and where English lessons were structured mainly around doing exercises and eliciting answers from students in an IRF model.

However, there are examples in Husein's teaching in which he does not seem in complete charge of the class with his IRF-exchange teaching style; he introduces pair work at some points, mainly as required in the coursebook instructions, and encourages a certain level of speaking in an uncontrolled way during class talk. Extract 3 below shows an example of pair work followed by uncontrolled student talk in front of the class. Students are initially required to write down what objects and parts of furniture there is/are in their living rooms and then compare their answers with their partners. After that, they are encouraged to tell their sentences to the class. But as the talk goes, Husein starts asking them about different parts of their flats (e.g. bedroom, kitchen, dining room, etc) and students start giving answers without looking in their books.

EXTRACT 3

- T: Okay that's enough. No problem. Compare your answers. Do you have the same or different answers? [T returns to his desk while ss are talking to each other about the furniture of their living rooms].
- T: Okay. That's enough. Thank you. Tell the class now. Yehia, what do you have in your living room? What furniture do you have in your living room? For example [T models an example of the furniture he has in his own room and writes up two different forms for students to choose from: *In my room, there is/are ...* or *My room has ...*]. What about you Yehia?
- Yehia: My living room has a coffee table, two sofa
- T: Two sofa?
- Yehia: Two sofas
- T: Two sofas.
- Yehia: four armchairs, clock
- T: a clock.

Yehia: a television
T: a television. That's enough. Thank you very much. Nahed? What about your house or your flat?
Nahed: My living room has two sofas, two armchairs, three coffee table and three lamps and television
T: a television. [...] Yes Ayat.
Ayat: My living room
T: Talk about, no not your living room, your bedroom.
Ayat: My bedroom has emm two beds, emm a rug, a computer, a chair, desk,
T: a desk?
Ayat: a desk, emm bookcase,
T: a bookcase.
Ayat: and a lamps.
T: lamps. A lamp. Okay. [...] Ibrahim, Ah your dining room.
Ibrahim: My dining room has two tables. No one table and chairs and a clock and pictures.
T: Okay thank you very much. That will do. Shadi?
Shadi: Tell us about emm
Ayat: kitchen
T: Yes, your kitchen.
Shadi: My kitchen has microwave
T: a microwave
Shadi: a refrigerator
T: You can say fridge. Yes it's short for refrigerator.
Shadi: a fridge, a stove and ...
T: That will do. Thank you very much. Ah Muhammad.
Muhammad: My kitchen has a table, a stove, a microwave oven, a refrigerator, chairs, curtains,
T: Curtains in the kitchen! Nice, so your kitchen is kind of big.
Muhammad: Yes
T: Excellent. Thank you very much. [CO3 (min 23:50-35:00)]

This example shows what happens in a speaking activity in Husein's lesson, which deviates from the IRF, exercise-oriented model described above. Husein is seen to introduce pair work, mainly as instructed by the coursebook, and encourage some level of uncontrolled talk. In fact, the dominating IRF, exercise-oriented model over his lessons may or may not be interpreted in terms of the influence of his prior learning experiences. In the stimulated-recall session following this lesson, Husein admits that this exercise has been done successfully in his opinion, which can attest his awareness of the importance of student talk in the classroom. However, he comments that this activity has slowed down his lesson and affected all other exercises in the unit [SRI 3]. It seems that Husein might not be entirely locked in

the traditional IRF model, as he is obviously capable of presenting a different model of teaching based on the assistance of the coursebook and teachers' guide. But what hinders his attempts to keep enacting such uncontrolled, speaking-oriented practices may be the 'coursebook-based instruction' policy promoted in Bright Future (as we shall see in the next chapter), which makes his teaching centred around getting as much of the coursebook content as possible out of the way, in which case an IRF model to do coursebook exercises seems to offer a quick solution for him.

5.1.2 Husein's beliefs and practices about the use of coursebooks

The teaching models in the Syrian educational system operate within a transmission model which adopts a notion of learning as one that occurs through students' accumulation of bits of knowledge as transmitted by the teacher. Husein seems to adopt this notion of how learning occurs, and hence appears to hold beliefs that teachers must teach from coursebooks because these provide language information that facilitates student language learning in a gradual way.

Husein believes that EFL learning occurs through doing coursebook exercises that are graded in design. This is clear in the way he describes his own conception of how EFL learning occurs:

"You [student] move smoothly from one task to another in the coursebook and then feel you've learned something" [SS11 (English) 140-42].

He believes that coursebooks provide exercises to help learners build up linguistic knowledge and explains why he relies on coursebooks asserting that he believes in the importance of:

"finishing a book, or half a book, so that students would possess certain definite concepts. I'm so convinced that students should have foundations to build upon, but when you give them a brick from here and another from there .. they can't build a foundation .. Let them establish a small building rather than give them a hundred of scattered bricks" [RG12 (Arabic) 229-32].

Husein believes that EFL learning is about building a foundation and arranging bits of knowledge on that foundation, which can be facilitated by the graded design of coursebook exercises. This is further confirmed when he asserts that:

“The New English File people [i.e. the coursebook writers], they are Oxford people, they are better than me in deciding what learners need at this stage .. so every exercise in the coursebook has a purpose in building up gradual knowledge at learners” [SR11 (Arabic) 220-3].

Such a comment implies that EFL learning, according to Husein, is a gradual accumulation of language parts, represented in the coursebook exercises, to be acquired by the learner through a step-by-step movement between exercises. This oversimplified notion of how learning occurs is referred to by Wilkins (1976) as a traditional ‘synthetic’ approach that has as a core element a belief that the purpose of teaching is to simplify learning by breaking down the content to be taught into smaller parts to be delivered in a sequential and graded way. Husein believes that coursebooks, in their graded sequential structure and organisation, contribute to establishing a linguistic foundation which learners need in order to further develop their knowledge. This linear, systematic acquisition of knowledge is commented on by Nunan (1996) in his metaphor of linguistic knowledge as ‘a language wall’ in traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Nunan (1996) observes:

The language wall is erected one linguistic ‘brick’ at a time. The easy grammatical bricks are laid at the bottom of the wall, and they provide a foundation for the more difficult ones. The task for the learner is to get the linguistic bricks in the right order (p. 65).

The belief which Husein holds about EFL learning as arranging ‘bricks’ of knowledge in a particular consecutive order explains why he continues to focus his teaching on coursebooks, which, according to him, build gradual knowledge through their graded exercises. Such an approach to teaching, with its underlying conception of how learning occurs, might have been developed tacitly during Husein’s prior learning experiences and seems to have implications for his practice in the classroom. For the most part, Husein’s lessons consist of carrying out exercises from the coursebook. In each of the three lessons observed, Husein covers more than twenty different exercises from the coursebook with the typical

pattern showing him reading prompt sentences from the coursebook, giving time to students to do the coursebook exercises and finally checking students' answers [CO1], [CO2] and [CO3].

5.1.3 Husein's beliefs and practices about the role of EFL teachers

Embedded in Husein's views that learning is an additive and 'synthetic' process is another belief which seems to be held as a result of his observation of his early teachers during his 'apprenticeship of observation' period: that teachers are transmitters of knowledge and explainers of new information, which, for him, can also reside in the coursebook exercises.

Husein appears to approve of one of his former teachers at school stating that:

"I think I can tell you key words about why she was successful .. Probably she's got good ways in trying to make students understand. She explained a lot. She got a very good (sic) English" [SSI1 (English) 88-90].

He continues

"the successful teacher is one who must be able to convey the information in the coursebook to the learners" [SSI2 (Arabic) 197-8].

For Husein, 'explaining' and 'conveying information' to learners are features of the successful teacher's practice. In fact, this view characterises the public-sector educational culture and seems to influence Husein's conception of the role of EFL teachers in the teaching process. He tends to view the teachers' role as one of imparting information, explaining it and being proficient in English.

Linked with Husein's notion of teachers as explainers and transmitters of information is a tendency to view teachers as knowledgeable role models and evaluate them according to their knowledge and linguistic competence. Talking about one of his former university teachers, he comments:

"He was good at conveying his knowledge to us. You feel he had a depth of knowledge .. I got a lot of knowledge from him .. I wrote down everything he said, word by word" [RGI2 (Arabic) 316-9].

In contrast, he seems to disapprove of another university teacher because he believes she was less knowledgeable and tended to make mistakes:

“She was funny .. She didn’t have so much knowledge. She always had doubts about whether or not she was giving correct information. I remember once she wanted to write up on the board the words *success* and *succeed*. She didn’t know the difference between them and made mistakes with their spelling, and we corrected her ... I mean she was a joke for everybody [RGI2 (Arabic) 36-9].

The view of ‘teacher as a knowledgeable role model’ not only affects Husein’s conceptions and judgments about former teachers in retrospect, but also appears to influence his perception of himself and his classroom decisions. Extract 3 below from one of Husein’s lessons, with his own interpretation of it, provides an example on how such a view influences Husein’s self-image and practice:

EXTRACT 4

T: We often go out. Emm Yasin [a student]
Yasin: We often don’t go out.
T: We often don’t go out or? [looking at other students]
Ss: We don’t often go out.
T: Yes it sounds nicer. We don’t often go out, but as I told you both are correct [CO2 (min 7:28-7:42)].

This example is seen while Husein is teaching the present simple. When a student produces the negative form of the statement ‘*We often go out*’ as ‘*We often don’t go out*,’ Husein confirms his answer, but then expects other students to provide a reformulation as ‘*We don’t often go out*.’ Watching himself later in the video, he observes that he was not actually sure about which sentence structure was correct, adding that he did not want to reveal his doubts to the students and preferred to assure them that both forms were correct:

“students wouldn’t believe if the teacher says ‘both forms are acceptable.’ They would think you say that because you’re not sure yourself. I didn’t like what happened. Suppose he [the student] checks a grammar book and discovers his answer was correct. I’d be shocked” [SRI2 (Arabic) 285-8].

Husein is keen on preserving the image of a knowledgeable teacher in front of his students. He seems to be concerned about how his students view him. He is reluctant to reveal to his students that he is not sure which form is correct, as he wants to show them an image of a teacher who knows all the answers. In fact, the view of ‘teacher as a knowledgeable role model’ is a societal expectation which

has been developed over years of people's 'apprenticeship of observation,' particularly as a consequence of the role teachers play in the teaching process and the way they view learners and the learning process. The view that 'teachers are knowledgeable role models' appears to have impacts on Husein's beliefs and practice in terms of the kind of teacher he wants to project to his students.

5.1.4 Husein's beliefs and practices about the teaching of grammar

The teaching of grammar in the Syrian school system is mostly governed by 'deductive' approaches in which teachers focus on the explanation of concepts and grammar rules and expect learners to learn by doing exercises practising these concepts and rules. Husein's classroom approach to grammar teaching seems to draw upon deductive notions which characterise his prior learning experiences.

Husein's 'apprenticeship of observation' is full of examples of grammar teaching that are conducted in a deductive way and which tends to focus on studying English grammar as a set of structures and rules rather than focusing on its use and function. He describes this approach as tending to view language as discrete codes. He comments on his experience with learning grammar at school asserting that:

"grammar was taught very explicitly. I remember times when a student might be asked to repeat a grammatical rule, e.g., to form the present simple, we use a subject and a verb in the present, etc" [AA (English) 84-6].

He describes grammar lessons in his prior learning experiences as conducted in this way:

"They [teachers] just have to explain the grammatical rules and then apply them using some exercises" [SSI1 (English) 60-1].

Husein is seen to draw upon deductive approaches of grammar teaching in his self-reports and in his actual instructional practice. He points out that teaching grammar has ever been an easy task for him and that he teaches it "very simply. I don't have a problem with this at all. I don't know why" [SSI1 (English) 243]. He continues,

"We open the books, and I look very quickly to know that I should teach a certain structure in a certain tense in the positive form, negative form and question form. So I write something [a statement] on the board, [then ask] 'how do you make the question form of this? the yes/no question? We have two answers as you know. To say yes, yes what? Yes comma I do. No? no comma I don't, etcetera'". [SSI1 (English) 249-53]

Husein is repeatedly seen as embodying this model in his teaching of grammar. Extract 4 below sheds light on Husein's approach to grammar teaching in relation to the present continuous tense:

EXTRACT 5

- T: We take for example this sentence. Ok. *They're arguing*. This is an example of present continuous. Is it in the full form or contracted?
- Ss: contracted.
- T: We have a contraction here. It's not *they are*. It's *they're*. *They're having a party*. *They're arguing*. [T underlines they]. What do we call this?
- Ss: they
- T: What do we call it? subject, object,
- S1: pronoun
- T: Yes, but here what job does it do in the sentence?
- S2: subject
- T: We call it a subject. The subject is usually the person or people who are doing the verb, doing the action .. then what's this? [underlining 're in *they're*]
- Ss: verb be
- T: It's verb be exactly. In what tense?
- S2: present.
[...]
- T: [writing subject + verb be + verb(ing)]. This is the basic structure .. We need to make it negative. What do we do? [CO1 (min 1:18:46 – 1:30:40)].
[T then starts an exercise from the coursebook that asks students to put the verbs in brackets in the present continuous].

In another activity on the use of *some* and *any*, Husein writes these two words on the board and makes a chart with three columns having three signs as headings: (+) positive, (–) negative and (?) question. Then he explains in which form each one is used. He, then, opens the book and reads example sentences. Extract 5 below is noted:

EXTRACT 6

T: We use *some* for positive sentences. There are some chairs. Okay? There aren't any chairs or sofas. Negative. For questions, *any* or *some*?

S: *any*

T: *any*. Excellent .. *Some* for positive, *any* for negative and questions. Are there any desks in the classroom? .. [CO3 (min 55:35 – 57:50)]
[T then starts an exercise from the coursebook on *some* and *any*]

Extract 5 and 6 above are examples of Husein's approach to grammar teaching and the pattern he follows of explaining the grammatical structure of the target language component (e.g. how present continuous is formed and in which sentence forms '*some*' and '*any*' are used). The extracts also show that he teaches grammar in an explicit manner, with a focus on the use of grammatical meta-language (e.g. *subject, pronoun, tense, contracted, positive, negative* and *basic structure*) to explain the target structure followed by reinforcing exercises, an approach which looks similar to his description of his prior learning experience with grammar teaching.

In fact, Husein's account reveals a certain awareness of the terms *deductive* and *inductive*. He has come across these terms and how they are applied in the teacher's guide that comes with the coursebook series that he is teaching. He tends to believe that he follows an inductive approach to grammar teaching on the basis that he teaches the grammatical rule based on a typical example, making links between the two, rather than give students abstract rules to memorise like what former school teachers did (e.g. "To form the present simple, we use a subject and a verb in the present, etc." [AA (English) 85-6]). He comments:

"I teach grammar inductively by taking examples from the coursebook, from what we have been talking about and writing them on the board and dissect these sentences into grammatical units .."
[SR11 (Arabic) 133-5].

However, Husein's conceptualisation of the difference between the two methods seems rather simplistic. The inductive approach is more than the order in which grammatical rules and examples are presented. It is a 'grammar consciousness raising' approach (Rutherford, 1987; Shawood Smith, 1988) in which students are

engaged in a process of hypothesis formulation by being given “sufficient examples so that they can work out the grammatical rule that is operating” (Hedge, 2000). It seems that the conventional images of grammar teaching carried out deductively in Husein’s ‘apprenticeship of observation’ are so familiar and powerful that they do not allow him to enact alternative approaches effectively. Even when he shows awareness of an alternative approach of grammar teaching (e.g. inductive) which he learned from the teacher’s guide, his actual teaching indicates a limited view of the learned approach and a tendency to enact practices similar to those that constitute a default position in his early learning experience, the fact that leads him to initially comment that teaching grammar has always been easy for him and that he has never had difficulties with it.

5.1.5 Husein’s beliefs and practices about student-teacher relationships

During his ‘apprenticeship of observation,’ Husein encountered both positive and negative teacher role models and has thus constructed beliefs and teaching principles based on the images he can recall of these role models and the impact these have had on him in terms of the kind of teacher he aspires to be in his classroom. Thus, his learning-to-teach experience as a beginning teacher involves both acceptance and rejection of certain attributes and practices based on the remembered images of former role models in his early learning experiences as a school and university student. One of the important points about the influence of the positive and negative role models in Husein’s learning-to-teach experience is concerned with the interpersonal relationships he wishes to develop with his learners.

Husein seems to appreciate certain attributes of his former teachers with whom he had positive experiences on the interpersonal level. In a private course, for example, Husein was taught by a teacher who appears to have influenced his conception of the teacher in terms of such attributes as “friendly, tolerant and encouraging” [SRI3 (Arabic) 49]. He observes,

“He has a very good teaching style. He was very *active* in the lesson. You feel he’s like a TV presenter. He was always like yes, hooray, Bravo” [SRI3 (Arabic) 51-2].

He continues that this teacher was tolerant in a way that he never frustrated students who did not do homework or were noisy in class and was always in a positive mood for teaching. He adds,

“He was very *friendly*, very tolerant with students. These things affected me a lot, *friendly* and tolerant. They affected me a lot, a lot” [SRI3 (Arabic) 82-3].

Husein has also had a positive experience with his aunt who taught him English in a private course. He describes her as:

“My aunt has a style that was very *friendly* and tender with all students .. her students loved her, worshipped her” [SRI3 (Arabic) 16-7].

He reports that he had a teacher in the elementary stage who had made a special impact on his way of dealing with his own learners in terms of love and dedication she gave her learners. He observes,

“She was *more mother-like* .. I mean very *caring* .. I think when she taught, she always thought about her own children and how she would’ve treated them if they had been with us. She was very conscientious and had a heart for us” [RGI1 (Arabic) 133-5].

He further points out that

“She was so meek, *friendly* and *tolerant* .. she was very very *flexible*, so easy-going with her students and never disturbed or put pressure on anyone. I mean she was never insisting or hurtful to anyone” [RGI1 (Arabic) 28-34].

Husein’s mother was also an English teacher. He attended some of her lessons in a private language centre that she owned in the past. She was particularly successful, for him, in terms of the informal style of dealing with her students. He explains her informal style as

“You feel she is very easy going, acting like friends with her students .. She had a very kind way of treating them” [SRI3 (Arabic) 41-2].

On the other hand, Husein appears critical of other negative role models in his ‘apprenticeship of observation.’ He describes teachers who acted in an authoritarian manner:

“Teachers believed they had the right to force you to be silent – [they did it] in a dictator-like manner. They thought because they are simply your teachers, you then had to respect them .. Most probably, students were silent not because they were concentrating in the lesson but because they were forced to be silent. They could be disgusted with the lesson as a whole” [SRI1 (Arabic) 426-8].

He also points out that some teachers tended to ridicule students. On one of his teachers in his elementary education, he comments,

“She hurt my colleagues. She shouted at them. She once made fun of my friend because he was fat. That was not nice .. These things made me hate her. All colleagues didn't like her” [RGI1 (Arabic) 149-51].

Husein has had bad experiences with other authoritarian teachers, who sometimes even used violence against students:

“Another thing I remember about Miss Susan is that she hit students when they drove her crazy. She didn't beat like teachers; she rather fought and beat with her arms and feet like children” [AA (English) 60-2]

The positive and negative role models in Husein's 'apprenticeship of observation' have influenced his views about the kind of teacher he wants to be with his learners. Drawing upon images of former teachers in his 'apprenticeship of observation,' Husein appears to have formulated certain beliefs based on his early positive and negative teacher role models, which guide his perception of the quality of his relationship with his learners and the kind of teacher he wishes to be in his classroom. Husein has constructed from his learning experience a teacher image for himself which he wants to adopt with his learners in his classroom:

“If I want to be a civilised teacher, I need to be *friendly*. The teacher image is never the rebuking one” [RGI1 (Arabic) 62].

Asked whether he uses violence with his students, Husein replies:

“Never. I'm not convinced of it, nor am I convinced that it can give good results” [SRI3 (Arabic) 395].

Husein has also developed a set of beliefs about how teachers should deal with their students. For him, teachers ought to be “outgoing and approachable,” and

their relationship with learners “should definitely be kind and very friendly” [SSI2 (Arabic) 267]. Husein feels that his contribution to teaching lies in his approachable style of dealing with learners. He states that his teaching differs from public-school teaching in terms of the level of openness and respect he gives his students.

These beliefs have implications for the way Husein teaches and deals with his students in the classroom. Husein argues that he tries to enter his classroom with a smile on his face which he keeps throughout the lesson. He also states that he prefers encouraging rather than forcing students to do tasks or homework. He also tries to be sensitive with situations in which students do not want to speak in public and argues that:

“You can't force them to speak [if they don't want to]. It's even wrong to push them. You can encourage them instead .. I'm against insisting on things. If they want to speak, they'll do it themselves” [SR11 (Arabic) 430-3].

He also seems to be sensitive in the way he gives feedback to his students. For example, in one of his lessons, he teaches the two forms of *there was/there were* followed by singular or plural nouns [CO1]. The coursebook activity asks students to look at a picture and try to remember as many objects as possible and then tell their partners what there was or were in that picture. One student could not remember more than two objects out of the six given. Husein tells him that he had a bad memory. Watching this incident on the video, Husein notes that

A student gave only two answers out of six. I said to him: you have *bad memory*. I didn't mean it, and I usually avoid such remarks. I was a bit *uncomfortable with that* .. *Maybe it will frustrate him as a negative remark* .. *I was kidding* .. *Maybe I shouldn't have said that* [SR11 (Arabic) 177-83].

Husein regrets making such a negative remark to the student and believes that this kind of statement can be frustrating and discouraging to learners. As he believes that teachers should adopt encouraging styles of teaching in the classroom, this incident, it seems, has presented a contrasting image of the kind of teacher he aspires to be and made him feel ‘*uncomfortable*’ about what happened. Thus, based on his prior experiences as a learner when he met both positive and negative teacher attitudes and behaviours, Husein strongly believes that teachers

should adopt friendly, caring and encouraging teaching attitudes in their classrooms and try to avoid situations that might put off or discourage their learners. These beliefs seem to shape the way he deals with his learners as well as his interpretation of his own classroom practice.

5.1.6 Summary

Thus, Husein enters the teaching profession with certain beliefs that seem to have been developed during his 'apprenticeship of observation' and which appear to make impacts on his early learning-to-teach experience as a beginning teacher in his first year of teaching, acting as guides to his conceptions and classroom practices. In some instances, Husein is seen to have developed a set of espoused, opposing beliefs as a reaction to his negative prior learning experiences; nevertheless, his unconsciously-held beliefs constructed by conventional images of teachers and teaching models in his prior learning experiences seem to have a noticeable influence on his practice.

- Husein develops espoused beliefs about the process of EFL teaching that run counter to the transmission models prevalent in schools. Although he states that he teaches English communicatively, his classroom practice reflects a controlled, exercise-oriented approach within an apparent IRF sequence where student talk is minimal and only limited to providing short answers to the coursebook exercises.
- He also believes that teachers must teach from coursebooks. For him, learning is believed to be a systematic and 'synthetic' process of information accumulation that depends on the graded and gradual organisation of coursebook activities.
- He also holds beliefs about the role of EFL teachers in the teaching process. He tends to view EFL teachers as transmitters of knowledge and explainers of language information. Further, he appears to view teachers as knowledgeable people, a view which seems to affect his attitude and self-image in the classroom especially in situations where he avoids appearing doubtful about his own knowledge in front of his learners.

- As for his approach to grammar teaching, he appears to draw upon notions of teaching grammar that are mostly 'deductive' in approach and which characterise typical school teaching models, which he initially criticises. Despite his assertions to conduct grammar lessons inductively, his views of such an approach seem rather limited. He is seen to fall back on the 'default' approach in his prior learning experience in spite of his awareness of an alternative approach.
- Finally, he seems to have chosen for himself an image of the teacher who is civilised, friendly, caring and encouraging based on his beliefs about what teacher-student relationships must be like. Such beliefs have been shaped during his early school experiences in which he met both positive and negative teacher attitudes and behaviours.

5.2 Munzir

Munzir starts his teaching with previously-held beliefs about EFL teachers and the process of EFL teaching and learning. He constantly refers to his 'apprenticeship of observation' period in which he received his early school and university education and which has contributed to the formulation of a set of personal beliefs that he holds about language teaching and teachers which influence the ways in which he makes sense of his own learning-to-teach experience as a beginning EFL teacher and which have impacts on his teaching philosophies and classroom practice.

5.2.1 Munzir's beliefs and practices about the process of EFL teaching

Munzir received his early education in public-sector schools where the EFL teaching model was typically characterised by 'traditional' approaches which consisted of grammar instruction and doing the coursebook exercises. He has formulated beliefs based on his own past experiences of learning English within these teaching models and is seen to repeatedly comment on their perceived limitations, particularly in terms of the lack of focus on practice and absence of relevance to and connection with real life. His learning-to-teach experience involves attempts to counter these traditional practices and transform them into more positive practices for his learners in his classroom.

At the outset, Munzir describes how the English subject was taught at his school:

“The teacher used to say ‘open your books’ in Arabic not in English, of course .. The textbook contained grammar and reading activities but no listening or speaking activities, and if it did, teachers totally ignored these activities” [AA (English) 26-30].

The absence of speaking and listening activities in Munzir’s ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and the over-reliance on teaching grammar and reading texts both lead him to assert that:

“The English subject was as dry as dust: the English class started with a pure dictation of grammar which used to take no less than half of the time of the lesson. Then, we were told to do the exercises in the workbook by applying the ‘rules’ we had memorized” [AA (English) 42-6]

Commenting on whether he has been positively influenced by any EFL teacher in his school experience, he notes:

“None of my teachers at school was of any inspiration to me” [AA (English) 63].

He continues that he always ‘hated’ the English subject at school because teachers never focused on speaking the language or practising listening, stating that these two skills usually make students more involved and interested in the lesson than the mere process of reading texts from the book and memorising grammatical rules. On his own negative experience with the English subject as well as English teachers, he comments,

“I’ve never had a teacher who made me feel I was interested in the English lesson. The English lesson has ever been a worry to me. I didn’t like it. It was like a disease, a real disease” [SSI3 (Arabic) 265-6]

Describing English lessons as a ‘worry’ and ‘disease,’ Munzir here shows that the way English lessons were conducted in his school was not seen as desirable by students, and he ascribes this perceived lack of motivation towards learning English at school to what he describes as a “*mechanical*” [SS11 (Arabic) 107] way of delivering the content of the English lessons, which, according to him, refers to

the typical systematic approach of teaching language as structure with primary focus on a rule-governed model of teaching which focuses on knowledge of grammar and items of vocabulary.

Munzir states that these school approaches tended to largely ignore the importance of producing and practising the language, pointing out that when instances of language use existed, they were highly typical and controlled and limited solely to utterances of greetings upon the teachers' arrival at the classroom which followed the same exact model every day. He recalls one of his former teachers who never used English in her lessons except when she first entered the classroom:

“she always started by saying ‘good morning students. How are you?’ Of course we answered this greeting in a very typical way: ‘fine thank you and you? In other words, this teacher never tried to teach us whether directly or indirectly any other kinds of greetings” [AA (English) 22-5].

Clear from Munzir's comments is a tendency to view early school models of teaching in his 'apprenticeship of observation' as incapable of helping learners produce and practise English. He is quite aware of the shortcomings of these traditional methods and reports that using the language must be the ultimate aim of learning it:

“My personal experience of learning lacked what is most vital and effective in language learning: real practice of English” [AA (English) 99-101].

Asked whether he thinks his approaches to teaching have been influenced in any way by his learning experiences, he states that when influences exist, they are reactions towards what he views as negative in his early experiences as an EFL learner:

“Of course there is an influence, but this influence is a reaction. Never ever have I had a teacher who made me enjoy in the English lesson” [SSI3 (Arabic) 264-5].

He reports a disappointment to have lived eight years of primary and secondary education without being able to speak any English. He states that in his teaching he wants to make a change because he has perceived the failure of traditional

grammar-based approaches in providing any help to learners who want to learn how to speak English:

“I was learning English from the fifth grade to the Baccalaureate, but I couldn’t speak. I love the English language but I can’t speak it. I realised that it [the traditional method] failed, so, no I won’t do it” [SSI1 (Arabic) 313-5].

This reported disappointment is commented on by Broughton *et al.* (1994: 39) who argue that learning within the traditional teaching methods leads many learners to perceive a significant frustration at the moment of realising that they are not able to speak the language in real life situations and that these traditional models of teaching “have for many years produced generations of non-communicators.”

Based on his own learning experience during his ‘apprenticeship of observation,’ Munzir seems to have constructed a set of opposing beliefs which influence his perceptions and judgment and have implications on his classroom practice. Due to his perceived frustration resulted from the inability of school, grammar-based approaches to teaching English to help him speak the language as well as his reported negative feelings of ‘hate’ of and ‘boredom’ in the English lessons, Munzir seems inclined to hold countering views which appear to conflict with what he perceived as unhelpful teaching approaches in his early learning experiences in favour of ones which are more directed towards language use and encouraging oral production of English.

Munzir indicates that his own school experience with grammar-based EFL teaching has contributed to his current opposing views and beliefs about the importance of language use as opposed to language structure:

“I was a student once and I know: grammar was hated by all students. So, hang on, for me students do not want to learn, take information, copy it and go home to study it. In these two hours, they’re here to practise after all” [SRI1 (Arabic) 33-5]

These adopted beliefs about the importance of language use constructed as a reaction towards early school EFL teaching seem so powerful that they influence his perceptions of new information and concepts he is introduced to during interviews; although he points out that he is not familiar with the ELT terminology,

his discussions reveal a tendency to interpret such terms as 'communicative language teaching' and 'effective teaching' in light of his early experiences with traditional approaches and his espoused beliefs that such approaches fail to enhance learners' oral production of English.

Munzir describes communicative language teaching as one which focuses on students' production of English through interacting with students and focusing on topics which attract their attention. He perceives communicative teaching as a process where:

“students are here to speak, not to learn and do the exercises, but to practise speaking, to practise listening” [SSI1 (Arabic) 304-5].

He also defines 'effective teaching' as one in which teachers:

“lead students to use the *theory* given in the lesson and transform it into *practice*” [SSI1 (Arabic) 262-3].

He adds that 'effective teachers' are those who can help learners speak English and do oral practice in the classroom rather than extensively focus on vocabulary and grammar.

Thus, Munzir tends to view school-based EFL teaching as providing little help to learners and show a powerful inclination to counter these school practices with opposing views about the focus of EFL teaching instruction which he thinks can create more successful learning experiences. In other words, his views that EFL teaching must be more directed towards enhancing students' oral skills rather than grammatical and vocabulary information appear to have been developed mostly as a reaction to the school methods of EFL teaching which he experienced in his early formal school education. His adopted beliefs constructed as a consequence of denying early teaching models also seem to influence the ways he interprets new concepts that are raised during discussions with him.

However, these discussions with Munzir also indicate that his beliefs about the focus of classroom instruction on language use rather than structure, which have been developed as a consequence of unsuccessful experiences in his formal school education, are further strengthened and reinforced by his own informal experiences of EFL learning which appear to contribute, though less noticeably, to

the construction of the beliefs which he holds about the focus of EFL instruction. Prior to entering the EFL teaching career, and due to his passion for the English language, Munzir had been so keen on bridging the gap in his school learning experiences represented in the perceived lack of focus on oral language practice in his school experience by allowing himself opportunities to improve his own English in other ways:

“To be honest, I didn’t learn English at school. I learned English from films only and exclusively. I have improved my English as a result of long *exposure* to films .. I used to hide the *subtitles*, and a film used to take 5 hours with me because I used to replay the segments I didn’t understand” [SSI1 (Arabic) 285-7].

Munzir’s informal experience with learning English from films makes him wish to create this element of ‘exposure’ in his classroom by shifting the conception of classroom from a place where students acquire language knowledge to a place which creates opportunities for more speaking and interaction.

Thus, as a consequence of both formal and informal experiences as a learner of English, Munzir comes to believe that his own major contribution to EFL teaching lies in his endeavours to encourage speaking in his classroom and states that his classes stand in extreme contrast with school teaching in terms of

“*more speaking and more interaction with the teacher*. I try to speak with them on different things like World Cup, etc .. At school, there was no *speaking*. I remember I read and I did exercises, but I didn’t speak and teachers never thought of bringing tape recorders to the classroom” [SRI1 (Arabic) 257-9].

In his teaching, Munzir enacts practices which tend to provide a complex mixture of school-like practices that focus on explanations of grammar, usually carried out deductively, and items of vocabulary based on the coursebook in addition to other practices which are conducted in congruence with his espoused beliefs about encouraging oral production of English, moving away from typical school, coursebook-based, structure-focused approaches. More specifically, there are a few instances in which Munzir seems to act upon his beliefs about language use and to relatively encourage speaking in his lessons, though this is done

minimally due to contextual influences which he revealed in his discussions and which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Munzir's lessons contain a few incidents of uncontrolled oral participation by students that is not based on the coursebook instructions. This is particularly seen when he conducts free conversations with students at the beginning of reading activities to contextualise the reading text and prepare students for it. For example, on a reading lesson on 'How much language can you learn in a month?', Munzir introduces an open-ended discussion in which students try to participate orally with each talking about their own opinions and experiences. Extract 6 below is noted from this lesson:

EXTRACT 7

- T: Are Syrians good at learning a foreign language? [...] What do you think, Nour please? [...]
- Nour: Not good. Fine, but not good.
- T: [laughs] Why do you think? What's the reason?
- Nour: Not a specific reason. [...]
- Ahmad: Not good but not bad
- T: Ah ha. Not good, but not bad.
- Susan: Some people, I guess. Some people they can take the accent, some people cannot.
- T: In general. I'm not talking about accent
- Susan: Syrian accent is easy so we can learn English. Maybe Chinese they can't speak English. Maybe, I guess some accents ..
- T: You mean because of the Syrian language?
- Susan: Yes, we have all vowels. Some languages like Spain they don't have some sounds. I don't know.
[...]
- Firas: [talking about Japanese people] They don't want to learn the English language because they don't like people America because the world war [...]
- T: What if you went to .. a country with a strange language, let's say Russia. Okay. ... If you went to Russia for 1 month. Only 1 month. How much do you think you can learn in 1 month? ..
- Firas: Fifty per cent.
- T: Fifty per cent? Then make it 2 months – one hundred per cent. What do you think?
- Firas: My uncle went to the Russia and came 1 month and speak Russian very well.
- Susan: But maybe he is studying at the same time. Maybe if I go to England and study a course I learn faster.
[...]

- Riyad: In turkey I went 1 month I can speak because they have more words in Arabic and English.
- T: Ah, and your first language is Arabic then maybe one month is enough, [...] Can you ask about the time in Turkish?
- Firas: Saat kaç. Saat kaç. [...]
- T: Do understand what people speak there?
- Riyad: No, because they speak quickly.
[...]
- T: [shows a page in the book] okay let's look at the picture here.
[CO1 (min 50:00- 58:32)].

This extract is one example of several other examples on uncontrolled discussions in Munzir's lessons. Munzir is repeatedly seen to encourage similar free, open-ended conversations particularly at the beginning of some reading activities. Although the overall structure of his lessons is coursebook-based and exercise-oriented rather than one which is specifically targeted towards the enhancement of students' oral skills, the free classroom discussions, like the one above, which he sometimes tries to encourage can be an indication of the influence of his beliefs about the importance of focusing EFL instruction on speaking skills on his classroom practice. This is clearly seen when Munzir indicates that these parts of his lessons are usually the most successful in his teaching. Commenting on the above example, Munzir appears to be pleased with the amount of speaking that has taken place in this part asserting that:

"We talked before *reading* for at least 5 minutes as an introduction. As I told you students come here to practise speaking at the end of the day. They talked well [a good amount] when they talked about their personal experiences" [SRI1 (Arabic) 49-51].

Implied in his comment is a reference that he has achieved his mission in helping learners practise some speaking. He also implies that when learners talk about their personal experiences, there is more chance for language practice to be stimulated in the lesson. This is quite consistent with Swan's (1990: 94) notion of communicative interaction when he asserts that "There are times when the same language practice can take place more interestingly and more directly if the students are simply asked to talk about themselves." Munzir seems satisfied with these free conversations in his lessons and alludes that he wishes he could continue focusing all his teaching on enhancing students' oral practice, as this is

what constitutes learning a language, for him. However, a set of contextual factors seem to get him locked into a model which he does not favour, and hence his experience of learning to teach involves him trying to effect a balance between what he believes about the importance of oral practice and what is required from him by the institutional management, an idea which will be discussed in depth in the next chapter and which will show how Munzir experiences an on-going frustration due to his inability to continue teaching following the model he sees as appropriate due to a number of institutional constraints which inhibit his full engagement with his own beliefs in his classroom.

5.2.2 Munzir's beliefs and practices about the use of coursebooks

Munzir holds certain beliefs about the use of coursebooks in the EFL teaching process. He continues to view school EFL teaching methods as 'traditional' and unsuccessful in terms of their inability to equip students with what he sees as the most vital element of learning the language, i.e., oral practice, due to their overly structured and controlled way of delivering English lessons which is solely based on the coursebook instructions and exercises. He appears to have developed certain beliefs as a reaction to the school coursebook-based approaches, which make an impact on his personal theories of EFL teaching and his preferred teaching approaches with his learners. Considering his stated approach which he favours about oral language practice and his views of teaching as creating an atmosphere for classroom interaction that can be maintained with a focus on learners' interests, it does not seem surprising when he holds beliefs that run counter to the over reliance on the highly structured designs of coursebooks in teaching. This is consistent with Thornbury and Meddings' (2001) claim that a view which sees language as a medium of communication that is best fostered with a focus on learners' interests and needs rather than nuggets of grammatical knowledge normally assumes that the argument for using coursebooks is not a very strong one.

Munzir expresses disapproval of coursebook-based approaches to teaching English in his prior learning experiences and states that:

“Never was an English lesson different from a history, philosophy, or even math lesson” [AA (English) 41-2].

He implies that English was seen as a standard school subject which was delivered to learners from the coursebook. Believing in the importance of oral language practice in the EFL teaching process, Munzir appears to refuse viewing English as a subject and rejects coursebook-based methods on the basis that they inhibit spontaneous learner-initiated production of language. This claim is actually supported by Thornbury and Meddings (2001: 11) who suggest that:

“Maybe other subjects – like geography or history, or mathematics – do need textbooks, but we’re not sure that language does. For a start, language is not a subject – it is a medium. Giving language subject status by basing the teaching of it around books is a sure way of paralyzing its capacity to convey messages.”

Munzir had negative experiences with teachers in his school who followed the coursebook slavishly. He describes one of his English teachers in his school as a ‘bad teacher’ on the basis that his lessons were merely consisting of “open your books, read, do exercises” [SSI3 (Arabic) 273]. He comments on school English teachers:

“they never gave any introduction, though the coursebook had pictures which are very important, but they never referred to them .. Everything was *by the coursebook literally*. The book said something, so they did it” [SSI1 (Arabic) 98-102].

Clear from Munzir's comments is a tendency to view EFL teaching methods that are strictly based on coursebooks as unsuccessful, providing little help to learners who wish to broaden and strengthen their oral skills rather than merely do coursebook activities. He appears to have formulated certain beliefs that run counter to his negative experiences with coursebook-based approaches to EFL teaching and learning, hoping to create more opportunities for oral practice and free classroom discussions.

As a reaction towards traditional coursebook-based approaches in his ‘apprenticeship of observation’ as well as the passive role which teachers are doomed to within these teaching models, Munzir have constructed a set of opposing views about EFL teaching and teachers. He believes that EFL lessons

and EFL teachers need to consider alternative ways and additional components and materials in their teaching rather than depending solely on coursebook-based teaching methods:

“You [as a teacher] should live for the language .. You should recommend students a book [outside the curriculum], for example, talk with them about a film, ask them to listen to a song, refer them to an internet site .. but school teachers never do that. They just want to cover the curriculum and go.” [SSI3 (Arabic) 275-7]

Munzir continues that such a teaching tradition as the coursebook-based model of teaching renders the teaching profession the most boring and passive of all professions and that when teachers teach by the coursebook and never talk about anything else such as topics based on personal experiences, the teaching process becomes overly passive. He seems to have developed certain beliefs about EFL teachers who, for him, need to act in ways that make EFL learning a more active and lively process. He asserts that the traditional coursebook-based methods make

“students have a very bad idea about the teacher: a boring person whose life is miserable and who’d better go and commit suicide .. Teachers should give you the impression that they are like other people who have interests and hobbies and who read and watch films and have personal *activities* [RGI (Arabic) 27-9].

Munzir here indicates that teaching is a profession that involves important aspects other than doing the coursebook activities. He holds beliefs that EFL teachers need to talk about different topics in the EFL lessons, including their own personal interests and experiences, rather than carrying out lessons from the coursebooks. At university, he seems to have had some positive experiences with teachers who conducted lectures and seminars without following a certain syllabus but rather based on their own preparation of supplementary materials and a focus on open, uncontrolled talks and discussions as they develop without a strict plan which were directed towards getting students more involved in the learning process due to a focus on different topics from real-life situations. Talking about one of his university teachers, Munzir comments,

“We knew a lot of things about his personal life: his marital status, his likes and dislikes, his best friends, his favourite singer, actor, music, café, restaurant, soap opera...etc .. No textbook was assigned. He used to play his lectures by the ear .. This style of teaching made me wait impatiently for Professor Sami’s lectures” [AA (English) 77-83].

This comment involves a belief which Munzir holds about the importance for the learning process to integrate elements other than coursebooks. His remark that he was eager for his teacher’s lectures because they included discussions on different topics based on personal experiences and “No textbook was assigned” reflects his tendency to view the learning process as one which goes beyond delivering lessons from coursebooks and which can turn into an effective, more involving process when such topics other than those in the coursebooks are raised and discussed. This belief also seems to guide his conception of the successful teacher. He believes that:

“basically the successful teacher is one who doesn't always resort to the coursebook. Any working method other than the coursebook is also fine .. I don't like the typical method of ‘okay open your books and let's go’” [SSI1 (Arabic) 136-141].

He continues that the successful teacher is one who has a choice to determine what should be covered in the coursebook and who should primarily aim at getting learners involved in the learning process and creating opportunities for language use rather than finishing the curriculum. They can freely choose what is useful in the coursebook and skip and change what they think is not very relevant. He asserts that:

“students shouldn't feel that they are doing one coursebook exercise after the other with the teacher saying this is right and this is wrong. The teacher, too, shouldn't be so constrained. If he was, student learning will be constrained, too” [SSI2 (Arabic) 10-11].

Believing in the importance for EFL teaching to encourage language-productive discussions, Munzir here implies that, in order for teachers to foster more effective student learning, they should be flexible in planning and willing to move away from the coursebook if need be. Embedded in saying that coursebooks constrain teachers, which in turn constrain student learning, is a belief that lessons which are

tightly planned deny opportunities for spontaneous, free discussions and language-productive activities. Munzir refers to this fact stating that teachers should be given more choice on what tasks and activities should be carried out in the EFL lesson. His comment also indicates that he holds beliefs similar to Van Lier's (1988) opinion that "it is predominantly during unplanned sequences that we can see learners employ initiative and use language creatively" (p. 215).

However, classroom data show Munzir adopting a strict adherence to a coursebook-based strategy in his teaching. Apart from the brief free, open-ended discussions, which he introduces to contextualise reading passages, as the previous section has showed, Munzir never deviates from the coursebook and tends to focus all his teaching on the coursebook activities and exercises. Each of his observed lessons shows him holding the book and reading from it all the time, with more than twenty activities from the coursebook covered in each lesson. The overwhelming majority of time spent in these lessons consists of doing the coursebook exercises with Munzir reading instructions from the coursebook word by word and students giving brief answers in turn to be validated and written up by him on the whiteboard [CO1], [CO2] and [CO3]. Although Munzir shows resistance to this kind of EFL coursebook-based teaching model, he seems to be perpetuating this model in his classroom teaching, even though this conflicts with his own espoused beliefs that he has constructed as a reaction to this model in his early learning experiences. In fact, discussions with Munzir reveal that he experiences further frustration due to his inability to continue his teaching following the model he wishes to adopt in his classroom. More specifically, Munzir finds himself locked within coursebook-based teaching models and made to continue his teaching following these models citing a number of contextual constraints that work against his preferred way of conducting EFL lessons. These contextual constraints unfold on both the institution and classroom levels and are going to be fully uncovered and discussed in the next chapter.

5.2.3 Munzir's beliefs and practices about the role of EFL teachers

During his prior learning experiences, Munzir observed different teachers and teaching styles and has developed beliefs about the role of EFL teachers in the EFL classroom.

As the account above shows, Munzir had experiences with teachers in his school who taught English lessons by the coursebook as the only source of information. He appears critical of this kind of EFL teaching asserting that:

“Our teachers thought the only source for teaching was the coursebook and their own explanation of grammar. We were expected to memorise the grammatical rules and new words, and teachers never tried to encourage us to speak English” [SSI1 (Arabic) 297-99].

He also comments on how his former teachers were viewed by students:

“We looked at teachers as people who know everything. If we had questions, we asked them. They didn't even tell us to check the dictionary for example” [SSI1 (Arabic) 208-9].

Munzir has developed opposing views to the prevalent teachers' roles as knowledge providers and transmitters of coursebook information and tends to see the role of EFL teachers in a way congruent with his espoused beliefs, i.e., in terms of mainly encouraging learners' oral participation in the classroom. He asserts that the role of EFL teachers:

“is about getting students to speak. It's not about knowledge, no. The teacher role is to create an atmosphere of *interaction* in the classroom .. but giving knowledge? I don't think so. If it was so, students could buy a book where they find better and more credible information” [SSI1 (Arabic) 209-12].

He further describes the role of EFL teachers adding that:

“the teacher must encourage students. It's not about giving them knowledge, but about encouraging them to work on their English language and to create interests in them and encourages them to go back home and watch a film, for example, and switch the subtitles into English rather than Arabic, and to show interest in their learning and make them speak” [RGI (Arabic) 207-9].

However, despite these opposing views, which he holds about the ‘traditional’ role of teachers as providers of knowledge, Munzir is sometimes seen to evaluate other former teachers on the basis of the knowledge they possessed and tends to criticise them when they showed lack of knowledge or made language mistakes. Talking about one of his past teachers at university, he comments:

“She didn’t have the knowledge which she was supposed to give us. Sometimes students corrected her. She was not so knowledgeable about the information she gave us. I once heard her say *suburb* [with the stress on the 2nd syllable]. I was unhappy to hear that” [RGI (Arabic) 204-5].

Commenting on other teachers at school, he continues:

“When I was doing my Baccalaureate, I was watching movies [at home], but didn’t have a dictionary at that time. I remember I asked my teacher many questions about new words, but he didn’t know. Miss Mary was also like that. I remember I asked her about the word Keefa, which I came across in a TV programme, she said ‘how should I know?’” [RGI (Arabic) 49-52].

It seems that the conventional teachers’ role as knowledge providers (e.g. “she didn’t have the knowledge which she was supposed to give us”) and expected image as knowledgeable people (e.g. “I asked my teacher many questions about new words, but he didn’t know”) in Munzir’s prior learning experiences seem to have influenced his perceptions and the ways he evaluates his former teachers in retrospect. As his comments show, he seems “unhappy” when teachers make mistakes and tends to expect them to have answers to his questions.

However, Munzir’s prior learning experiences do not only influence his perceptions about the role of EFL teachers as knowledge providers and their image as knowledgeable people, but also appear to shape his own role as a ‘controller’ of his classroom, which is another typical role played by teachers in Syrian public-sector schools.

Although he seems to hold beliefs about encouraging free, uncontrolled discussions and succeeds in introducing these at some points of his lessons, Munzir, for the most part, appears in complete charge of his classroom activities as well as of what students do. This is clear in the way he talks about how students need to act in his lessons:

“Students have to appreciate the lesson. When they are in the lesson, it means whatever I ask them to do, they have to do. They can’t be assigned to do something, and then start a chat with their colleagues as if they didn’t take me seriously. These things happen. Even when you try to impose respect, you encounter people who don’t care” [SSI2 (Arabic) 23-6].

He continues:

“I particularly hate it when I have a group of friends in the class. Sometimes to make them listen I snap my fingers or tap loudly on the table. When they don’t respond, I get annoyed .. It’s very rude” [SSI3 (Arabic) 50-52].

An example from his lessons is noted in Extract 7 below, in which he appears to be in charge of who should speak and when:

EXTRACT 8

- T: Let’s go to page 135. Um 5C.
[Students are looking at their books].
- T: [holding and showing his book] Of course at home, you can have a quick look at this [snaps his fingers]
[students look at him]
- T: .. There are very important tips. Okay? ... Let’s do exercise B together. [Reading from the book] Complete the sentence with *have to*, *don’t have to* or *mustn’t*. okay? Either *have to*, *don’t have to* or *mustn’t*. Don’t use *must*. For example, we *don’t have to* work tomorrow. It’s a holiday. Let’s start with number one with Nour please. You
- Nour: You *mustn’t* touch those animals. They’re dangerous.
- T: You *mustn’t* touch those animals. They’re dangerous. Number two, Ghena please.
- Ghena: We *have to* take the bus to school
- T: Yes, we *have to*. It’s too far. Okay? We *have to* take the bus to school. Three. Walid, please.
- Walid: You *don’t have to* pay
- T: You *don’t have to* pay. Number four. Ahmad, please.
- Ahmad: It’s late. I *have to go* now.
- T: It’s late. I *have to go* now. Susan please, five.
- Susan: We *must*
- T: No *must*. *Have to*, *don’t have to* or *mustn’t*
- Susan: Sorry. We *don’t have to* keep the door open. The cats will come in.
- T: you *don’t have to*?
- Susan: We *have to*
- T: No. You *mustn’t* leave the door open.

Susan: Why? Maybe I have a cat out.
 [Students laugh]
 T: It's you. Only you.
 Susan: Why? What's the problem. I have a cat. She will come in.
 T: But this one is like to open the door, and cats will come from the street.
 Susan: Yes, I love that.
 T: You only okay? You *mustn't*. Six Nizar please.
 [CO1 (min 28:38-31-20)]

Extract 8 above is an example from one of Munzir's lessons. Munzir seems to decide not only when students speak, but also what they say. Munzir chooses the student who is required to talk, and students expect him to say their names and the number of the sentence in the coursebook before they provide their answers. Apart from the few brief discussions that Munzir introduces at the beginning of reading lessons, this pattern is followed in Munzir's lessons noticeably, and students do not seem to talk if they are not given a signal by him. Munzir also seems to insist on his opinion when Susan provides an alternative perspective to the sentence in question. In fact, watching himself teaching this lesson on the video later, he expresses being unhappy with Susan's participation, describing her as a 'talkative' 'silly' student:

"I find dealing with some students difficult, as some of them are talkative. For example, this girl keeps interrupting me, and she continues talking while I'm talking. Even other students sometimes try to stop her saying: hey hey. Can you imagine?" [SRI1 (Arabic) 50-1].

"I hated her. There's nothing personal, but she's silly, and I hate silliness. She wants to attract attention. I don't like silly people. She made me annoyed" [SRI1 (Arabic) 52-3].

Munzir's lessons are also predominantly teacher-fronted, which is a typical position for the 'controller' teacher. In the three lessons observed, which last about 290 minutes altogether, Munzir is seen to move around the class only two times, and he does not seem to be checking student work or listening to their talk. The majority of his lesson time is spent while he is standing at the front of the class holding his book or writing up on the whiteboard at times [CO1], [CO2] and [CO3]. He further argues that he never sits down in his lessons because this will lead him to lose respect and he wants to be observable and be the centre of students' attention:

“I’m against teachers sitting down [in the lesson] .. When you sit down, you become on an equal footing with students. Students wouldn’t be able to distinguish you from other students. You feel you lose your respect. I feel so. I think you will no longer attract their attention no matter how loud your voice is. You become equal with them. However, when you stand up, you control them a bit. I don’t mean real controlling, but it’s like ‘come on. Look here. Try to concentrate.’ You attract their attention and make them concentrate” [RGI (Arabic) 67-71].

Thus, Munzir, by making such comments, reveals a tendency to act as a controller in his classroom by refusing to be on an equal footing with students and claiming that he would lose respect in students’ eyes if he sat down during the lesson. Such an attitude that focuses on imposing respect and being the centre of the classroom is typical of public-school teachers and teaching philosophies and might have been developed by Munzir during his contact with his former teachers during his apprenticeship of observation. In this period, he also seems to have developed beliefs about the role of teachers as knowledge providers. These beliefs are revealed when he criticises his former teachers for not being able to answer his questions or for making language mistakes. Images of his learning history also seem to have impacts on his classroom practice in terms of controlling the classroom exchange with learners. This can be seen when he decides who should speak and when or when he does not welcome alternative perspectives from his students.

5.2.4 Munzir’s beliefs and practices about the teaching of grammar

Munzir describes his prior learning experiences with school teaching approaches that focus on reading and grammar asserting that these two aspects characterise public school teaching and tend to turn learning into a passive process:

“School means boredom. This is it .. There’s nothing to attract you to be honest. It was all *grammar-reading, grammar-reading, grammar-reading*. They killed us: *grammar, grammar, grammar*. Give me a break” [RGI (Arabic) 92-5].

He contends that these grammar-based teaching models fail to prepare students to survive real-life situations and comments on their limitations in helping students learn English:

“students didn’t benefit. They didn’t learn English. They were learning a *set of symbols called English*. It was like ‘okay you have *grammar* now. Put a *subject*. Put a *verb*. Try to memorise that we use *recently, lately, already, just, never* with *present perfect*. If you see them, use *present perfect*” [SSI1 (Arabic) 93-6].

Munzir indicates that learning was about being given a set of rules that describe English in terms of identifiable codes taught in isolation and delivered separate from practice, and the focus has ever been on describing language as structure rather than a means of communication. He appears to hold opinions about his prior learning experiences which correspond to White’s (1988: 8) descriptions of traditional EFL teaching that “knowledge of the rule is regarded as being more important than application and the focus is on teaching about the language.” He further comments that learning English was expected to take place by memorising these rules and doing exercises on them. He seems to disapprove of these early teaching models and hold views congruent with Broughton’s *et al.* (1994: 39) portrayal of traditional teaching methods that, instead of encouraging speaking and focusing on meaning, “the students are smothered with linguistic information, rules with examples, its paradigms .. and related exercises.”

Munzir has developed a set of opposing beliefs. He believes that the focus must be on the practice of grammar. He asserts that:

“I was a student once and I know: *grammar* was hated by all students. So, hang on, for me students do not want to learn, take information, copy it and go home to study it. In these two hours, they’re here to practise after all” [SRI1 (Arabic) 33-5] [Quoted again].

Explaining his own approach, he argues:

“I try to teach *grammar*, but unconsciously. I don’t want them [students] to realise that they are learning *grammar* in terms of rule no.1, rule no.2, rule no.3. In this way there would be a separation from practice .. I give *grammar* indirectly using pictures and examples so you feel there’s something acquired in your brain, but unconsciously [SSI1 (Arabic) 307-9].

He also believes that EFL teaching is least effective when it follows this model, which he observed at school:

“Okay students. This is our lesson today. Please use *subject plus verb to be plus main verb plus –ing*. To make it *negative*, we use *not*. To make it *question*, we invert it. Please, *do your homework and see you next week*” [SSI1 (Arabic) 265-7].

He continues:

“I provide a context like a story or pictures until they get involved and become ready to deal with the new grammatical point ... I use examples. I explain the grammatical point through plenty of examples .. to move them away from theory. Anything theoretical must be turned into practice” [SSI1 (Arabic) 125-9].

However, classroom data reveals a great deal of concentration on grammar taught in an explicit manner, with a noticeable concentration on the use of grammatical meta-language. Extract 8 from one of Munzir’s lessons is noted, in which he teaches the form of *wh*-questions with or without auxiliaries:

EXTRACT 9

- T: Let’s start with question number one. Yaser please.
Yaser: Which song did Robbie Williams sing with Nicole Kidman?
T: [Writes the question and says each word he writes]. Of course it’s a question. Please check ‘*did*’ [puts a circle around ‘*did*’] and ‘*sing*’ [puts a circle around ‘*sing*’]. [Reads the question again]. Question number two. Fuad please.
Fuad: Who sang ‘I can’t get you out of my head’?
T: [Writes the question and says each word he writes]. It’s a name of a song. Please check this. Who *sang* [puts a circle around ‘*sang*’].
[Reads the question again]. What’s the difference between these two questions? Yes please [referring to Nour]
Nour: In the first sentence ask for umm. In the second sentence ask for subject.
T: Who sang ‘I can’t get you out of my head’? Let’s say the answer is Britney Spears.
Nour: Whereas the first one, the
T: Ok the question is about what? [reads the question again]. Object or subject?
Ss. Object.
T: Object. Because guys .. [reads the question]. We say Robbie Williams sang let’s say ‘*imagine*,’ a name of a song. Let’s write it here. [He writes *Robbie Williams sang ‘imagine’*] It’s a name of a song. [reads the question again]. Where’s the verb?
Ss. *Sang*.
T: *Sang* is the verb. [underlines ‘*sang*’ and writes V underneath] Subject?

Ss. Robbie Williams
T: [underlines '*Robbie Williams*' and writes S underneath].
Object?
Ss: '*imagine*'
T: '*imagine*' is the object. And here the question is about the
object. [points to the word '*imagine*']. That's why we say 'which
song *did* [loudly]. We don't say 'which song sang Robbie
Williams'? No. We use what? [points to '*did*'].

Ss. Auxiliary.
T: Which song *did* [stress] Robbie Williams sing? The answer is
imagine. The question is subject or object?

Ss. Object
T: Object question, clear?
Ss. Clear. [...]
T: Here's an object question because the answer is *imagine*. The
question is about the object. So we use an auxiliary and the
main verb. [reads question again]. But look at this question
[points to the other question]. Who sang 'I can't get you out of
head?' Let's say

Ss: Britney Spears.
T: Britney Spears. [T writes *Britney sang 'I can't get you out of my
head*] Subject?

Ss. *Sang*
T: [shouts] subject?
Ss: *Britney*.
T: verb?
Ss. *Sang*.
T: Object?
Ss. *I can't get you out of my head*
T: And the question is about what? is about the person. That's
why we say *who sang*. We don't say *who did sing? Who sang 'I
can't get you out of my head'*? The answer is *Britney*. *Britney
sang 'I can't get you out of my head.'* So, with object questions,
we use an auxiliary, but with subject questions, we don't use
an auxiliary [...]
[CO3 (min 47:18-52:14)]

This extract offers an example of Munzir's teaching while he deals with a certain grammatical point (i.e. making *wh-* questions). Even though he initially indicates that he tries to use plenty of examples so that students acquire the grammatical information 'unconsciously', this extract shows that there is only one example used for each case (i.e. subject questions and object questions) where the focus is on explaining the rule and linking it with the single example rather than on its use; students' practice seems missing despite Munzir's comments that the focus of grammar must be on practice rather than theory. It seems that Munzir here reverts

to the school-like approaches to grammar teaching which he observed during his prior learning experiences and which might have unconsciously influenced his classroom practice. Despite his espoused beliefs that grammar must be taught 'unconsciously' through examples with a focus on practice rather than theory, his classroom approach to grammar teaching seems to concentrate a great deal on teaching the grammatical rules with little evidence of any focus on practice to understand the rules.

5.2.5 Munzir's beliefs and practices about student-teacher relationships

As Chapter 2 shows, learners in the Syrian educational system look at their teachers with reverence and are expected to show both respect and obedience. Teachers, too, impose formal relationships with their own learners and expect them to show adequate attitudes of devotion. They can also apply corporal punishment in situations of students' misbehaviour or negligence of homework.

Munzir appears critical of formal student-teacher relationships that he perceived at school, but reveals a tendency, in his accounts, to appreciate its importance and insist on it with his learners.

Describing how teachers treated the students in his school, Munzir comments:

"Honestly the experiences that put me off were related to punishment. I remember my teacher in both the fifth and sixth grades to make us kneel down to her as a punishment. I used to ignore that English teacher during the lesson as much as possible in order not to be punished or rather "humiliated". Of course, that had a horrible effect on my learning experience of English at the time. In her classes I used to be as passive as a desk. I even developed both hatred and fear of English subject" [AA (English) 104-9].

Munzir criticises how a former teacher in his school kept her distance with learners:

"She was such a mean character .. She was like 'look, you're a student, and I'm a teacher' .. I mean she put boundaries like 'I'm your teacher, so you'd better behave" [RGI (Arabic) 77-80].

On the contrary, he seems to approve of other teachers who did not insist on such boundaries and sometimes accepted jokes by students:

“Mr. Rafi wasn’t like this. We saw him in the streets. We saw him as a *person*. He greeted us, and asked ‘how are you?’ You don’t feel he was a teacher” [RGI (Arabic) 75-6].

He continues:

“We had Armenian students in our school, and in Armenian Rapi with *p* means ‘teacher.’ So we sometimes joked with him and called him Rapi. His real name is Rafi .. He accepted it [the joke] and took it with a smile .. You feel he jokes, he laughs, he’s flexible” [RGI (Arabic) 82-6].

Although Munzir appreciates how his teacher appeared ‘as a *person*’ who greeted and talked with students when they saw him outside the classroom, his accounts show that he seems to be against these outside-class talks with his students:

“Perhaps I don’t put boundaries [with students] inside the classroom, but outside, that’s it .. I mean during the break, I don’t chat with them .. To be honest *they’ll know too much about you*. This shouldn’t happen. I like to put some boundary because some students act silly. There must be a kind of awe towards the teacher – respect and awe .. not an awe, but there should be an *aura* around the teacher, like a halo. I believe this is very important [SSI4 (Arabic) 116-22].

Such a comment shows that Munzir, in his way of dealing with learners, tends to adopt a teacher attitude that contradicts with his stated opinions about teachers who acted flexibly, accepted jokes and talked with students outside the classroom. He also seems to want to leave a distance between himself and his learners, like some of his former school teachers did, and asserts that he likes to put boundaries to create respect and awe in the students’ eyes.

Munzir seems so obsessed with the idea of imposing respect on his learners that he tends to tell them unreal facts about himself in an attempt to gain their respect:

“I never tell students I was born in 1988, but rather 1984” [SR11 (Arabic) 211].

He believes that he would lose students’ respect if they realised that he is the same age as they are or even younger:

“This would reduce their feelings of respect towards me .. This in turn might affect everything. They might not do their homework or study or show interest. If I tell them ‘*don’t speak in Arabic*’, they might not take me seriously. Yes yes don’t be surprised. So, I avoid these situations” [SR11 (Arabic) 212-3].

On the level of friendliness with learners, he comments:

“In my opinion, you shouldn’t be so much friends with the students. It’s wrong” [SSI2 (Arabic) 14].

He continues:

“The teacher should make students respect him no matter how old they are .. sometimes I meet students at the age of 50, but I make them respect me. I make them, when they see me, stand up to shake hands – not because I’m more important than him, but because sorry in these two hours, if the student doesn’t respect me, the lesson is ruined” [SSI2 (Arabic) 15-7].

Thus, although Munzir appears rather critical of the formal way his former teachers dealt with their students, he reveals a tendency to enact similar practices with his students. This can be seen in the way he prefers to deal with his students outside the classroom, his tendency to put boundaries between himself and students and his reluctance to reveal information about himself in order not to lose their respect for him. This can be an indication of the influence of the former teachers’ images and early teaching models which he received in the past on his current conceptions and actions as a beginning teacher in the present.

5.2.6 Summary

Munzir’s early experience as a beginning EFL teacher in the first year of teaching is guided by a set of personal beliefs which he holds about different aspects of EFL teaching and learning and EFL teachers. These beliefs have been formulated during his ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and seem to exert influences on his early experience of learning to teach.

- Munzir holds beliefs about the process of EFL teaching and strongly believes that English lessons should focus on developing students’ oral language use rather than ‘smothering’ them with linguistic knowledge that is based on grammar explanations and doing exercises. His classroom

practice shows him partially enacting practices according to his espoused beliefs which he developed as a reaction to his early negative experiences as a learner. This is clear when he occasionally initiates free, uncontrolled discussions with learners, especially at the beginning of reading lessons.

- He also seems to support teaching models that break away from coursebook-centered methods and holds beliefs that these methods can inhibit teachers' and learners' ability to engage in free, language-productive activities. Again, these beliefs have been formulated as a reaction to his negative experiences with coursebook-based models of teaching. However, his classroom practice reveals that his lessons are based, to a large extent, on the use of coursebooks.
- As for his beliefs about the role of EFL teachers, he seems to have been influenced by the typical images from his prior learning experiences in terms of viewing teachers as knowledge providers and role models for correct language performance, despite reporting opposing opinions. He also seems to have developed a controlling attitude in his classroom. This can be seen during his language exchange with his learners in the classroom when he appears in charge of the class and activity, especially in terms of who should speak at any one time or when he insists on his opinion when given an alternative perspective by students on the studied language structure in question.
- Munzir also holds beliefs about the teaching of grammar that have been developed as a reaction to the public-sector school models he witnessed in the past. However, these espoused beliefs are rarely reflected in his practice. Although he states that grammar should be taught through examples where the focus is on practice rather than theory, his classroom practice shows his tendency to teach grammar as it was taught in his 'apprenticeship of observation' where the focus was mainly on the explanation of grammatical rules and students' practice was rare.
- Finally, Munzir appears critical of the formal relationships between teachers and students in his apprenticeship of observation and approves of some former teachers who were flexible and friendly. However, in his relationship

with his learners, he appears more influenced by the typical images of the teacher that were prevalent in his past schooling and seems to insist on keeping his distance with his students and rejecting to be friends with them fearing that this might lead to him losing respect in their eyes.

5.3 Iman

Iman's learning-to-teach experience as a beginning teacher in the first year draws upon her past learning experiences at public-sector schools and university. Iman attended the first years of her primary education in a state school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where her father had a job contract. She then moved back to Aleppo, Syria when she was eleven years old. There, she completed her secondary and higher education in public-sector schools and the University of Aleppo. These two different educational school contexts offer two contrasting pictures in Iman's prior learning experiences and provide insights into her current experience of learning to teach.

5.3.1 Iman's beliefs and practices about the process of EFL teaching

Iman holds beliefs about the process of EFL teaching that seem to be adopted as a reaction to her prior learning experiences as a former school and university student.

Iman recalls feelings of 'boredom' and 'dullness' when she describes what EFL teaching was generally like and how teachers taught English in her school in Syria:

"they [teachers] always had complete freedom to do whatever they want. So, they could decide if the learning experience had to be interesting and fun or dull and boring. It seemed that they always chose the second one. Mostly, school teachers used grammar-translation method. That is why their lessons were dull and useless ... Also, memorization was a must if I want to get high marks" [AA (English) 10-5].

She continues:

"For example, grammatical rules had to be memorized since they were given the same way as mathematical equations. [A] Vocabulary [item] was also seen not as a concept to be comprehended but as a word to be memorized with its two meanings, the Arabic and the English one" [AA (English) 16-19].

Iman views the process of EFL teaching in her school experience as 'dull' and 'boring' due to the extensive focus on grammar and translation as well as on the process of memorising grammatical rules and items of vocabulary. Such a teaching model seems to have affected her attitude towards learning when she was at school:

"As a student, I found it stupid to be like a parrot. I'm a human being who wants to think, understand and apply what I learn in my real life. That is why I used to keep silent, not participate or do homework ... This made me [seem as] a lazy and stupid student ... I was seen as a failure during my school years" [AA (English) 21-7].

Iman indicates that the school language teaching methods with their reliance on memorisation lacked a focus on language learning that serves real-life situations. She adds that the main focus was on teaching for the exam:

"It wasn't important to comprehend. After all, it was all about who can get high marks and who can get a high GPA [Grade Point Average]" [SRI1 (Arabic) 292-3].

She further asserts that:

"Before college I never had the chance to fully develop my English language" [AA (English) 85-6].

Therefore, Iman decided to join a private language centre in the past where she could improve her English and feel the enjoyment of learning without the pressure of final exams:

"Taking English courses in private centres gave me more power and made learning English more fun for me. Taking English courses was just like taking a cold shower in a very hot day, refreshing and energizing. English wasn't taught to pass examinations anymore. The goal was to raise my proficiency" [AA (English) 160-3].

Iman also states that she has been influenced by one of her former university teachers, who, she argues, had come with teaching styles different from other teachers she had encountered. She states that in his lessons, he focused on learning for real-life situations and made links between the materials he taught and certain incidents that occurred in his life, which made learning enjoyable for her:

“You know normally lectures are all theory. This teacher gives you examples from real life. The *fun* is back ... For example, he told us a story that happened with his wife [when they were in the US] to *show you the importance of knowing phonetics*. His wife entered a supermarket to buy water. She said ‘*I need water*’, but nobody understood. After some time, they said ‘*Ah you need water*’ [with a rolled /r/]. Then he commented ‘if you go to the UK, you will find a yet different pronunciation’. So, he was connecting things with real life, which made me very interested. This is just a simple example, but everything he taught was in this method” [SRI1 (Arabic) 200-10].

She continues,

“He teaches you what you will need and use in your life. You finish your college having the knowledge needed for your life. Others give you theory and boring stuff .. I used to attend Dr Tarek’s lectures just to have *fun* .. I wanted to learn from his teaching style that was all *fun*” [RGI (Arabic) 231-6].

Iman holds beliefs that appear to have been adopted as a consequence of her positive experience with her university teacher as well as her rejection of the old school practices. Her accounts about the process of EFL teaching revolve around ‘making learning fun’ and ‘focusing on real-life situations.’

For example, she appears to appreciate the importance of amalgamating learning with enjoyment in her teaching:

“For me, the most important thing is when *they* [students] *have fun*. This is my opinion. I personally think that if there’s no enjoyment in the lesson, it’s worthless no matter how much information is presented” [SSI1 (Arabic) 56-8].

She continues:

“This is exactly as a consequence of the role played by our schools. I always thought that if I was to teach instead of my school teachers, I’d make it all *fun*. This is the most important thing to me. If I don’t create *fun*, I’ll be like my old teachers, and I might give up teaching” [SRI1 (Arabic) 75-6].

She comments that in her teaching, her priorities now are:

“to make my students interested in my lessons by involving them and giving them some space to express themselves. I can say my motto is edutainment (education + entertainment)” [AA (Arabic) 72-4].

Iman also has opinions of how successful teachers teach. Asked about her conceptions of the 'successful teacher,' she replies:

"The successful teacher is two things. First, education and entertainment – recently they've been combined as edutainment. This is essential. It has to be there. Without *fun*, it [learning] is pointless in my opinion ... The second thing is to teach students the use of language, not something theoretical ... I think yes these two things – for students to learn how to use the language and to get it through fun" [SSI1 (Arabic) 220-6].

Iman's classroom practice and lesson planning seem to reflect her espoused beliefs about making learning fun and focusing on learning for real-life situations. In her lessons, Iman seems to introduce games and supplementary materials which she believes create enjoyment or focus on using English in real-life situations.

An example can be seen when she teaches a vocabulary lesson. Knowing that the month of Ramadan is now approaching its end, she decides to teach her students vocabulary related to Eid Al-Fitr festival. So, she starts a brief discussion about what Muslims normally do in Eid and elicits some answers from students:

EXTRACT 10

- T: What do you think of Eid?
S1: Everyone is happy.
T: Everyone is happy, and what about children?
S1: They have a lot of money and new clothes.
T: What do you think of poor people? How do they spend the Eid?
S2: By being happy.
T: [laughs] by being happy? Without new clothes? Without sweets? Do you think they will be happy?
S1: No much like rich people
T: Not like rich people, so what should we do for those? ..
S3: Help them
T: How do we help them?
S4: By money.
T: Give them money, and
S3: Buying new clothes for them.
T: Buying new clothes. What else, giving them maybe sweets? So we call all this charity. Right? Now let's listen to the song [CO1 (min 00:22-01:44)].

Then she introduces a gap-filling activity, which she previously designed at home, for which students need to listen to a song called 'Eid' by Sami Yusuf and try to fill

in the gaps with a given list of words such as *rejoice, laughter, mosque, worshippers, embrace, charity* and *greed*.

In this same lesson, Iman also wants to review *fruit and vegetable* vocabulary which she taught in the previous lesson. She asks all six students to form a circle and gives one of them a piece of chocolate. She asks this student to say any *fruit* or *vegetable* word and pass the chocolate piece to the next student to say a new word. Anyone who cannot think of a new word or repeats a word that has been said goes out of the circle, while the last student takes the chocolate [CO1 (min 20:40-24:14)].

During the video-watching session, I asked Iman about what she thinks was done successfully in this lesson. She comments:

“I think the teaching materials were *interesting*” [SRI (Arabic) 38].

She continues:

“I wanted to remind them [students] of what we do in Eid like give *charity, helping poor people*. We were having *fun* .. and I felt that the music and song suits their interests .. The things that were done successfully are the games and *fun*” [SRI1 (Arabic) 80-2].

So, Iman seems to have chosen for herself a teaching style that is focused on providing a learning-for-fun atmosphere in her classroom as well as on learning for real-life situations. Her classroom teaching is structured around the use of supplementary materials of her choice as well as games to foster her students' interests. Her style of teaching seems to have been developed as a reaction to her negative prior experiences with school teaching models in which she experienced feelings of boredom and dullness and which focused on memorisation. Her former university teacher also seems to have contributed to her espoused beliefs about creating enjoyment and focusing on real life situations in her classroom teaching.

5.3.2 Iman's beliefs and practices about the use of coursebooks

As the section above shows, Iman's prior language learning experiences were characterised by 'dullness' and 'boredom', and, as a reaction to these negative experiences, she seems to hold beliefs about the importance of enjoyment in the

learning process and focusing on the use of English rather than on theoretical information. These espoused beliefs seem to influence her decisions about the use of coursebooks in the teaching and learning processes.

For Iman, teaching from coursebooks does not seem to go in line with her espoused beliefs about 'making learning fun':

"To me, the most important thing is when *they* [students] *have fun*. If I had to teach from a coursebook, where's the *fun* in that? It's boring, and we just move from one exercise to another. Students do not usually interact while doing [coursebook] exercises" [SSI2 (Arabic) 63-64].

In her attempts to introduce enjoyment in her lessons, Iman seems to have adopted a different view from the school coursebook-based approaches she witnessed in the past. Describing her own current classroom approach, she comments:

"I want something to attract their attention. I feel songs attract their attention, and at the same time, they learn new words. Also movies – when I tell them I have a movie for them to watch, they get excited. I assign them to watch a movie every week and extract 10 new words from it and learn them. Students always come to me and say 'we love movies, when is our next movie?' I feel they are more attracted in this way" [SSI2 (Arabic) 64-67].

Iman does not seem to base her teaching on the coursebook in her classroom practice although her students bring their coursebooks to the classroom which they bought from the language centre when they joined the English course. In all three lessons observed, she is seen to teach only one exercise from the coursebook [CO2]. She states that in her teaching she relies on supplementary materials instead:

"I always teach through a *movie* for example or using *worksheets* and pictures. It's very important to use pictures, *worksheets* or *posters*, and if there's *PowerPoint*, it's great" [SRI1 (Arabic) 159-61].

She continues,

"I like them [supplementary materials]. I can't imagine entering my classroom and starting talking straight away. *I'm not gonna get interested in my job*. If I sat down and just taught from the

coursebook, I'd get bored myself. Of course, it depends on the person. Some people are visual, others are auditory. I'm not auditory at all, and also a lesson given in an auditory way kills me" [SRI1 (Arabic) 173-7].

Iman also argues that her biggest concern while teaching is the level of student interaction in the classroom rather than the number of exercises covered in the lesson:

"The most important thing for me is whether or not there's *interaction* ... This is the thing which I'm occupied with – *to maintain interaction*" [SSI2 (Arabic) 118-21].

She asserts that she does not follow the tight teaching plans of coursebooks as this might affect interactive activities which students are engaged in:

"When I teach an interactive activity and I'm engaged in it, I might spend an hour on it. I don't think it's a problem. And when they [students] are engaged in this activity, I never interrupt them as long as they're interested" [SRI2 (Arabic) 113-5].

Trying to counter her old school coursebook-based methods, she argues that she uses plenty of pictures while she is teaching asserting that this style has come as a reaction to her former teachers who taught by the coursebook for the most part:

"I like using pictures ... and I use them in teaching. They say pictures convey a thousand words" [SSI1 (Arabic) 254].

"To be honest, this is from me. My old teachers were not like this. They used to teach by the coursebook. I like it [using pictures], so I try to apply it. Everything negative at school I try to see what it will be like if countered" [SSI1 (Arabic) 260-1].

Iman clearly states that her current beliefs have been formulated during her early learning experiences, and so she now tries to incorporate in her teaching what was missing in her past school experiences as a learner:

"By the way, my school days have formed all my views now. I always look back at my lessons and try to imagine what they would be like if a certain thing was in them" [SRI1 (Arabic) 180-1].

She continues that her own early learning experiences in Saudi schools seem to have played a role in her views about using supplementary materials, rather than coursebooks:

“By the way, when I was young, I studied in Saudi Arabia. The system there was totally different from here [Syria]. It was more *fun* and based on materials and visual aids. .. My school itself was full of pictures on the walls ... Maybe this thing has remained in my head, and it was absent when I came back to Syria” [SRI1 (Arabic) 182-4].

Iman’s lesson planning and classroom teaching show her acting upon her espoused beliefs which she developed as a reaction to her past school experiences. She asserts that she spends more than a quarter of her salary on the preparation of supplementary materials including films and pictures. In her lesson on the future forms of *will* and *going to* [CO1], she wants to use a film (i.e., How the Grinch stole Christmas) in which students can see how the future forms are used. The film could not be played due to a technical error in the OHP, but she comments in the video-watching session after her class that:

“I wanted them to watch this movie in the classroom. It was about the future and how the actor moves between times. I was going to get them to make predictions when the actor moves to the future. So the film was part of introducing the future tense. That was my aim” [SRI1 (Arabic) 67-71].

In the next lesson, her focus is on the future using *going to* to talk about future plans. She has prepared a letter for each of her six students in which an imaginary friend in the year 2070 has several problems due to lack of water resulted from our overuse of the water resources. Students need to read the specific problem and then write a response letter using *going to* suggesting plans to people in the present on how to avoid the potential problems in the future [CO2 (min 17:00-44:00)].

So, Iman tries to act according to her espoused beliefs in her teaching in terms of using supplementary materials as opposed to coursebooks. These espoused beliefs seem to have been constructed during her apprenticeship of observation in which she experienced feelings of boredom when her former teachers taught English mainly from the coursebook. She clearly states that her attempts to make a

difference have come as a reaction to her negative experiences with the school coursebook-based teaching models and, therefore, she tries to introduce alternative approaches that are focused on using supplementary materials instead. She enacts practices reflecting her espoused beliefs which can be seen in the way she uses films and previously designed materials (e.g. letters) to teach certain language structures to her students.

5.3.3 Iman's beliefs and practices about the role of EFL teachers

Iman holds certain beliefs about the role of EFL teachers that seem to have impacts on her early EFL teaching experience. These beliefs influence her conceptions of EFL teaching as well as her classroom practice. As Chapter 2 shows, EFL teachers in the Syrian educational system view themselves as providers of knowledge and tend to perceive the learning process as one in which teachers transmit information and learners receive it in a process of passive listening and memorisation. This typical role played by EFL teachers lead them to adopt a 'controller' stance in the classroom where they feel they are in charge of the class and activity denying learners' opportunities to experiment with their learning and cuts down on their opportunities to speak (Harmer, 2007). Hence, teachers who are controllers are mostly the dominant speakers in their classrooms with a lot of teacher talking time (TTT) invested in their lessons.

Iman argues that the EFL lessons she received on her past schooling days all followed a lecture format in which the focus was extensively on dispensing grammatical information with teachers talking most of the lesson time. She also points out that this lecture-like style of teaching renders the learning process boring and void of any language practice on the students' part, a fact which leads her to assert that:

“Before college, I never had the chance to fully develop my English language” [AA (English) 85-6].

Iman sees these traditional teaching models as inappropriate to modern life in which communication and focus on real life situations must be seen as the ultimate aim of learning a language. She further states that EFL teachers cannot continue viewing themselves as the only sources of knowledge, but rather they have to

provide their learners with opportunities to practise the English language and develop their language communication skills. Consistent with this adopted view about the importance of allowing more opportunities for language practice in the EFL classroom, Iman sees herself as a facilitator of learning with her learners. She holds beliefs about how successful teachers need to act in their classrooms and what role they need to fulfil in the teaching process:

“[a successful teacher] leads the orchestra in his class. He guides you [students] on what to do. He gives you general instructions and you will work and complete the task. The teacher must not speak more than one quarter of the lesson time and students should speak the remaining time. His job is just a *facilitator* showing them how they can learn information” [SS11 (Arabic) 270-273]

Iman’s notions of teachers as guides who encourage language practice and allow more time for students to speak in the English lessons are not typical of school models of language teaching, and might have been developed as a result of her unsuccessful experiences with traditional school methods of teaching which she criticises as offering little help to students who wish to develop their English proficiency.

In response to the dominant views of teachers’ typical role as transmitters of knowledge, she appears to hold opposing views about how teachers need to act in their classrooms in order to best respond to students’ needs. These seem to have changed her priorities in the teaching process and influenced her lesson planning:

“The most important thing for me is whether or not there is student *interaction* in the lesson .. if students are silent, I don’t feel comfortable .. For me, the thing which most occupies my thinking is to maintain student *interaction* .. if there’s student *interaction*, it means everybody is working and everybody is comprehending” [SS12 (Arabic) 118-23].

Iman comments that she tries to get students to speak and is usually satisfied with the amount of their talking in class. However, although student-student interaction seems to be fostered and maximised in Iman's lessons, she expresses her disappointment with the amount of student talk when they speak in front of the class or during student-teacher interaction citing her ‘controller’ ways of teaching developed during her ‘apprenticeship of observation’ as the main reason behind being the dominant speaker in the classroom. Although she mentions that her

lessons are usually successful in terms of helping learners to speak a good deal, her video watching sessions seem to change her overly optimistic notions about her own role as a facilitator of learning and reveal her tendency to fall back on what constitutes a default position in her prior learning experiences. In our discussion of the three lessons I observed, she expresses that she is actually taking the majority of the classroom talking time:

“I feel I'm not giving them enough space .. they should be provided with more open activities. They should talk, not me. This lesson was all led by myself. I was the main talker and they only talked one or two sentences. This was a problem. It needs to be the other way round: I should speak one or two sentences and they should take the remaining time” [SRI1 (Arabic) 9-14].

She continues:

“I've noticed that. I didn't know it. But, to be honest, the video has revealed what is happening with me. My talking is much more than theirs, I'm not giving them enough space, and I am even so impatient that I don't wait until they give me their answers..” [SRI1 (Arabic) 24-6].

Iman seems frustrated when she watches herself repeating the same style in the next lesson although, after watching the video of the first lesson, she said that she was determined to avoid being the dominant speaker in the classroom. Watching herself in the video of the second lesson, she comments:

“I'm doing that again, uncomfortably. The teaching method I was used to has an impact on me without noticing it. It's true that I have changed so many points, but this particular point remains. My former teachers did not wait and also always gave *immediate feedback* .. Probably I've learned this from them *unconsciously* in that I didn't notice I had made this mistake again” [SRI2 (Arabic) 267-70].

It seems that the conventional images of public-sector school teaching in Iman's learning history where teachers acted as controllers of class and activity exert a powerful influence on her current classroom practice, in that she is seen to unconsciously replicate these early models of teaching even though she declares her rejection of enacting such practices. Iman seems to teach the way she was taught despite her rejection of these teaching models as well as her serious attempts to counter them in her teaching, which attests to the power of these early

conventional images that have been developed during teachers' apprenticeship of observation during school days.

Thus, despite Iman's stated preference to view her own role as a facilitator of learning who guides students and allows them more opportunities for language practice, her lessons show her controlling some classroom activities and denying her learners the opportunities to have enough talking time by being the dominant speaker in the classroom. The power of the conventional images of language teaching in her prior learning experiences makes it hard for her to actively enact alternative practices which she believes she should be doing.

5.3.4 Iman's beliefs and practices about the teaching of grammar

Iman holds beliefs about how grammar should be taught. These beliefs seem to have been formulated during her prior learning experiences. She describes how grammar was taught in her local school in Aleppo:

"It used to be a dull subject void of any cultural knowledge or real-life use. English lessons were given according to the grammar translation method. That is to say, grammatical rules were put to be memorized not to be used in real situations" [AA (English) 89-92].

She also recalls how a typical grammar lesson ran when she was learning English at school:

"A typical grammar lesson was given like the following: The present continuous consists of am, is, are + ing. Use it when you see the following expressions: now, right now, today, this week, month, year, etc. (but why do we do this? God knows) then artificial sentences are used to practice the tense. So, the mastery of tenses was based on the memorization of their rules + expressions, but not their use" [AA (English) 123-8].

Iman seems to have developed opposing views of grammar teaching. She contrasts her own approach with that of public-sector schools asserting that:

"There [at school], we start with rules and then we take activities. Here it's the other way round – we start with a number of examples and activities, then we take the rules. I mean when they [students] comprehend the meaning, we give them the rules. I can't do the other way round. I use the activities to get students' interests. There

[at school], things were not like this. They used activities that were made to match with the tense. Not real at all" [SRI1 (Arabic) 384-7].

She also points out that:

"The most important thing is the focus on meaning not on form .. We have fun while we take the meaning and after that we take the form. And it's essential that the examples are real not fabricated" [SSI2 (Arabic) 78-80].

"Grammar was taught deductively and memorised like mathematics for example ... Here I focus on the use of it. It's not important to memorise, but to learn how to use it" [SSI1 (Arabic) 179-80].

These espoused opinions about how grammar needs to be taught also seem to influence the way Iman interprets new terms introduced during interviews with her. Although she argues that she has limited knowledge of the meaning of communicative language teaching, she seems to try to interpret it in terms of her espoused beliefs about the focus of grammar teaching on use rather than form:

"I don't know who a *communicative* teacher is. I don't know exactly" [SSI1 (Arabic) 551-2].

"I think communicative teachers don't use the *deductive way*. I mean they give grammar through the *use of it*. When you focus on the use of it, this is *communicative*" [SSI1 (Arabic) 457-8].

In fact, observational data on Iman's classroom practice contains a mixture of approaches to grammar teaching. Although she introduces films, songs and other supplementary materials, as the previous sections show, to contextualise the target structure stating that she focuses on the use of English rather than the form, she seems to revert at times to the early models of grammar teaching which focus more on teaching the grammatical rules than on fostering language use. The following extract highlights her lesson on *will/going to*:

EXTRACT 11

T: So now our point is about grammar. It's about the future. How can I talk about the future? Do you know what we use to talk about the future?

S1: *will*

T: *will*. What else?

S2: *going to*

- T: *going to*. In fact these are the major forms, but now we're gonna see more uses for the future and what's the difference between *will* and *going to*. Do you know the difference? You don't know, right? So let's watch. [plays slides on OHP and reads] .. The first use of the future is to predict. Do you know what's the meaning to predict?
- S1: to make something.
- T: to make? If I say Munib *will* be a professor, *will* be a doctor in the future. Do I know the future? I'm just predicting. Am I living in the future? No I'm living in the present. I'm predicting about something, make a guess about what will happen. Look at this [plays another slide]. Who can read this for me? Yes Nour.
- Nour: *The homes of the future will have special devices to help us get the ketchup out of the bottle.*
- T: What do you think of this special device? So this is a prediction about the future. Can we see the future. It's out of my mind right? Now, *going to* ... [CO1 (min 25:10-27:12)].

This extract shows that Iman teaches the grammatical point of *will/going to* by simply reading the rules from the OHP screen and then showing one example before she moves to the next grammatical point. Although she originally states that she teaches grammar through examples and activities before she provides the rules ("we start with a number of examples and activities, then we take the rules. I mean when they [students] comprehend the meaning, we give them the rules. I can't do the other way round" [SRI1 (Arabic) 384-5]), she actually starts with explaining the rules and then gives the example sentence with little evidence of any prior use of examples or activities to introduce the grammatical point in question. This can indicate that she sometimes falls back unconsciously on the school-like models of grammar teaching which she initially criticises as focusing on teaching the rules where these rules come first and an example follows and providing little room for the use of grammatical points being taught.

5.3.5 Iman's beliefs and practices about student-teacher relationships

Iman seems to have constructed a set of beliefs about student-teacher relationships based on her early experiences as an EFL learner in both Saudi and Syrian public-sector schools. Her experience as a beginning teacher is shaped by the beliefs which she holds about EFL teaching and learning and the kind of teacher she wishes to be with her learners in the classroom.

Iman recalls many positive experiences when she was a student in a Saudi state school. She refers to some positive teacher role models who had left an impact on her teacher personality and teaching approach especially because they made learning enjoyable and paid attention to learners' motivation, interests and needs. On the other hand, Iman's accounts are full of illustrations of her negative experiences as a learner in Syrian state schools with regards to the ways teachers treated their learners.

While her learning experiences were mainly successful in Saudi Arabia in terms of her motivation to learn, the encouragement she received from her teachers and the relationships her teachers developed with students on the interpersonal level, her experiences with teachers in Syrian schools have been mostly negative. She describes how her school life was generally like in her local school in Aleppo:

“Supervisors at school used to scold me for not wearing the appropriate uniform, ... Teachers used to scold me for not doing the homework or not studying hard. My parents also used to scold me for being lazy at school. So, I developed a kind of thick skin” [AA (English) 5-8].

Although Iman sees herself as a hardworking student who was willing to develop and learn if she was motivated and encouraged, she states that her past teachers put her off by being “arrogant, boring and careless about students' needs” [AA (English) 95], the fact that led her eventually to adopt a passive role in the learning process and was hence judged by her teachers and parents as a ‘lazy’, incompetent student. Further, Iman's negative experiences with school teachers lead her to adopt a certain attitude towards the teaching profession in general. She asserts that:

“Based on my school experience, it was impossible for me to think of becoming an *English teacher* one day” [SSI1 (Arabic) 2].

Iman's attitude towards teaching as a profession comes as a reaction to the ways her school teachers dealt with their learners; she points out that teachers did not treat students equally and tended to give more attention to those who did the required tasks and that this way of favouring certain students over others made her more de-motivated in the EFL learning process:

“that made me really mad at my school English teachers. Good students who memorised well were always head and shoulders above the others .. average students used to be neglected and forgotten, and sometimes standing in front of the board [as a punishment] .. for not memorizing or writing their homework. I was in fact one of them, but that was because I didn't have the motivation to work hard ..” [AA (English) 110-5].

Iman indicates that her EFL learning was, to a large extent, inhibited by ‘affective’ factors that impeded her motivation and self-confidence. She talks about the role of ‘affective filter’ in her prior learning experiences and how this influenced her learning. She came across this concept and picked it up in the fourth year at university when she took an optional module in psycholinguistics. She seems to draw upon this concept when she describes her prior learning experiences and her current experiences with her own learners as a beginning teacher. Krashen (2003) defines ‘affective filter’ as an impediment to learning that is caused by negative emotional responses to learners’ environment. The ‘affective filter’ hypothesis, first proposed by Dulay and Burt (1977), suggests that certain emotions such as anxiety, self-doubt and boredom can interfere or inhibit the learning process by reducing the amount of language input which the learner can understand. Learners experiencing these negative emotions are not expected to process language input efficiently (Krashen, 1982, 2003). Iman explains that her own ‘affective filter’ was always high due to her feelings of inequality, insecurity, anxiety and boredom in her school and university. She recalls a critical incident, which had serious impacts on her ‘affective filter,’ and which happened with one of her teachers at university whom she describes as “mean and arrogant” [AA (English) 47]:

“I wanted to ask a question about the lecture but I was a bit afraid so I delayed it till the end of the lesson .. So I raised my hand and asked the question. That time he was so angry with me. He said: 'are you stupid? I've been spending the whole lesson explaining it'” [AA (English) 53-7].

In fact, this incident is so remarkable in Iman’s prior learning experience that she is seen to report it time and again during interviews. Iman was severely put off by what happened with her university teacher, especially because this incident occurred in front of hundreds of students. She indicates that this incident led to the maximisation of her ‘affective filter’ in that:

“I couldn't focus with him anymore. .. questions [directed to him] are indicators of either stupidity or showing off. He was [acting like] the director or the boss and every one of his students was an inferior” [AA (English) 58-65].

Iman criticises this top-down relationship between teachers and students which she witnessed during her ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and which affected both her motivation to learn and self-confidence. She argues that she came across some university teachers who dealt with students in an arrogant and unapproachable manner, especially when they insisted that students should use titles (such as 'doctor') if they want to address them:

“If you want to commit the biggest crime in your life, go and call him Ustaz [i.e. school teacher] .. He would reply: I haven't studied all these years to be called Ustaz. He scolds and humiliates you [if you do so]” [SSI2 (Arabic) 406-8].

However, Iman has also encountered some positive role models in her university education who she believes have made clear impacts on her current thinking and teaching philosophies particularly in terms of the ways she wishes to deal with her learners in the classroom. One of the most significant positive role models she has encountered was her Linguistics teacher who she can remember very well and who appears to have changed her life upside down. She asserts that this teacher was distinguished among others because he presented an opposing picture to other negative role-model teachers she had encountered especially with reference to the considerable care and attention he gave his students:

“Teaching with passion was a motto to that professor .. language was not given in a dull way anymore .. Moreover, students were all equals; they were given the same amount of attention and respect. Also, everyone was welcome to participate in the lesson and ask any question without being underestimated” [AA (English) 149-53].

Iman asserts that she was so impressed by this teacher that she started to work harder and stop seeing herself as a lazy, less competent student. The attention which this teacher gave students along with his teaching style that involved all students in the learning process were factors which changed Iman’s attitude towards English and helped reduce the role of her ‘affective filter’:

"I loved English when this professor came. He cared about every individual learner. You feel the attention is all paid to you when you attend his lessons. This boosted my *motivation*" [SSI1 (Arabic) 206-8].

Iman adds that her attitude towards the teaching profession changed:

"By the way, when I met him, I started to like being a *teacher* because I now had a good role model who I aspire to be like" [SSI1 (Arabic) 211-2].

Describing this teacher's approach and what particularly inspired her about his way of dealing with his learners, Iman says:

"He seeks students' satisfaction. I mean you feel *he cares about you* as an *individual* ... I feel *he cares about me. He respects me*" [SSI2 (Arabic) 364-6].

Iman indicates that she was positively influenced by this teacher because he changed her attitudes towards studying and the teaching profession by adopting approaches that offered a contrasting picture of the prevalent approaches in the Syrian educational culture, one in which students are not expected to be active thinkers or raise questions or have any social communication with their teachers:

"He gave us freedom to ask. No question was stupid for him. I don't understand why in our *culture* you're not allowed to ask and you also get ridiculed and scolded ... No, this teacher was the other way round. If you ask, he gets more interested .." [SSI2 (Arabic) 369-71].

She also comments:

"He had interest in every student .. He treats me like his daughter. He sees you in the street, he greets you. I'm impressed. Have you ever seen any professor who greets his students? It never happens .. He gives you his phone number and his email" [SSI1 (Arabic) 364-70].

As a consequence of encountering positive and negative examples of teachers and experiencing certain critical incidents with them during her early language learning history, Iman has constructed a set of beliefs about what is like to be a teacher on the interpersonal level and the image of teacher she wishes to be with her learners. She seems to have chosen for herself a teacher image which she insists on

preserving and which seems to shape her current conceptions during her early learning-to-teach experience.

Iman seems to have developed a set of beliefs that run counter to her negative experiences with negative role models at school and university in terms of the ways they treated their learners. For example, asked about how she thinks successful teachers should deal with their learners, she replies:

“As a *friend*, of course. This is the most important thing. Forget about the top-down relationships which we were used to at school. I'm not their [students'] mother to treat them like that” [SSI1 (Arabic) 412-4].

Iman also appears critical of the role which her former teachers assumed in the teaching process and firmly asserts that teachers cannot continue viewing themselves as preachers or child raisers who think they have the right to lay down their theories and viewpoints and expect students to act according to them. As a reaction towards her negative experiences with former school teachers, Iman believes that teaching is a social process centred around people interacting with each other and that teachers should show the human side of their personalities, as this constitutes a more important factor than teaching methodology. Therefore, she is seen to hold ‘affective’ beliefs about teaching and teachers as a reaction towards the early models she had encountered that were primarily based on classroom discipline in the learning process. She continues that:

“Students change if they like their teacher and if the teacher is a good role model. .. but not when I hold a stick and hit them” [SSI1 (Arabic) 423-4].

In fact, the theme of teacher ‘likability’ is reiterated several times during interviews with Iman, which attests her appreciation of the ‘teacher factor’ in the teaching process. This can further be seen when she illustrates that if she was given a chance to be in a position to select and employ new teachers, she would focus on their personality as the main criterion particularly in terms of the way they would treat students, and she would consider giving them the job even if they had average standards of English language proficiency. She comments:

“You find people who have a high *level of English* .., but they don't know how to deal with people. For me, language proficiency doesn't matter that much” [SSI2 (Arabic) 58-9].

Iman seems to hold beliefs about successful EFL teaching that revolves around personal attributes of teachers such as sympathy with learners and likability. She comments:

“You like the person. Then you like their way of teaching. For me, I should like the teacher first, and then I can accept their information” [SSI1 (Arabic) 372-3].

It seems that these beliefs which Iman holds and their affective dimension have been developed as a response to the negative experiences which she had in her learning history. Iman has formed negative impressions about her former teachers at state schools and now believes that those teaching models that are based on punishment, ridicule, and scolding must be seen as dysfunctional and ineffective in the teaching process. Her comment above that "For me, I should like the teacher first, and then I can accept his information" stresses the importance of the 'teacher factor' in the teaching and learning processes and shows that teacher likability and personal attributes and the way teachers approach and deal with their learners can be more important than knowledge and methodology, a belief that is quite consistent with findings of other studies on beginning teachers' beliefs such as Bailey *et al.* (1996) and John (1996).

Iman's focus on teachers' personal attributes and her appreciation of the affective, human sides of teachers as people rather than professionals shapes her conception of 'effective teaching' which she defines as one carried out by teachers as humans, who can leave an impact on their learners on the interpersonal level.

In her classroom, and as a response towards school models of teaching, Iman argues that she tries to build good relationships with her learners on the interpersonal level and asserts that her endeavours to create rapport with students in the classroom has come as a reaction to her negative experiences with her former teachers at school. She also clarifies that:

“I also try to avoid being strict like my previous school teachers. That's why whenever I am in an awkward situation, I pass it with a smile in order not to hurt my students' feelings” [AA (English) 77-8].

By ‘awkward situation’ Iman means any incident that would normally cause teachers’ discomfort or anger at particular student behaviour such as arriving late for the class or misbehaving. She argues that when a student comes late, she feels uncomfortable because she will then have to repeat the sections which the student has missed, which can affect her lesson plans. Nevertheless, she asserts, she never shows her feelings of anger fearing that this might hurt the student’s feelings.

On the notion of inequality and lack of respect which she suffered during her ‘apprenticeship of observation,’ Iman clearly holds countering beliefs when it comes to her learners in her classroom. She asserts that:

“I also have great respect for every one of my students no matter if they are hardworking or lazy ones. I believe that everyone is clever in his own way. So, we shouldn't underestimate anyone” [AA (English) 78-80].

She also shows a tendency to report beliefs that draw upon her own experiences with her Linguistics teacher who shaped her disposition and from whom she learned a great deal about modern teaching principles particularly those pertaining to the ways teachers deal with their learners. She mentions that she has been inspired by this teacher especially because

“There was respect. He deals with us as intelligent people. This in itself is a very important issue” [SRI1 (Arabic) 202-3].

Clear from Iman’s comments is a serious attempt to show in her teaching a picture that stands at sharp contrast with her negative experiences with her school teachers who tended to favour good students and focus the teaching process on them at the expense of other students who were mostly “neglected and forgotten” [AA (English) 113], as she puts it. It seems that Iman wants to compensate her students for the poor teaching she has received in her ‘apprenticeship of observation’ by creating a classroom atmosphere in which she respects her students and tries to pay attention to their morale and confidence.

Iman continues to show her rejection of the ways school teachers treated students and clearly displays a desire to act in an opposing manner with her own students:

“students were marginalised. For me, students are very important. .. This [view] is a reaction to school .. because this underestimation was always there during school days. I was never told I was good ..” [SSI1 (Arabic) 264-7].

Iman ascertains that the experiences she had with some positive and negative teachers in her ‘apprenticeship of observation’ have impacts on the way she deals with her learners in the classroom. Asked about how these impacts manifest themselves in practice, she replies:

“I never put boundaries. I try not to deal with them in a formal way. I act normally and they can talk about whatever they want. I never shout at them, as this is a bad thing which can frighten them” [SSI1 (Arabic) 378-9].

She continues that she gives her students opportunities to discuss with her their personal issues and tries to be considerate and sympathetic if they have problems or difficulties. She also asserts that she usually opens the door for questions and offers help when needed and tries to eliminate the teacher-student boundaries which the culture has promoted by viewing her students as friends.

5.3.6 Summary

- Iman holds beliefs about the process of EFL teaching. These beliefs have been developed based on her own prior experiences as a learner at public-sector schools in Syria where she experienced feelings of boredom, dullness and lack of language practice. As a reaction, she develops a teaching style that is focused on creating enjoyment and encouraging opportunities for the use of English for real life situations. This is seen when she uses games and designs supplementary materials (e.g. songs and gap-filling activities) with a focus on real-life events (e.g. Eid Al-Fitr festival) that her students are now living.
- She also holds beliefs about the use of coursebooks in the teaching and learning process. She is entirely against the coursebook-based teaching

models because these caused her a negative feeling of boredom in the past and contradict with her own approach of 'learning through fun.' In her teaching, she enacts practices drawing upon her espoused beliefs. This is seen in the way she moves away from coursebooks and focuses her teaching on supplementary materials instead aimed at fostering students' interests and creating more enjoyment.

- As for her beliefs and practices about the role of EFL teachers in the EFL classroom, she tends to view teachers as guides and facilitators of learning who provide students with opportunities to practise their oral skills rather than dispensing information. She believes that teachers should not control the talking time but rather allow the majority of classroom time for student talking instead. However, her opinions of her own classroom teaching reveals her frustration at her ways of teaching, especially with reference to her dominant teacher talking time compared with that of her students. She asserts that this dominant role has been acquired unconsciously from her former teachers.
- Iman also holds beliefs about the teaching of English grammar. She appears to believe that grammar needs to be taught with a focus on use rather than form. Attempting to counter her old school practices, she develops opposing beliefs about the importance of teachers' presenting enough examples and activities to introduce the grammatical structure before they can teach the form. However, she seems to sometimes revert to the traditional method of grammar teaching which she observed during her apprenticeship of observation. This can be seen when she focuses on teaching the rules with little evidence of any prior use of examples or activities to introduce the grammatical point.
- Finally, she holds beliefs about student-teacher relationships which seem to affect her current teaching philosophies and classroom practice. She believes that students must be treated equally with respect and as friends. These beliefs have been formulated due to her prior experiences with positive and negative former role models who she encountered when she was at school and university. In her teaching, she wishes to create an

opposing picture to that which she witnessed in the past when she saw some negative attitudes from some former teachers. She also seems to be influenced by one of her positive former role models. This has made her value the personal human side of teachers' profession rather than their knowledge or methodology.

5.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has explored the influence of participant teachers' 'apprenticeship of observation' on their current experiences of learning to teach. The chapter has shed light on various aspects and instances of participant teachers' previous experiences as learners at school and university and showed how they have developed a set of personal beliefs drawing upon these experiences. Each of Husein, Munzir and Iman has had unique prior learning experiences that seem to contribute to the construction of a set of personal beliefs which they hold and which shape their early EFL teaching experiences while they learn to teach in the first year of their professional careers. These personal beliefs influence their judgment and perception which, in turn, shape their decisions and classroom practice in terms of five main areas: the process of EFL teaching, the use of coursebooks, the role of EFL teachers, the teaching of grammar and the student-teacher relationships.

The next chapter portrays the participants' teaching experiences while they learn to teach within their own private language centres and the kind of contextual influences that further shape their decisions and classroom practice.

Chapter Six

The Influence of the Teaching Context on Participants' Experiences of Learning to Teach

In Chapter 5, I discussed the influence of participants' beliefs formulated during their 'apprenticeship of observation' on their current experiences of learning to teach as beginning teachers in their first year of their EFL teaching careers. The chapter showed how beginning teachers draw upon their prior learning experiences at school and university and seem to have developed a set of personal beliefs that guide and shape their learning-to-teach experiences. These beliefs are based on images of former positive and negative teacher role models as well as general notions and practices which characterise the EFL public-sector teaching models. They act as guiding factors which influence participant teachers' main conceptions about EFL teaching and have impacts on their instructional classroom practice.

Although participant teachers hold beliefs and personal theories which seem to be influential in shaping their current experiences in the first year, there are other influences coming from the teaching context, in which participant teachers' work operates, which seem to further shape teachers' experiences of learning to teach.

This chapter will deal with these contextual influences and the role they play in shaping the learning-to-teach experiences of the participant beginning teachers. The chapter will be structured around two sources of contextual influences operating at two different levels: institutional and instructional. The institutional-level influences are those forces within the educational workplace of the private language centres in which participant teachers' work operates outside the classroom, whereas the instructional-level influences are those factors that operate on the micro level of the classrooms that are situated inside the host educational institutions.

6.1 Contextual influences at the institutional level

Beginning participant teachers in this study work in the private sector, which sometimes operates with different sets of values and working practices from its public-sector counterpart, where most of the participants' beliefs originated. The

difference between these two teaching contexts, i.e., public and private, poses certain challenges for beginning teachers, which have implications for how they learn to do their work in ways that respond to the demands posed by the contexts of their workplaces.

The general picture, as revealed in the data, is that the private language centres in which the participant teachers work are influential on their current experiences of learning to teach in the first year and that the institutional characteristics of these workplaces constitute important factors that influence teachers' perspectives on teaching and create certain modes of action. Institutions including policy makers' beliefs and approaches, preferred modes of language instruction and social relationships between individuals all affect the ways teacher' work is carried out and how teachers learn to teach in the first year. The data shows two main areas to be explored concerning the contextual influences on the institutional level: (1) the institutions' preferred models of teaching and (2) the institutions' collegial relationships. Each of these two themes will be explored in detail in the following main sections with presentation of data on how teachers respond and make decisions in relation to their teaching context.

6.1.1 The institutions' preferred models of teaching

An important institutional influence on participants' early learning-to-teach experiences is concerned with the institutionally preferred models of language instruction. Two major issues appear in the data in this regard: (a) coursebook-based language instruction and (b) teaching English through English (TETE).

(a) Coursebook-based language instruction

Private language centres promote a coursebook-based model of language instruction. The coursebook derives its importance in the private sector from a number of different purposes which it can serve. First, coursebooks are mainly used to identify the number of grade levels of the students in the language centres. Generally, eight grade levels are distinguished (i.e., Zero, Beginners, Elementary A, Elementary B, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Post-Intermediate and Advanced) following the same structure of the adopted coursebook series. Second, items corresponding to the content of coursebooks are used in conducting placement

tests to accommodate students in different grade levels. In other words, placement tests are based on

“being aware of the components of the coursebook we’re teaching, and the questions we are asking students [in these tests] should match the book itself” [Malek: Interview 2 (English) 116-8].

Third, conducting achievement tests is also entirely based on the taught components of the coursebooks, and these tests are usually prepared to measure the same language knowledge covered in the coursebooks during the course.

This last arrangement particularly poses a number of challenges for the participant teachers, as there appears to be a serious necessity imposed by the language centres’ managements of covering the same coursebook material at the same rate across each grade level. This promoted model of teaching that relies on coursebooks is a general policy and an expected norm in the language centres which leaves teachers with little choice over what they wish to teach in their English lessons:

“In the *intermediate* course, for example, they have 4 different student groups. All have to take the same *test* on the same day, which means all required [coursebook] units have to be covered at the same time. They [the management] don’t appreciate if a certain group need more time to do certain things. They don’t appreciate at all if a group need more work on their *speaking* from the teacher, for example. Never. .. So can you dare not give the lesson as they want or not finish at the time they want?” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 518-522].

Such a situation experienced by Iman took place at the language centre where she had worked before she decided to join Pioneers. It caused her a conflict that made her give up teaching under this kind of pressure after two weeks because such a strict coursebook-based approach contradicts with her own preferred style of teaching that is mainly based on ‘fun’ and the preparation of supplementary materials targeted at fostering her students’ interests and motivation to learn. In Pioneers, she lives a different, more fulfilling experience, as we shall see later in this section.

Thus, the coursebook-based instruction policy is adopted due to the washback effects of language tests, in that these tests predetermine the language components to be covered in the language courses.

The general approach in Bright Future is that teachers are required to prepare students for an English test which accompanies the coursebook series and which has been predesigned by the coursebook publishers to measure the language knowledge of the coursebooks:

“The *test* comes ready in the *New English File* [series], and I can’t amend it or cross out questions on areas I didn’t cover .. It comes on a CD attached to the coursebook. This is an established practice now in all courses” [Husein: SRI1 (Arabic) 216-8].

The fact that teachers cannot make amendments to the test questions means that this institutional procedure exerts pressure on teachers to cover every single activity in the coursebooks. In fact, such an institutional arrangement creates situations in which teachers are faced with a number of additional dilemmas and challenges. For example, because teachers are not expected to skip any of the coursebook activities, they have points at which they have to teach certain coursebook components even though they believe these components are not very important or relevant for their students:

“The activity on *stress* is not really needed at this stage. If I was to design the test, I wouldn’t put *stress* questions at all. But as long as it is there [in the test], I have to teach it. If I didn’t, students would find something that wasn’t covered in the course” [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 330-332].

This problem persists when teachers are confronted with a lesson in the coursebook with an uninteresting topic to their learners but still have to teach it due to the test washback effects. More specifically, being published in the English native west, particularly in the UK and USA, the coursebooks used in the private language centres contain topics unfamiliar to the typical Syrian learner:

“In *Elementary A*, you have lessons on *music* and Hollywood actors. I know this book is *international*, isn’t it? But how would a student be interested in *Freddie Mercury*? Who’s *Freddie Mercury*? It turns up that he sings in the *Scorpions*. Well, I haven’t heard of the *Scorpions* in my entire life, and I have a whole lesson revolving around this character. This ruins the lesson” [Munzir: SSI3 (Arabic) 212-5].

The conflict here for Munzir is represented in the perceived lack of freedom over selecting the coursebook components that he wants to teach his students. Such a

coursebook-based policy of teaching seems to challenge his previously-held beliefs about focusing the EFL process on learners' interests. As chapter 5 shows, he holds beliefs about the importance of uncontrolled oral practice that is focused on learners' interests and views successful teachers as those who need "to create interests in them [students]" [Munzir: RGI (Arabic) 207]. However, he seems to have little to say regarding what he wants to teach and how to create interest in his students because the institutional policy of coursebook-based instruction determines a certain mode of action that denies him opportunities to act upon what he believes. This policy even suggests a method of teaching which he does not favour in the first place and which contradicts with his beliefs that:

"basically the successful teacher is one who doesn't always resort to the coursebook. Any working method other than the coursebook is also fine .. I don't like the typical method of 'okay open your books and let's go'" [Munzir: SSI1 (Arabic) 136-141].

"students should not feel that they are doing one coursebook exercise after the other with the teacher saying this is right and this is wrong. The teacher, too, shouldn't be so constrained. If he was, student learning will be constrained, too" [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 10-11].

Participants also report that an approach that requires them to cover the whole coursebook with all its components renders the EFL teaching a mechanical process which causes a great deal of boredom on the learners' part. Observation data on Munzir's lesson on kinds of music reveal that only one student out of eleven is actually involved in the lesson, who responds to the elicitation questions and who shows some awareness of the different kinds of music, whereas the other students are mostly silent when it comes to questions of this kind during the lead-in stage. They either listen to the discussion between Munzir and that student or copy the answers and new words Munzir dictates on their books [CO3 (min 14:50-25:50)]. Watching this on the video, Munzir comments:

"It [the lesson] wasn't very successful because of the topic. This lesson is always like that. This is the third time I teach it. Students never interact. Well, they don't listen to western songs. Ok they listen to Arabic songs but they still don't know what Jazz and Pop mean. Do you know who sings Jazz or Blues in Arabic? [Munzir: SRI3 (Arabic) 29-32].

Such a comment reveals the kind of challenges participants are encountered with concerning the institutional coursebook-based instruction policy. They appear with limited choice in that, although they realise that the coursebook materials are sometimes unsuitable and that the lessons are therefore unsuccessful when taught from coursebooks, they keep teaching them time and again because they are not expected by the management to make any changes due to an already-prepared set of test questions waiting for them at the end of the course.

The data shows yet another reason for students' boredom caused by the coursebook-based policy, which participants appear more or less unable to resolve. This is concerned with the fact that the class sometimes spend two or three sessions talking about one same topic in the coursebook:

“Students get bored, and I can tell this from their faces on the video. They're extremely bored because what happens is we start a certain topic, but we don't always finish it. We come back to it in the second or third session. Some students do the homework hoping that was the end of that topic, but I can't skip the other activities, although I know students are sick of this topic” [Husein: SRI2 (Arabic) 274-7].

Such a situation causes a problem for participant teachers because they have very little freedom to make any changes that can break students' negative feelings of boredom. The coursebook-based instruction policy and its associated teach-for-the-exam approach mould teachers' practices in ways that comply with the institutional regulations but inhibits their opportunities to teach as they want or even attempt to resolve these problematic classroom situations.

Not only is boredom caused by uninteresting topics or the extensive focus on one same topic over a multiple number of sessions, but also the overall structure of the English lessons following the coursebook-based approach by consisting of repetitive transitions from one activity to another makes teachers uncomfortable because they think that their teaching is becoming such a dull process for learners:

“Some students were yawning. They didn't use to yawn, but perhaps my style is becoming a bit mechanic and monotonous. I don't feel comfortable when they yawn or feel bored, but what can I do? We need to cover the coursebook” [Husein: SRI3 (Arabic) 463-5].

Students, as observed in Husein's classes, do one exercise after another for the whole lessons, and are seen to spend most of the lesson time doing almost the

same task, i.e., copying answers to the coursebook questions either as dictated by him or from the whiteboard [CO1], [CO2] and [CO3]. The coursebook-based approach adopted causes such a 'monotonous' style of teaching, and teachers are made to follow this approach, even if they feel that it creates problematic situations in their classrooms, in order to comply with the rules set by the institution.

The coursebook-based approach to language teaching and the teach-for-the-exam methods adopted in the private language centres also seem to have impacts on teachers' instructional pace at which they deliver their lessons to cover the assigned coursebook materials. Teachers are required to finish the coursebook, or part of it, for each grade level in a limited number of sessions (i.e. usually 24 sessions). This entails that they move quickly from one activity to another cutting down on any real opportunities for spontaneous classroom talk or open-ended discussions in the classroom, and this is what accounts for the dominating exercise-oriented type of lessons. This 'mechanical' way of teaching is particularly emphasised over the summer season in which the managers of language centres want to open as many new courses as possible in a period of 4 months. Teachers seem to be under huge pressure and are required to adjust to working in these conditions:

"of course when we [teachers] finish quicker, we'll be welcoming a new group after another. They [managers] are thinking about it financially and economically .. We do it quickly and we go directly to the next course .. but I'm getting extremely exhausted. It's like I'm being tortured" [Husein: SRI1 (Arabic) 256-60].

"a course cannot go beyond 2 *extra sessions* maximum .., and they would question you if that happened ... If the centre was mine, I would put the policy I want, but here I can't. I need to go *quick* indeed, and students feel they're doing something [a task in class] and then suddenly they're required something else different. Please, give me a break - the *English File* [the coursebook series] is so massive" [Munzir: SRI2 (Arabic) 100-6].

Delivering English lessons from coursebooks in such a quick pace under the pressure of having to finish the assigned language units poses a number of constraints on teachers who seem to adjust their own perspectives and beliefs to resolve the conflicts that arise from the demands imposed on them by the

surrounding teaching environment and the promoted styles of teaching in their workplaces:

“I once taught a course and it was very interesting, but it took me 29 sessions. They [managers] said, what’s wrong? Why did that happen? ... maybe they’re right. There was a 10-day delay because of this” [Munzir: SRI2 (Arabic) 114-7].

Believing in the importance of maximising students’ opportunities for oral practice, as Chapter 5 shows, Munzir refers to this course as the most successful in his teaching career because he managed to encourage more student speaking in class by allocating half of the lesson time for oral presentations on different topics chosen either by him or students. However, the result was a 10-day delay because the assigned units of the coursebook also had to be all covered. Managers were not happy about this and insisted that a grade level should not take more than 24 sessions, the fact that required Munzir to readjust his approach for the next courses and revert to the established norm of focusing his English lessons solely on coursebooks.

The pressure exerted by such a limited number of sessions to finish courses in order to start new ones also affects teachers’ decisions to foster students’ interests through using supplementary materials outside the coursebook:

“I sometimes think of bringing *extra materials*. But think about it. If I brought *extra materials* with me, where would I find time for them for God’s sake? Even when I have the *extra materials* ready and useful, I look at them – Gosh when can I ever give them to students? There’s no time. If I did, the course would be delayed - although I believe the idea [of using extra materials] appeals so much to students – they would be happy to have *extra materials*” [Husein: SRI1 (Arabic) 263-5].

Although Husein values teaching from the coursebook on the basis that the graded activities in it help learners build up linguistic knowledge gradually, as chapter 5 shows, he is not entirely against using supplementary materials from outside the coursebook. His comment above reveals that he does appreciate using supplementary materials but can hardly find a slot to bring any due to the constraints of the coursebook-based instruction policy and the entailed approach that focuses on finishing the coursebook material in a limited number of sessions.

Moreover, such an approach seems to have implications for his teaching role in the classroom in that it actually encourages and deepens a teacher-centred, knowledge-transmission style of teaching:

“To save time, I finish every exercise with the minimum effort it requires. .. but if I wanted to let go and talk with learners about everything or be *eliciting* rather than *explaining* to allow them rather than me to talk about everything, it would consume a lot of time” [Husein: SR12 (Arabic) 153-6].

Time management seems to be a serious issue for teachers working under the institutionally promoted coursebook-based model of teaching. Such a preferred teaching model seems to affect teachers’ work and have impacts on the roles they are expected to fulfil in their classroom.

However, data also shows that when language centres do free participant teachers from such coursebook constraints, teachers enjoy opportunities to carry out their work and conduct language instruction according to what they believe. Pioneers is managed by a TESOL-qualified manager and operates with learner-centred ethos where teachers are allowed a more active role to play in choosing the appropriate methods of teaching in their classrooms and designing assessments:

“I feel very comfortable in this language centre. I design the *tests* in the way I want and do it at the time I want. They [the management] just take a look at the test *form* to give *advice*, but they say it’s all my decision – like *you’re the boss of your class*” [Iman: SS11 (Arabic) 526-8].

Iman lives a more fulfilling experience in Pioneers than in her previous language centre which she left after two weeks of starting work there. In Pioneers, things are differently prioritised from those in Bright Future, in which tests are the centre of language instruction towards which the teaching process is directed and structured. Pioneers provides an environment where Iman can teach in line with her EFL beliefs about fostering students’ learning in a learning-for-fun environment through designing supplementary materials that suit their age and interests. Although some kind of pressure comes indirectly from students’ parents on her to do some coursebook work, she states that she feels protected in Pioneers where

the manager continues to encourage her sense of free agency and never puts pressure on her to satisfy students' parents. She argues that the manager often deals with parents' complaints while she continues to teach in the way she believes is most effective asserting that teachers would become less creative in their classrooms if their work was to be shaped by what parents want:

“if you teach as they [parents] want, you lose your *creativity*. You become doomed to work on a *schedule*, as if teachers had been all created or meant to be like each other” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 507-8].

Thus, as the above account shows, such a promoted style of teaching as the 'coursebook-based language instruction' plays an influential role in shaping teachers' work. Institutions have certain objectives behind such an adopted teaching model, which teachers are required to meet. The test-centred approaches to teaching assume that teachers' work needs to be mainly structured around preparing students for the test. Teachers are required to teach the coursebooks with all their component activities to avoid any chances where students find questions in the tests, which are prepared in advance, that they have not covered during the course. Teachers working under such a coursebook-based instruction policy are left with little choice over what they wish to teach in their lessons. They also have to cover certain predefined amounts of the coursebooks, which require them to move with a quick instructional pace that cuts down on their opportunities to introduce any extra materials or encourage uncontrolled classroom talk. However, in situations where such an approach is not so strictly promoted, participants enjoy more freedom to teach according to their beliefs, and even when there is pressure from students' parents on teachers to teach the coursebooks, they are still able to carry out their work with the free agency that the management encourages.

(b) Teaching English Through English (TETE)

Teaching English through English (TETE) is another promoted approach to English language teaching in the private sector that appears in the data as an important factor shaping beginning teachers' experiences and the ways they are expected to teach and act in their workplaces. As chapter 2 shows, private-sector language

centres are commercially-run enterprises, and they operate within a set of attitudes and beliefs derived from BANA models of English language teaching in that they are “in some way managed or spawned from the British, Australasia and North American model” of language teaching (Holliday, 1994: 12). Bright Future is a well-known American brand with 365 branches all over the world. Pioneers is a local brand but is managed by a TESOL-qualified professional who obtained his doctoral degree in the United States. These two language centres follow a BANA-based educational ideology which attempts to employ what Holliday (1994: 12) calls ‘high status methodologies’. One of the important aspects of these ‘high status methodologies’ is teaching English through English, an approach that puts the private sector at sharp contrast with public-sector teaching models, where language instruction is mainly conducted in students’ first language, Arabic. The story of the TETE approach in these two language centres began with the recruitment of native-speaker English teachers from the USA. However, when there is shortage of such native-speaker teachers, managers employ Syrian teachers with native-speaker standards in terms of proficiency and language accent to best implement the TETE approach:

“When this language centre first opened, they had American teachers. But now it’s not easy to find them, .. So the *criteria* [of selecting teachers] were they [teachers] should be *American* or *studied in America*. Afterwards, they [the management] lowered their expectations. Now if you have a good *American accent*, they accept you” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 97-99].

“I told him [Malek] I had no teaching experience whatsoever .. I had a feeling that he liked my American accent” [Munzir: SSI1 (Arabic) 19-20].

Such a tendency of private language centres to employ teachers with native-like English accents reflects an ideology that is based on the assumption that “native-speaker teachers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology” (Holliday, 2005: 6). As part of their marketing job, private language centres attempt to give the student customers the impression that they are providing English courses within this ‘ideal’ ‘Western culture’ through selecting teachers with native-like accents of English and strictly adopting a TETE policy:

“Students wouldn’t be happy to listen to a Halabi [someone from Aleppo] speaking English ... They are taken back by the language by native teachers. We’re not native speakers – we’re maybe native-like. But we have to be like this. Again, it’s market” [Malek: Interview 1 (English) 92-7].

“[Managers] believed we should not speak in Arabic, not at all .. I don’t think [their] perspective was kind of methodological. I think it was kind of a marketing approach” [Husein: SSI1 (English) 330-1].

Such a ‘marketing approach’ to offer a native-speaker Western culture in the workplace to impress student customers has important implications for how beginning participant teachers are expected to teach and act in and outside their classrooms:

“Students have the impression that I’m a *native*. So I have to keep this impression that I really am a *native*” [Husein: SR3 (Arabic) 520-1].

In Husein’s accounts, he asserts that one of his biggest obsessions as an English teacher in Bright Future is the extent to which he sounds ‘native’ in his classroom. In fact, in one of his past courses, students were made to believe that he is a real ‘Brit’; the sales manager, while encouraging a group of students to take an English course, referred to Husein as a ‘Brit’ relying on his British-sounding English and Western facial features. This same phenomenon of ‘I need to sound native’ is also noticed with Munzir:

“I had a whole course when students didn’t find out I was Syrian .. Once I had a course – a student whispered to another in Arabic ‘Gosh, do you think this teacher can understand what we’re saying now?’” [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 215-6].

Munzir states that students, throughout the whole course, thought he was an American native-speaker teacher. He did not reveal his Syrian identity to them nor did he use any Arabic whatsoever during a 2-month course, either inside or outside the classroom. It seems that teachers teach under the pressure of having to assume the identity of real native speakers in front of their learners. Such a TETE policy gradually turns into a strict ‘no Arabic at all’ approach aiming at preserving the image of the Western culture in the workplace. Not only is this approach found in classrooms but also in situations in which teachers chat with other employees

and secretaries outside the classrooms in the presence of students or when they meet students in the corridors, cafeteria or even outside the centre.

The TETE approach appears to have impacts on teachers' learning in that it sometimes appears to exert positive influences that enhance their teacher learning experiences. Having come from an educational background that relies on teaching English through Arabic (i.e. public-sector schools) and now finding themselves in situations that promote a TETE approach to EFL teaching (i.e. private-sector language centres), teachers now are required by the language centres to develop new notions of English language teaching practices through engaging in an activity which requires them to present a different picture from that in public-sector schools and which complies with the workplace policies. In many instances, teachers find the TETE approach positively challenging and contributing to their self-image as English language teachers:

“I was used to speaking in Arabic .. However, the private [centres] require you to speak everything in English. Here this is the standard and the perfect practice. So if you speak in Arabic, you'll feel you're not good enough and you're not a good teacher ..” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 34-8].

Although Iman was not used to the TETE approach in teaching when she first started her teaching career, she now embraces and acts upon a new understanding that she has constructed in her current teaching context, one that views TETE as a good practice and those adopting it as good teachers. In her classroom, Iman is seen to implement the TETE approach, although she originally states that “my vision about teaching was all different, totally different. In schools, all teaching was in Arabic. I didn't know how I would give lessons when I first started” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 38-9]. She now believes that using English as the medium of instruction should be maximised in the English classroom. Classroom data on Iman's three lessons show that the majority of her language instruction is conducted in English with only few instances in which students used Arabic in concept-checking stages [CO1], [CO2] & [CO3].

The TETE approach also appears to have an impact on teachers' instructional strategies for explaining the target language's structure. Knowing that using Arabic

is not allowed, teachers resort to strategies other than translation to explain the new lexical items encountered in the lesson:

“we had some new words and they [students] learned them. My use of gestures helped explain and elicit the differences between *foot* and *feet* and *tooth* and *teeth*. I use my body language to explain better. I think this was done in a good way” [Husein: SRI2 (English) 5-8].

“I think words related to furniture were presented in a very nice way, and I taught them very effectively. I was asking them [students] *comprehension questions* like *where do you put ..? what is a ..?* By doing so they try to remember the correct piece of furniture” [Husein: SRI3 (Arabic) 153-6].

The use of body language as well as concept-checking questions are teaching techniques that have been discovered by Husein to resolve certain classroom situations in light of an institutional policy that forbids the use of translation into students' L1. Interestingly, Husein is seen to employ these practices in the lessons observed despite not having heard of 'concept-checking' in ELT. Extract 11 from one of his lessons is noted:

EXTRACT 12

- T: Where do we usually put books? [waits] Where do we put books?
[using his hands to gesticulate a box]
- Ss: in the bookcase
- T: in the bookcase. Very good. Ah what do we have on the table next to our beds?
- Ss: lamp
- T: a lamp. Yes, Very good. Ahh. On the floor, next to my bed, on the floor [points to the floor] there's a small [gesticulates a big circle downwards]
- Ss: rug
- T: rug. Excellent ... I put my food in the?
- S1: refri
- T: slowly
- S1: re-fri-ge-ra-tor
- T: Excellent. Re-fri-ge-ra-tor, Re-fri-ge-ra-tor. Ah in the kitchen, there's a big thing where I eat.
- S2: microwave.
- T: There's a microwave. That's right, but in the kitchen when we eat, we sit at [gesticulates table]
- Ss: table
- T: the table. Ah To make the food hot, or to cook, we need?
- Ss: a stove

- T: to cook. But just to make the food we cooked before to make it hot again, we put it in the?
- Ss: microwave
- T: microwave. Excellent. In the living room, between the sofas, we have a low thing.
- Ss: coffee table
- T: coffee table. Very good [CO3 (min 15:18-17:08)].

From this example, it seems that the TETE policy is shaping new understandings, and participants are seen enacting new practices that they did not experience in their prior learning experiences at public-sector school, but are adopted due to contextually promoted approaches that appear to mould the ways teachers are expected to teach and act.

However, the TETE policy also seems to create certain constraints for teachers due to the perceived lack of flexibility in its implementation. In other words, the strict application of the TETE policy and the associated 'no Arabic at all' approach adopted, especially in Bright Future, sometimes creates discomfort on teachers' parts and poses a number of classroom situations which teachers appear to hardly enjoy any freedom to resolve. For example, in situations where using L1 seems justified, teachers still refrain from using it in order not to break the institutional TETE policy:

"using L1 is really important sometimes yeah .. to save time because you keep beating around the bush especially with elementary students to explain something which can be easily done in one word in Arabic .." [Husein: SSI1 (English) 310-3].

Saving time to check comprehension is one situation in which using students' L1 can be justified, as some ELT researchers advise (Al-Alawi, 2008; Atkinson, 1987). Because of the time management problems caused by the need to cover coursebooks, as discussed above, Husein suggests that using Arabic can be particularly useful to resolve these problems. In fact, he continues to perceive the same problem of time management while giving instructions to new tasks or activities and believes that using Arabic could help him resolve this problematic situation:

“Any *task* or *activity* we do takes time sometimes, especially at the beginning .. If it was in Arabic, I believe it would be much quicker”
[Husein: SRI1 (Arabic) 143-3].

However, despite his awareness that using students’ mother tongue can be helpful to resolve these classroom situations, the TETE policy comes to make him behave differently by creating constraints to the extent to which he can employ his preferred strategies:

“Three weeks until now I started not to use Arabic at all or talk in Arabic because in a meeting they said ‘you should stop using Arabic’”
[Husein: SSI1 (English) 320-1].

The TETE approach to teaching is not exclusively adopted due to influences coming from the institutional workplace. Teachers also follow this approach for reasons that operate at the core level of the classroom context, as we shall see later.

Thus, the TETE approach is another preferred model of teaching that is suggested in the private language centres. These language centres, being commercial enterprises, wish to attract student customers through adopting policies and teacher selection criteria that aim at giving the impression of academic excellence, particularly in terms of offering a native-speaker Western culture in the workplace. Teachers are seen to respond to these requirements and, in some cases, assume the identity of native-speaker teachers, which can be facilitated by their native-like accents of English. However, the TETE approach also contributes to teachers’ self-images as good EFL teachers and helps them learn new ways to teach the target structure other than offering direct translation, an approach that characterises their prior education contexts. On the other hand, it also creates challenges for teachers when they face situations in which using students’ mother tongue can be useful such as saving time, but they are still unable to utilise this approach due to strict instructions coming from the management to continue teaching in the way they specify.

6.1.2 The institutions’ collegial relationships

Every educational institution has a ‘culture.’ An institutional culture is the behaviour of human individuals who make up an institution as well as the meanings they

attach to their actions. It also includes shared assumptions between individuals as well as expected working patterns that shape the ways people and groups interact with each other. Learning to teach for beginning teachers involves learning how to balance the personal influences coming from other individuals the beginning teacher interacts with in the workplace (Farrell, 2003; 2008) and also learning the unique culture of their institution in order to become active participants and perform their roles in a contextually accepted manner.

The data collected for this study show that professional relationships between individual teachers or between teachers and other employees including their superiors are powerful forces in the participants' learning-to-teach experiences. The institutional culture of the workplaces appears to either enhance or inhibit their opportunities to extend their teacher learning. A prominent theme regarding the institutional collegial relationships, as revealed in the data, is one of *individualism vs. collaboration* in the workplace and the impacts it makes on the participant teachers' early experiences while they learn to teach.

(a) Individualism in the workplace

The general picture of the sort of collegial relationships in Bright Future and Pioneers, as revealed in the data, supports Palmer's (1998) observation that teaching is the most privatised of all professions.

In the early stages of their career entry, participant beginning teachers tend to adopt an individualistic stance even in situations where collaboration is encouraged:

“Malek loves the idea of *collaboration* .. Munzir does too. When I started, I was a kind of person who doesn't tell people 'Oh I did this and I did that'. I didn't want them to think I'm being proud of what I'm doing. If I do something successful in my class, I don't go and spread it in the centre” [Husein: SR3 (Arabic) 215-7].

Husein's comment actually lends support to Cranton and Carusetta's (2002: 168) remark that teaching is a “secretive profession where faculty [teachers] are reluctant to share either successes or failures for fear of appearing foolish or boastful.” Husein does not want to appear 'boastful' about his successes and hence he kept a low profile during his first few weeks in Bright Future.

The fact that participant beginning teachers adopt such a preference to work individually can also be caused by reasons related to how other established teacher colleagues act in the workplace. The data shows that a common teacher behaviour in language centres is that senior teachers gather in small cliques, who do not often welcome or share ideas with new members or people from other groups. Iman, in *Pioneers*, encounters such a situation that seems to be one of the major reasons why she remains isolated:

“When we have meetings, those who are *friends* come together and only talk to each other. Every *group* is on its own. No one can sit with a *group* that is not theirs” [Iman: SS12 (Arabic) 293-4].

Iman finds herself so detached from all teachers around her because everyone of them seems to have already found a group for themselves and established a teacher clique. In fact, Iman reports that feelings of her being isolated and not having the opportunity to either meet a trusted colleague or join a group of established teachers reinforces her style of carrying out her work individually.

Another important reason for individualism perceived by the participant teachers in the workplace is concerned with the level of competitiveness between teachers. In *Pioneers*, for example, teachers, secretaries and coordinators are all females and have the same English literature major. Some of them get promoted from secretarial work to a teaching position if they have a good English proficiency level and a native-like accent of English. Iman reports that this situation makes other employees look at those who get promoted with a kind of envy:

“because if a secretary had been good in terms of language proficiency, they would have appointed her a teacher, not a secretary” [Iman: SS11 (Arabic) 153].

Due to these differences in positions and rankings, Iman finds herself in a place where she is envied for having been selected by her manager as a classroom teacher without even needing to do any initial secretarial work. Iman argues that if someone is appointed a classroom teacher in *Pioneers*, this is looked at as a declaration by the manager that they have a good level of English language proficiency. Because the competition is on English language proficiency, the secretaries and coordinators tend to show Iman that their English is also good and

that her English is not as good as theirs and therefore she is not necessarily the right person for the teaching job:

“I always come to them with good intentions, but because your English is good, *they feel they're not up to you*. So they start spotting mistakes in what you say” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 148-50].

“It's unconscious by the way. That's why I avoid talking with them because if you choose not to speak in English, they think you're not good at speaking English, so they start speaking in English with you. And if you speak in English, they feel so jealous, so *anyway you can't avoid it*” [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 158-60].

In fact, Iman expresses feelings of discomfort when dealing with these employees and states that she does not want to deal or even talk with them anymore, which again reinforces her feelings of isolation in the workplace.

The 'competitiveness' element in Iman's early teaching experience does not stop at this level. Some established teachers want to gain the manager's approval and show him their loyalty by reporting the newcomers' failures. Established teachers in Pioneers want to show their dominance by belittling the newcomer Iman as a way of maintaining the pecking order in the workplace. Iman recalls her first lesson she gave to young learners when she brought a teddy bear to the classroom and the children were so excited. The level of noise was so high that the coordinator came to see what the problem was. She then decided to assign a senior teacher to attend Iman's lesson and help her with the children's discipline matter. However, after the lesson, the senior teacher told the manager and other teachers about the chaos and noise produced by children and Iman's failure to control her class, which was thought of as a weakness by other teachers. She also built up stories that did not happen about Iman leaving the classroom crying because of the children's behaviour and deciding to quit teaching in the centre:

“I was very shocked when I got a call from a supervisor at an adjacent school asking me: 'Did that really happen with you? If you're not happy there, come to our school' .. Can you imagine? The problem even reached the adjacent school, let alone the teachers here” [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 311-14].

In fact, this incident appears critical in Iman's early teaching experience that she now strongly believes that teachers should not disclose their own teaching

experiences and incidents unless they have met someone with whom they can share mutual trust:

“I prefer to keep my own teaching issues to myself. If I had a problem, I would never tell it to anyone, as I wouldn’t know how their reactions might be. They might report it to others in their groups. This always happens” [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 295-6].

“I never talk about my own classroom problems unless I’ve met someone whom I know and trust” [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 320-1].

Iman’s traumatic experience in terms of professional relationships with colleagues and other employees has actually intensified her individualistic approach to working in the workplace and made her decide to remain isolated and not to try any sort of collaboration with anyone in the future:

“If you talk to someone about the things that happen with you in your classroom, you’d feel a kind of harmony in general. However, every time I try it, a problem pops up. So, I’ve given up” [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 338-9].

In fact, at the end of the data collection period, Iman’s isolation remained, to a large extent, unresolved.

Thus, as this account shows, a common phenomenon in the language private centres is that beginning teachers, when they are newcomers, choose to carry out their work individually. They prefer to keep their classroom experiences to themselves and not share them with other colleague teachers either because they do not want to appear ‘boastful’ about their successes, as in Husein’s early experience in the first few weeks, or because they fear that their experiences or failures might be passed on to their manager or other colleague teachers, as in Iman’s case. The account also reveals that beginning teachers decide to work individually because other senior teachers tend to establish and maintain pecking orders in the language centre, which makes beginning teachers live an uncomfortable, if not traumatic, experience as newcomers in the language centre.

(b) Collaboration in the workplace

As observed above, some beginning teachers prefer to work individually at the early stages of their career entry, as in Husein’s case during the early weeks in the profession. However, the data shows that after some time, Husein seems to have

found a 'trusted other', Munzir, and some instances of collaboration start to appear, but these occur mainly in a clique and are 'serendipitous' (Scribner, 1999) and 'spontaneous' (Hargreaves, 1994) rather than structured or institutionally led, with 'talk' (Nias, 1989) being a key feature of this collaboration:

"We talk about what we do in our classrooms. Munzir talks a lot about his teaching and what he does, and so do I .. I think there's a kind of collaboration between us .." [Husein: SRI3 (Arabic) 271-4]

The kind of collaboration between Husein and Munzir and the occasional conversations that occur between them tend to mainly draw upon the notion of 'trust' which has been developed because both are around the same age and are newcomers in Bright Future who started work at the same time:

"Husein and I sometimes talk about our own experiences. I trust him, but not the others. We both entered this language centre at the same time, and we both had the same worries and concerns as newcomers. I just can't talk with others about my concerns, but I do that with Husein" [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 209-12].

Husein and Munzir seem to talk about their own classroom experiences with each other, rather than with other teachers in Bright Future, because each one represents a 'trusted other' (Hatton and Smith, 1995) for the other:

"We sometimes sit and talk. There's a very special relationship .. We are clear that there's nothing sceptical. There's nothing which we wouldn't reveal to each other" [Husein: SSI2 (Arabic) 153-6].

So, based on this kind of 'trust', Husein and Munzir seem to establish a clique and feel secure to talk about their experiences and exchange ideas with each other. Despite happening spontaneously, the kind of collaboration between Husein and Munzir appears, to a certain extent, to contribute to their opportunities to develop new concepts and reflect upon their own teaching practices, though this is done minimally because most of these meetings are unplanned and 'serendipitous'. For example, Husein, based on his own classroom experience, observes that students would be more encouraged and motivated to practise speaking in the classroom if they were told that there would be a speaking test at the end of the course. Therefore, he talks with Munzir to see what he thinks about conducting speaking tests:

“We used to do this test. Sometimes we skipped speaking. And then they wait a minute. Why do we skip speaking? We talked and then we found out that we were wrong [in skipping speaking tests]” [Husein: SSI1 (English) 143-5].

Both Husein and Munzir agree that speaking should be tested, and, after this talk, they decide to discuss the issue with their supervisor, Malek, who appears cooperative and welcomes the idea. After that, it becomes an established practice for teachers in Bright Future to conduct speaking tests and tell their learners about it at the beginning of every course. Munzir expresses that such an arrangement is necessary, as it fits well with his beliefs about encouraging students’ oral practice in the EFL teaching process. He now decides to leave 15% of the total test mark for a speaking test question:

“As I said, speaking is the most important thing for me. When we started the speaking tests, some students really started to participate. Now, I give fifteen percent of the total mark to speaking and participation in the classroom” [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 226-8].

Another example of collaboration between Husein and Munzir appears in a conversation between them over some lead-in activities in the coursebook which Munzir finds uninteresting to his learners:

“For example, some *lead-in* activities can be silly. I ask Husein ‘How about changing them?.’ How would you give them? .. I once had a lesson that starts with writing up *Yellow Submarine* [on the whiteboard]. Student would spend hours to know this was a song for *Coldplay*. *Who’s Coldplay?* We need to change this. I talked with Husein and discussed how we should introduce an alternative *lead-in* here” [Munzir: SSI3 (Arabic) 161-4].

It seems that both Husein and Munzir interact with each other about some classroom matters to reach a certain shared understanding to resolve certain classroom problems. This new understanding requires them to revise actions and come up with new ideas that are believed to lead to a more successful classroom experience.

A further example is seen with Husein’s conception of feedback and its influence on students’ fluency. Husein believes that interrupting students’ talk to provide correction or reformulation might affect students’ flow of speech. He wonders how teachers can maintain students’ fluency and, at the same time, make

them aware of their mistakes. Through sharing this concern with Munzir, they reached an idea which suggests that it is important for students to keep talking even if they make mistakes, while teachers can take notes of these mistakes on a sheet of paper to discuss them at a later stage.

“I remember once I talked with Munzir about why our students don’t talk much. He said maybe we’re not giving them enough space. He also said maybe we shouldn’t interrupt them too often. I said ‘but how can we correct their mistakes?’. He said he never corrects directly but takes notes and puts them on the board later” [Husein: SSI1 (Arabic) 211-4].

In fact, classroom data shows that Husein has ‘picked up’ this idea through his conversations with Munzir. He carries out this technique in his lesson on ‘there was/there were + furniture vocabulary’:

EXTRACT 13

- T: Look at the picture [in the coursebook]. You have one minute to try to remember what there is in the picture – the things that are there, okay? .. ready? Okay one minute.
[students are staring at their books] ...
- T: Time is over .. we’re going to be students A and B.
[T divides the class into two groups and asks them to write down questions about what there was or were in the picture and then ask these questions to their partners to test their memories. T listens to the students’ questions and takes notes on a sheet of paper] ...
- T: Now you did very well while you were speaking. You communicated information. You could ask about things and understand the answers. I see you can use *was there* and *were there*, which is very good of you, but we have some notes for us to look at. [T writes on the board *What colour are there the curtains?*] Look at this question here Do we need to use *there*? [waits]
- S1: No.
- T: So what can the question be?
- S1: *What colour are the curtains?*
- T: *What colour are the curtains?* [puts a cross on *there*] and we use the past .. so how do you make it suitable for the tense? We’re talking about the past, we use the past.
- S1: *What colour were*
- T: *What colour were the curtains?* [omits *was* and adds *were*]. Look at the other sentences. [T writes *there was two tables*] Shadi, there’s a little problem with this sentence.
- Shadi: [reads slowly] There was two tables. There *were*.
- T: There *were*. Why?
- Shadi: Because *were* is for two, three, four.

- T: Exactly. [T omits *was* and adds *were*] and look at this [T writes *were they any pictures?*] Were they any pictures?
- Ss: Were *there*
- T: Were *there*, not *were they* [T omits *they* and adds *there*]. Excellent. Very good. [CO1 (min 5:30-21:46)].

In the video-watching session, I asked Husein why he used such a technique rather than simply providing immediate correction and where he learned it, he reports that he had a concern for students' oral fluency for a long time until he decides to share it with Munzir when they both talked about it and decided to follow this new correction technique.

However, both Husein and Munzir assert that they work in a clique and rarely collaborate with other teachers because they rarely see them due to situational constraints, ones that occur due to institutional administrative arrangements such as teachers' teaching schedules or teachers' meetings. In Bright Future, the teaching schedule distribution does not allow teachers to see or even know each other; the centre opens for 14 hours a day, and there are teachers who teach in the morning and others who teach in the evening. So, in addition to the notion of 'trust' between them, Husein and Munzir appear to talk about their own teaching and share experiences with each other because they teach in around the same teaching periods, mostly in the morning shift, while other teachers teach in different periods, and so they never meet with them:

"There are teachers we never collaborate with .. You have miss Lucy, for example – we never see her. She seems to come for the lesson and leave. She doesn't spend time here .. so we don't see her very often, we don't ask her and we don't open any subjects with her at all" [Husein: SRI 3 (Arabic) 235-9].

"In this centre, you and I might teach for 5 years .. and still don't meet each other because there are no regular teaching hours .. If we had to attend for example from 8:00 to 12:00, we would probably talk with each other because we see each other, but now I might spend three days in a row without even noticing Miss Susan or Mr Ahmad .." [Munzir: SSI 3 (Arabic) 166-70].

Moreover, lack of time due to heavy teaching loads seems to further explain why teachers do not see each other or have opportunities to talk about their teaching or share ideas. Malek observes that the 10 teachers in Bright Future are not enough

to teach 300 students, which puts the available teachers under heavy teaching loads and hence denies them opportunities to meet and talk:

“for me collaboration is very good and useful, but we don’t have the time for collaboration. We don’t have time to do workshops, to have meetings. This is the point. This is like a weakness” [Malek: Interview 1 (English) 19-21].

Further, the staff meetings and the issues discussed in them seem to explain why Husein and Munzir as newcomers do not seem to talk about their classroom experiences with other teachers in Bright Future. In these meetings, all English teachers gather and then leave without having been introduced to one another. The meetings never encourage opportunities for collaboration, teachers’ problems or classroom concerns. They often focus on discussing policies and codes of conduct including uniform, units to be covered of the coursebook, language of instruction and consequences of student absence:

“we don’t have regular meetings, but when we have meetings we talk about procedures. We have a long list of procedures. For example, attendance – students’ attendance is very important .. the book shelves, the bulletin board. We have many ideas. We think of excursions, but we need the manager’s support” [Malek: Interview 2 (English) 251-8].

“In the meeting, there’s no chance to discuss personal experiences. We discuss problems, not academic problems like how to solve a certain problem in a certain lesson, but administrative. It can be changing the coursebook series .. administrative issues like attendance, policies like using Arabic, these issues” [Munzir: SSI3 (Arabic) 192-6].

Thus, Husein and Munzir collaborate with each other to a certain extent and share private classroom experiences because there is mutual trust between them. Based on this notion of trust that has been built because both are the same age and have been newcomers who have almost the same range of concerns in the new workplace, Husein and Munzir fall into a teacher clique. Within this clique, some forms of collaboration appear, despite being unplanned and ‘serendipitous’ and based on informal ‘talk’ as the main feature characterising them. Husein and Munzir exchange ideas to resolve some of their classroom problems and concerns. However, they do not seem to share their experiences with other members who appear to work individually due to institutional constraints represented in the

teacher teaching schedules, teachers' teaching load and the sort of topics discussed in teachers' meetings.

To conclude this main section, the account so far has been on exploring the contextual influences at the institutional level of the workplace and their role in shaping the participant teachers' early experiences while they learn to teach in their private language centres. The section has shed light on the social factors within the institution context of the workplace where teachers' work operates outside the classroom. As the discussion shows, the institution as a workplace represents an influential context that has impacts on teacher's perspectives towards teaching and the ways they carry out their work. The private language centres where the participants work promote certain models of EFL teaching that are structured around serving a number of administrative purposes such as the coursebook-based approach to attend to washback effects of externally-published tests. They also encourage a TETE approach to attract their student customers through offering a native 'Western' environment that stands in sharp contrast with its public-sector counterpart, where these students have come from. These two models of teaching bear challenges for the participant beginning teachers whose teaching and general behaviour are shaped by what the institutions see as expected standards and codes of conduct. Workplace professional relationships also appear to be a further institutional force that shapes teachers' learning-to-teach experiences. Teachers choose to work individually or in cliques due to a number of institutional forces. These social relationships either enhance their teacher learning experiences by allowing them opportunities to exchange their classroom experiences and share their concerns with other colleagues or inhibit their learning by denying them opportunities to interact with other colleagues and hence reinforcing their feelings of isolation and individualism.

The next main section will revolve around the instructional-level influences on teachers' experiences while they learn to teach. These are factors that take place on the micro level of the classrooms that are situated inside the host educational institutions.

6.2 Contextual influences at the instructional level

This main section will deal with another source of contextual influences that shape teachers' learning-to-teach experiences and how they learn to carry out their work. Such influences appear at the instructional micro level of teachers' classrooms.

Classrooms derive their importance as contexts shaping the experience of learning to teach from the fact that they represent the real 'doing' environment where most of teachers' work is carried out and where continuously emerging opportunities for learning to teach arise due to the intensity of interaction between teachers and the other forces, on top of which come students. The immediate nature of classroom teaching makes this instructional context an important source in which teachers make decisions about teaching as events are played out. So, studying the classroom context is crucial if the process of how teachers learn to teach is to be understood.

The data reveals that students are the most powerful source of influences shaping the ways participant teachers do their work and that students do make impacts on the process of how beginning teachers learn to teach. Participants are quite aware that their students shape the ways they carry out their work:

"I normally learn by experience because every course I teach is different. I once had a student who was never *interested* no matter what I did. I once tried a 'puzzle' activity and wasn't expecting much .. but *he was so interested* and got all answers right .. so every student is different, and every course is different. The class I'm teaching now is different from the previous one. I mean students' interests are different" [Iman: SSI1 (Arabic) 277-81].

The fluidity of students and the associated unpredictability element create constant opportunities for teachers to consider and reconsider and sometimes adjust their own approaches in their classrooms. Two major factors regarding students as context for learning to teach appear in the data. These factors are (1) students' educational background and (2) students' age group and interests.

6.2.1 Students' educational background

Adult students, like their teachers, have also served a long 'apprenticeship of observation' in public-sector schools and developed a set of beliefs about what

language teaching is like and the best ways of learning a language. It seems that these beliefs are so ingrained that students, although they seek to find in the private sector what was missing in their school learning (see Chapter 2), still display a 'nostalgic' inclination to interpret their present experiences of language learning in light of their prior learning experiences. Learning in the private sector is 'instrumental' (Holliday, 1994: 12), i.e., it is based on a contract between language centres and students to focus the learning process on meeting students' needs. So, teachers constantly find themselves making decisions to satisfy their learners' learning preferences. Interestingly, both teaching models that are promoted on the institutional level (i.e. coursebook-based language instruction and TETE) also seem to operate on the classroom level.

Students appear to want a teaching model that is based on coursebooks. Having paid for their English course, they tend to think that teachers are not doing their job if they do not cover the coursebook:

"There's a hidden pressure [to cover the coursebook]. When you tell a student we'll finish this part, they would argue on why we won't cover the other parts. For example, in the *beginners'* course, the coursebook has 16 *units*. I normally teach 8. Some teachers teach 9 in the whole course. But students paid money to get the coursebook and can never be convinced that 8 units are enough for this course .. They think we're deceiving them" [Husein: SRI1 (Arabic) 226-9].

"Students lead you to be traditional and teach by the coursebook like in schools. They tell you 'okay we've paid money'" [Munzir: SRI3 (Arabic) 142].

Even though Munzir believes in the importance of oral practice in the EFL learning process, he finds himself teaching from the coursebook because students ask for such a teaching model. Based on his reported tendency to appreciate oral language practice in the classroom, as the chapter 5 shows, he sometimes introduces supplementary activities from outside the coursebook to stimulate students' oral participation. For example, he recalls a story that happened with him in one of his past courses when, having to teach a lesson on 'extreme activities,' he decides to abandon the coursebook and play a short video clip on a sport called Parkour (i.e. a French sport that contains some dangerous body movements) to

encourage some follow-up oral discussions by students. However, although students were involved in some speaking,

“I had a feeling and I was pretty sure that all students had a kind of internal displeasure as to why I didn’t carry out the activity from the coursebook” [Munzir: SRI3 (Arabic) 154-5].

He continues that he prefers to let classroom discussions ‘*go with the flow*’ [Munzir: SRI1 (Arabic) 219] and does not favour teaching following the structure and times of the coursebook activities. However, the fact that students have paid for the course and want their teachers to cover the coursebook leaves him with limited choice:

“I don’t like teaching by the coursebook, but again you can’t tell students ‘there’s no need for this [activity] and I’ll bring you something extra’. They tell you ‘we paid money and we want the book.’ So, okay you want the coursebook, we’ll teach you the coursebook and in the same order [of its activities]” [Munzir: SRI1 (Arabic) 216-7].

Munzir asserts that students come to the private sector to improve their speaking skills, but they come with misconceptions about how this aim can be achieved:

“When you’re ignorant of something, you refuse anything new and wish to be *on the safe side* .. students think there’s a *secret formula*. When you tell them about the coursebook at the beginning of the course, they look happy and come to ask you ‘are we going to speak when we finish the coursebook?’” [Munzir: SS11 (Arabic) 157-60].

Munzir describes how public school teaching affects students’ conceptions of learning and how they appear so achievement-oriented and hence still insist on a coursebook-based learning style on the assumption that it facilitates doing the test:

“[They think] if they memorise *vocabulary* and memorise *grammar*, they will speak, but what about *practice*. They don’t consider it an important thing .. This is because, after all, our students study for the [test] mark. They want to get high marks, so the easiest way is to memorise. It’s something fossilised in their heads. They come with the same requirements they’re used to at schools” [Munzir: SS11 (Arabic) 115-21]

Munzir comments that students believe that coursebooks facilitate this memorisation process, which makes them ask teachers to cover them the coursebooks. Teachers, in turn, are made to teach by the coursebook because

students want to have material which enables them to review their lessons, memorise grammatical rules and vocabulary and get prepared for the test. Interestingly, although these students view studying at the private sector as an opportunity to compensate them for the poor teaching they have received at public-sector schools, they are unable to accept alternative teaching styles and appear to have certain requirements which they want to fulfil and which, in turn, have impacts on how teachers are expected to carry out their work to attend to these requirements.

Munzir also suggests a further reason why some students prefer to follow coursebooks. He argues that, coming from an educational background where learners are passive listeners, some of his students appear resistant to any classroom activity that requires them to participate or speak in front of the class, and hence they find focusing the learning process on the coursebook a safe option which provides them with protection against any classroom oral participation:

“I once put the book aside and played a video on Zingo & Ringo [Pat & Mat: Czech stop-motion animated series] to stimulate a dialogue. Two girls and a boy were involved, but the others were not. I remember one of them said to me ‘can I remain just an observer, not more, not less?’ ... such a student wants to be passive, so he prefers to be on the safe side and stick to the coursebook. They urge you to teach by the coursebook. This is the problem” [Munzir: SSI1 (Arabic) 189-207].

The classroom context also influences teachers’ work in terms of the medium of instruction. The TETE approach, which is instructed to participant teachers at the institutional level, seems to be adopted by them due to influences that also operate on the classroom level. While teachers teach in line with students’ expectations derived from their school prior learning histories in terms of coursebook-based instruction, they seem to adopt the TETE approach to prevent students from reverting to early public-sector school models. More specifically, participants who believe in the importance of maximising opportunities for using English as a medium of instruction seem to show a clearly strict adherence to the TETE policy because they do not want their learners to fall back on the conventional methods characterising their schooling, particularly in terms of the use of Arabic to teach English:

“They want everything [to be translated into Arabic], every word in every context, even in grammar. Today we had the *present perfect*. They want to know that *present* means حاضر and *perfect* means تام, but what difference will that make? I don’t know. I say how about ignoring translation a little bit and let’s understand it [the present perfect] through examples .. Never. They want to get the translation word by word” [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 150-3].

Munzir is inclined to resolve such a student tendency to ask for Arabic equivalents of the target structure and vocabulary by insisting that Arabic should never be used in the English lesson:

“I’m quite sure if you open the door to Arabic, you’ll never be able to control it. I know students sometimes get bored [of long explanation] and ask for the meanings. They don’t seem to understand that they are improving their *listening* when teachers explain a new word .. They’d say ‘just give us the Arabic meaning, and that’s it’” [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 166-9].

Munzir seems strict when it comes to the application of the TETE policy for reasons pertinent to students’ educational backgrounds and the formulated learning expectations during their school education with which he does not agree and hence wants to project a sharply contrasting picture in his lessons by insisting on the prohibition of using Arabic. Although he believes that Arabic can be used in certain special situations such as explaining idioms and expressions, he seems insistent to forbid the use of Arabic because students would keep asking for Arabic translations if they heard any Arabic used in their lessons:

“to explain an expression like ‘*your guess is good as mine*,’ there’s nothing like saying ‘علمي علمك.’ The student will never forget it. That’s it – it needs no more explanation .. The students would say ‘wow we have a counterpart in Arabic.’ And *idioms* are another problem. They should be said in Arabic. ‘*To scrape through university*’ for example .. here you can tell them ‘أنا نجحت شحط’ – that’s it. However, I have a huge conflict here and I really want a solution because saying these in Arabic will urge students to keep asking for Arabic explanations” [Munzir: SSI1 (Arabic) 328-33].

Such a situation appears to create a conflict for Munzir, one of how to create a balance between his beliefs about encouraging English language use, as revealed in chapter 5, and students’ tendency to revert to school models and ask for Arabic translations, which apparently challenges these beliefs. This conflict gets intense in

situations where students' miscomprehension is encountered. Although there is an argument that using English can be abandoned in favour of student comprehension or to save time (Atkinson, 1987), Munzir appears resolute in his refusal to use Arabic even at the expense of student comprehension or lesson time fearing that this might encourage them to ask for more Arabic in his lessons. For example, he recalls a past lesson when he had to teach the abstract adverb word 'even' and states that students did not understand its meaning and tended to confuse it with 'until':

"It's a big problem, seriously. A student said '*until*,' I said 'okay *until*.' There's no choice. I give one, two, three examples and that's it. If they don't get it, I say 'okay don't worry' .. I'd leave it. There's no other choice. The only choice would be to say it in Arabic" [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 225-7].

He also recalls another lesson when he had to teach a word like 'gherkin':

"If I was to teach it again, I'd tell them it has no meaning because we were literally stuck. I spent hours [explaining it] and then had to change the classroom to put it on the *projector* because I didn't have a *projector* in my classroom. Of course, students were shocked seeing me moving them to another room just to explain a word" [Munzir: SSI2 (Arabic) 200-3].

Munzir argues that he adopts a strict stance against the use of any Arabic in his lessons because he does not want students to keep asking for it. The above comments show how he is ready to leave some lexical items unexplained or use a considerable part of the lesson time because he does not want to provide the Arabic equivalent to the words presented on the assumption that students will put pressure on him to continue teaching through translation.

Thus, students' educational backgrounds and the learning styles they have developed during their prior learning experiences exert influences on teachers to teach in certain ways. Teachers teach by the coursebook and never skip activities not only because the private language centre promotes this model but also because students ask for it. Students want material that provides them with organised information to study and 'memorise' and go to the test. The TETE approach seems to also be adopted in classrooms because teachers do not want their students to revert to the early position in their prior learning experiences at

schools where learning English was all done through translations. Teachers appear to disallow any use of Arabic and strictly adopt the TETE approach because they assume that any use of Arabic will encourage students to keep asking for it, which becomes difficult to control after a while.

6.2.2 Students' age groups and interests

Husein and Munzir's teaching experience has been focused on teaching adults in Bright Future, whereas Iman has experienced teaching teenager as well as adult groups in Pioneers. Students' age groups and interests have impacts on participants' planning, decision making and classroom practice in that participants revise their assumptions and reassess their experiences based on the age and interests of their learners.

In Bright Future, as the teaching process is mainly structured around coursebooks, student interests, even when perceived and acknowledged by their teachers, do not seem to affect teachers' decisions very much due to the highly structured coursebook-based methods of teaching suggested by the institution. Nevertheless, there are few examples where participants appear to make decisions or formulate new understandings based on their students' interests.

As chapter 5 shows, Husein is convinced that coursebooks provide a linguistic foundation for his students' language knowledge and that successful teachers teach what the syllabus designers suggest in the coursebooks. However, in a coursebook activity in which students appear to be involved in speaking and practising the target structure, he becomes aware that:

“when teaching specifically revolves around issues in our life, it becomes much deeper and leads to much better results. Our lesson today was on *superlatives* .. We needed to talk about the Syrian geography like the longest river, the biggest city in Syria, not only geography, anything in our country .. Students were pretty involved in speaking. They used *the longest, the smallest, the shortest, the best* because it related to them directly .. so teaching becomes very effective in this case, when it's personal” [Husein: SSI2 (Arabic) 275-82].

This activity which focuses on students' interests stimulates Husein's reflection on his own practice and makes him aware of the importance of introducing topics that

foster students' interests. Similarly, lack of topics revolving around students' interests also seems to stimulate participants to think about their teaching, particularly in terms of re-planning of the lessons that students find uninteresting:

"I'm determined to cross out this unit [on music] and find other materials. It will take me one whole day .. I know students will say 'you didn't give us this lesson', but I'll tell them from the very beginning that we'll skip this and take something alternative .. In *elementary A* there's also a lesson on *music*, and in *elementary B* there's one on *movies* in which students are not interested either. So I'll try to find an alternative" [Munzir: SRI3 (Arabic) 61-5].

In Pioneers, Iman teaches both adult and teenager groups. She reports a shock due to the impact of the contrasting student interests in these two groups on her concepts and classroom practice. She states that, while teaching teenagers is a fulfilling experience because they want to 'have fun', as she puts it, and hence, knowing what interests them, she has control over designing materials that meet this objective, teaching adults provides her with an experience that is mostly negative because their interests are difficult to predict. She expresses feelings of failure while teaching the adult groups due to her inability to figure out what they want or what interests them:

"One wants me to speak in Arabic. Another doesn't want Arabic. One wants a list of new words. One is not sure whether he's in the right grade level and thinks he deserves higher. Another thinks he should go lower .. A girl is annoyed because her colleagues come late in which case I repeat [what they miss]. One suggests that we're learning *English*, so we should minimise Arabic. Another does not understand everything .. and says 'your *English* is difficult and we don't understand.' I love the *teenagers* because they don't expect much of the teacher. They're here to have fun and to speak and I can do what I want. [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 142-8].

As Iman has developed a teaching style with teenager groups that is focused on games and creating enjoyment, she perceives problems when she wants to transfer this style to the adult groups. She comments that these adult students have different interests from teenagers and hence they tend to see her teaching style and the materials she brings to the classroom as unsuitable for them:

"When I want to prepare, I don't feel motivated and don't even know what to prepare. They view everything I do as childish. Everything ..

sometimes I bring games assuming that games can produce interaction. They never talk. No one talks. They remain silent" [Iman: SRI2 (Arabic) 176-9].

Failing to figure out what interests adult learners affects Iman's self-image as a teacher. She considers herself unqualified to teaching adults because she does not know how to get them interested in the English lessons. Moreover, her views of teaching as 'having fun,' which she has developed through teaching teenagers, are challenged when teaching adults, which leads to her feelings of disappointment as to why adults tend to be passive and reluctant to participate:

"I don't know how to teach *adults* .. It's a problem. Probably I wasn't born to teach *adults*. I have this feeling. I don't understand their *mentality* nor what they think .. I don't know how to deal with them .. I don't know what their *interests* are so that I can attract them through *their interests*" [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 311-4].

"to be honest, my *interest* is to *have fun, listen to songs, play games, interact*, but *adults* don't want these things" [Iman: SSI2 (Arabic) 420-1].

At the end of the data collection process, Iman's problems with teaching adults remain unresolved. She even decides not to teach adults anymore.

Thus, students' interests in the learning process appear to be another factor shaping participant teachers' work at the classroom level. Participant teachers are seen to make decisions based on the interests of the students making up their classes. They reassess their beliefs based on students' involvement in activities that foster their interests, make decisions on adapting some coursebook components to better respond to their students' interests or suffer a trauma which affects their self-image as teachers when they fail to recognise their students' interests in the classroom.

6.3 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has described the influence of the teaching context on participant teachers' early EFL experiences while they learn to teach in the private language centres where they work. The chapter has highlighted two major sources of influence which operate on two main levels: the institutional level and the classroom level. On the institutional level, certain forces appear to have impacts on

teachers and the ways they carry out their work and how they teach and act. These are represented in the institutions' promoted styles of EFL teaching and the collegial relationships in the workplace. On the classroom level, students making up participants' classes appear to make impacts on the ways participants make decisions and perform their teaching tasks. Students' educational backgrounds and the beliefs they formulated in their early school education seem to channel their own learning preferences which, in turn, affect their teachers' ways of doing their work to meet these preferences. Students' interests in the learning process and their age groups also seem to have impacts on how teachers learn to do their work at the classroom level.

Chapter Seven

Discussion of Study Findings

In this chapter, I revisit the research question around which this study has been structured. The chapter also brings together the findings reported in this study and synthesise them in the context of the literature review. These findings are discussed taking into account the literature on beginning teachers' learning to teach and the debates evolved around this research field. These discussions pinpoint the aspects of convergence and divergence of the findings of this study and other similar debates and studies in the existing literature and show to what extent this study contributes to the existing knowledge and theoretical notions on teachers' learning to teach.

7.1 Research question revisited

The key findings of this study and their relation to the debates and findings of other studies in the literature are presented in the subsequent sections under this main research question which they are intended to address:

- How do beginning English language teachers without any previous training learn to teach during the first year of their teaching experience?

There are two sub-questions which the findings chapters have specifically addressed:

- a) What is the influence of prior learning experiences on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?
- b) What is the influence of the teaching context on beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach?

Thus, the purpose of this study has been to understand the process of learning to teach as experienced by Syrian beginning teachers who start their teaching careers in their educational institutions without any previous formal teacher education. Before I start the main section on the discussion of findings, it is useful to provide a summary of the key findings as presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

7.2 Summary of key findings

- Participant beginning teachers enter the teaching profession with previously-held beliefs formulated during their prior learning experiences, i.e. the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ period when they received their formal education at public-sector state schools and universities. These beliefs appear to have clear impacts on teachers’ judgment and perception which, in turn, influence their classroom practice.
- Five common themes appear to run across the beginning participant teachers in terms of the beliefs they have constructed during their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ and which have impacts on their current learning-to-teach experiences. Teachers hold beliefs about the process of EFL teaching, the use of coursebooks, the role of EFL teachers, the teaching of grammar, and student-teacher relationships.
- Participants have formulated beliefs about the process of EFL teaching, which range between a relative confirmation of school teaching models and a clear rejection of these school models.
 - Husein’s beliefs run counter to the transmission models prevalent in schools. He states that he teaches English communicatively; however, his classroom practice reflects a controlled, exercise-oriented approach within an apparent IRF sequence in which student talk is minimised and limited to providing short answers which are followed by quick feedback from him.
 - Munzir believes that English lessons should focus on developing students’ oral language use rather than on grammar explanations and doing coursebook exercises. His classroom practice shows him partially enacting practices according to his espoused beliefs which he developed as a reaction to his early negative experiences as a learner. He occasionally initiates free, uncontrolled discussions with learners, especially at the beginning of reading lessons.
 - Iman has developed a teaching style focused on creating enjoyment and encouraging the use of English for real-life situations. This is a reaction to her early experiences at school when she experienced feelings of

boredom, dullness and lack of language practice. Now in her teaching, she uses games and designs supplementary materials with a focus on real-life events.

- Participants hold beliefs about the use of coursebooks. These beliefs have been formulated during their prior learning experiences:
 - Husein seems to confirm the dominant school-based approaches and believes that teachers must teach from coursebooks. For him, learning is believed to be a systematic and ‘synthetic’ process of information accumulation that depends on the graded and gradual organisation of coursebook activities in a brick-by-brick fashion.
 - On the contrary, Munzir supports teaching models that break away from coursebook-centered methods and holds beliefs that these methods can inhibit teachers’ and learners’ ability to engage in free, language-productive activities. His beliefs are a reaction to his negative experiences with coursebook-based models of teaching. However, his classroom practice reveals that his lessons are based, to a large extent, on the use of coursebooks. He states that this is due to a set of contextual factors.
 - Iman is entirely against the coursebook-based teaching models because these caused her a negative feeling of boredom in the past and contradict with her own espoused beliefs about learning as ‘fun’. In her teaching, she enacts practices drawing upon her espoused beliefs. She moves away from coursebooks and focuses her teaching on supplementary materials aimed at fostering students’ interests instead.
- Participants hold beliefs about the role of EFL teachers in the teaching process.
 - Husein tends to view EFL teachers as transmitters of knowledge and explainers of language information. He also appears to view teachers as knowledgeable people, a view which seems to affect his attitude and self-image in the classroom especially in situations where he

- avoids appearing doubtful about his own knowledge in front of his students.
- Munzir also seems to have been influenced by the typical images of teachers as knowledge providers and role models for correct language performance, despite reporting opposing opinions. He also seems to act as a controller in his classroom during his language exchange with students appearing in charge of the class and activity, especially in terms of who should speak at any one time and when he insists on his opinions and rejects alternative perspectives offered by students.
 - Iman reports that she views teachers as guides and facilitators of learning who provide students with opportunities to practise their oral skills rather than dispensing information. She believes that teachers must allow the majority of classroom time for student talking. However, she reports frustration at her ways of teaching referring to her dominant teacher talking time which she believes has been acquired unconsciously from her former teachers.
- Participants hold beliefs about the teaching of grammar that seem to have been developed during their ‘apprenticeship of observation.’
 - Husein appears to draw upon notions of teaching grammar that are mostly ‘deductive’ in approach and which characterise typical school teaching models, which he initially criticises. Despite his assertions to conduct grammar lessons inductively, his views of such an approach seem rather limited. He is seen to fall back on the ‘default’ approach in his prior learning experiences, although he has read about an alternative approach.
 - Munzir holds espoused beliefs developed as a reaction to the public-sector school models he witnessed in the past. He states that grammar should be taught through examples where the focus is on practice rather than theory. However, these espoused beliefs are rarely reflected in his practice which reveals his tendency to teach grammar as it was taught

during his 'apprenticeship of observation' where the focus was mainly on the explanation of grammatical rules and where students' practice was rare.

- Iman also appears to believe that grammar needs to be taught with a focus on use rather than form. As a reaction to her old school practices, she now appreciates the importance of teachers' presenting enough examples and activities to introduce the grammatical structure before they can teach the form. However, she seems to sometimes revert to the traditional method of grammar in her teaching, especially when she focuses on teaching the rules with little evidence of any prior use of examples or activities to introduce the grammatical point.
- Finally, teachers hold beliefs about student-teacher relationships based on their own prior experiences as learners at school and university in the past.
 - Husein seems to have chosen for himself an image of the teacher who is civilised, friendly, caring and encouraging based on his beliefs about what teacher-student relationships must be like. Such beliefs have been shaped during his experiences with both positive and negative teacher attitudes and behaviours.
 - Munzir appears critical of the formal relationships between teachers and students in his 'apprenticeship of observation' and approves of some former teachers who were flexible and friendly. However, in his relationship with his learners, he appears quite influenced by the typical images of the teacher that were prevalent in his past schooling and seems to insist on keeping his distance with his students and rejecting to be friends with them fearing that this might lead to him losing respect in their eyes.
 - Iman believes that students must be treated equally with respect and as friends. In her teaching, she wishes to create an opposing picture to that which she witnessed in the past when she saw some negative attitudes from some former teachers. She also seems to be influenced by one of her positive former role models, who has made

her value more the personal human side of teachers' profession than their knowledge or methodology.

- Factors coming from participants' teaching context appear to further shape and reshape teachers' conceptions of teaching and how they carry out their professional work. These contextual factors seem to be operative at the level of the institution as a workplace as well as the classroom as a venue for 'teacher action.'
- Institutional factors, which have impacts on teachers' work, include the institution's preferred models of teaching and the institution's social relationships between colleagues.
- Private language centres promote a teaching style based on using coursebooks as the main classroom material for instruction.
 - This is done to serve a number of administrative purposes such as allocating students to different grade levels, conducting placement tests and conducting achievement tests to measure the language knowledge covered during the course against already-prepared test questions designed by the coursebook writers.
 - The washback effects of language tests require teachers to teach coursebook components at the same rate across each grade level.
 - The coursebook-based language instruction leaves teachers with little choice over what they want to teach their learners or cross out of the coursebook. This, in turn, makes them urged to cover all coursebook activities including those which they believe are not appropriate or do not match learners' interests. Teachers' style of teaching becomes exercise-oriented and monotonous, and students also experience boredom due to the length of coursebook units that tackle one same topic.
 - Teachers are also required to teach in a quick pace to cover the required number of coursebook units in a limited number of sessions. Teachers are left with very little choice over how to conduct these lessons; they can neither encourage students' presentations and free

discussions nor bring any extra supplementary materials to their classrooms, as the priority goes to what the language centre wants them to cover in the coursebooks.

- This coursebook-based policy also seems to reinforce teachers' teacher-centred approaches, as finishing the assigned coursebook units is seen as more important than the methodologies implemented. Teachers do not find enough time to encourage spontaneous talk or implement elicitation techniques.
- Teaching English through English (TETE) is another promoted style of teaching adopted in teachers' workplaces.
 - Private language centres wish to impress their student customers by trying to create a Western culture in their premises through employing teachers with native-like accents of English and adopting a TETE policy.
 - participants sometimes work under the pressure of having to appear real 'native' speakers in front of their learners and, in some situations, pretend that they do not understand Arabic.
 - However, such a TETE approach seems positively challenging for participants and contributes to their self-image as good English language teachers. There is now a consensus among participants that using English must be maximised in EFL lessons. Participants also appear to develop certain strategies, such as concept-checking and using body language, to explain the target structure in their lessons under this institutional policy.
 - Likewise, the TETE policy also imposes a number of challenges for teachers, especially in terms of time management and checking comprehension. Teachers believe that using L1 can save them some time in their lessons, but they are not allowed to use it.
- The institutions' internal cultures in terms of collegial relationships between individuals are another institutional factor that appears of high importance for participants' first-year experiences and how they carry out their work.

- Participants seem to appreciate the importance of collaboration and having a colleague to share with them their concerns or classroom experiences. However, due to a number of institutional factors, they tend to work either individually or in cliques. The individualistic style of working is reinforced due to reasons related to competitiveness or envy in the workplace.
 - Examples of collaboration appear so minimal and are mostly spontaneous and serendipitous and occur in at clique level based on notions of mutual trust. Participants within their cliques seem to talk about their classroom experiences and concerns and discuss issues related to institutional regulations.
 - Working mainly within a clique and not with other teachers also appears to be due to other institutional factors such as teachers' teaching schedules, heavy teaching load and absence of any plans for structural collaboration in staff meetings. These factors seem to cut down on opportunities for meeting or working with other teachers in the centre.
- Contextual factors at the classroom level mainly involve students as contexts for learning that shape teachers' ways of carrying out their work.
 - Students come from an educational background that encourage coursebook-based methods of language instruction and use of L1 to explain the target L2 structure.
 - Having paid for the English course, students ask their teachers to cover them the coursebook. They also want to have material to help them study for the test. Further, they come with a misconception about language learning: that people are able to speak English if they finish all activities in the coursebook. So, teachers find themselves having to cover the coursebooks to cope with their students' learning preferences.
 - Knowing that students might ask them to use Arabic to explain the target structure, teachers seem to show a clearly strict adherence to

the TETE policy because they do not want their learners to fall back onto the conventional methods characterising their schooling, particularly because students might want to ask for Arabic equivalent to every individual English word they encounter.

- Teachers retain their strict adherence to the TETE approach even in situations where using Arabic might facilitate student learning, save time or when problems of student miscomprehension arise. Teachers insist that students must not revert to their former teaching models they received at schools and that they do not want to end up having to teach all their lessons through translation. In this decision, they seem to be 'protected' by the TETE institutional policy.
- Students' interests and age groups seem to also affect teachers' decision making processes, lesson planning and how they do their work. Finding out what interests their learners, teachers are made aware that teaching is more effective when it centres on students' interests. They also appear to suggest modifications to some coursebook activities to foster their students' interests. However, when students' interests contradict with teachers' preferred models of teaching, conflicts arise that may affect teachers' self-image and create doubts about whether or not they can continue teaching these students, like in Iman's story.

This has been a quick summary of the key research findings as presented in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. The following section will include the main discussion of the study findings in light of what we already know about the process of learning to teach.

7.3 Main discussion of the study findings

This study makes a contribution to our knowledge in the ELT domain of how EFL beginning teachers thrown in at the deep end without any access for previous formal training are still able to teach English by drawing on their previous experiences of 'experiencing teaching' at school (an 'unconscious' dimension of the process) and by responding to the realities of the experience of teaching in the workplace. The findings of this study suggest that learning to teach for these

beginning EFL teachers is a complex process that is influenced by a set of both pre-practice and in-practice types of influences. The pre-practice influences come from participant teachers' experiences prior to commencing teaching, i.e. their previous school and university learning experiences as students as well as the understanding and beliefs about teaching and learning that were shaped by these experiences. The in-practice influences, on the other hand, come from participant teachers' current teaching experiences in the workplace to which they have differing responses, to both macro- and micro-level sets of contextual factors within their educational institutions and classrooms.

It should be noted that this complex web of factors and influences revealed in this study pertains to the early stages of the learning-to-teach process. The formative experiences, both in the past and in the present, are highly significant in moulding teachers' responses and classroom practice, but we are now only looking at the first year in EFL teaching and cannot really extrapolate from this into the rest of a teacher's career. Learning to teach is an on-going, life-time journey which can be studied from different perspectives and can be seen to be shaped by different sets of influences at different stages of teachers' professional careers.

The following is a discussion of the main study findings in terms of each set of influences revealed in the analysis chapters.

7.3.1 Pre-practice influences shaping the process of learning to teach

Findings of this study suggest that there is a close relationship between participant teachers' 'apprenticeship of observation' and their current experiences of learning to teach. The 'apprenticeship of observation' construct provides a valuable basis for understanding teacher beliefs and how and when these have originated. This construct, as Wideen, *et al.* (1998) observe, has taken on its authority in studies on learning to teach mainly through repetition rather than empirical evidence. It is even sometimes viewed as a negative concept which teachers need to overcome if reform attempts are to be made in English language teaching. In this study, I have provided empirical evidence on the influence of the 'apprenticeship of observation' on teachers' current learning-to-teach experiences. The 'apprenticeship of observation' model is not necessarily a negative construct, especially for those

teachers who have not had the opportunity to follow teacher education. It actually appears of significant importance for understanding how beginning teachers are socialised into the profession without any kind of previous preparation. It provides insights into how these beginning teachers begin to teach and what kind of background experience they bring with them that characterises their early EFL experiences while they learn to teach in the first year.

It is clear in this study that the participant teachers have not entered the teaching profession '*tabula rasa*' or empty vessels but have brought with them an accumulation of past experiences when they were students. Despite not having received any formal training to prepare them for teaching, these beginning teachers are able to describe and talk about their own thoughts, philosophies and opinions about EFL teaching and EFL teachers. They appear to have a rich store of theories and mental images about teaching and teachers as well as their students and ways of dealing with them. The following are some important themes revealed in the findings about the relationship between teacher beliefs, which have been developed during teachers' 'apprenticeship of observation, and learning to teach.

(a) Teacher beliefs as latent models of action

Pre-practice influences from participant teachers' past learning history manifest themselves in the form of personal beliefs. Each participant's prior learning experiences have provided them with implicit theories as well as latent models of action about EFL teaching and EFL teachers that guide their decision-making processes and have impacts on their classroom practices. Participants have brought to their classrooms a set of well-established preconceptions about teaching and learning that tend to be influential on the process of their learning to teach in the first year. The formulated beliefs during participants' 'apprenticeship of observation' appear to shape the ways they conceptualise their own instructional practices as well as their own emerging perceptions of EFL teaching and of themselves as EFL teachers. It seems that "The story of learning to teach begins actually much earlier than the time one first decides to become a teacher"

(Britzman, 2003: 3). Participants have developed a wide range of latent models of teaching by the time they have arrived at their classrooms.

The latent models of teaching formulated, mostly unconsciously, in the past through observation of former teachers and teaching styles are now activated when teachers start to realise the tasks of their profession, to act as current models of action during teachers' early experiences of learning to teach. Teachers' experiences are clearly guided and influenced by these latent models. Such an influence appears in relation to participant teachers' beliefs and practices about the process of EFL teaching, the use of coursebooks, the role of EFL teachers, the teaching of grammar and the student-teacher relationships. Beliefs on these areas have been mostly developed during the previous learning experiences of teachers and seem to act as models of action shaping the ways they perceive their early EFL experiences of becoming teachers. These latent models, which Littlewood (1999: 4) calls "classroom schemata" provide teachers with assumptions about how their students learn, conceptions of what it means to be a learner and a teacher and ways of deciding what to do in routine situations and predicting what the effects of these actions will be.

(b) Teacher beliefs as lens to interpret experiences

Participants' beliefs formulated during their 'apprenticeship of observation' seem to act as lens and filters shaping the way they interpret incidents and also new information about teaching and learning and how this can be translated into classroom practice. In many cases, participants are seen to interpret the new terms and concepts presented to them during interviews in light of the beliefs they hold. Although they sometimes admit that these terms and concepts are new to them, they seem to try to talk about them guided by their unconscious or espoused beliefs about teaching and learning which shape the way they make their responses. Munzir states clearly that he has limited knowledge of ELT terminology; nevertheless, he interprets such terms as effective teaching and teacher's role on the basis of his beliefs about encouraging oral practice in the classroom. Similarly, Iman's beliefs about the importance of affective factors in teaching makes her interpret effective teaching as one in which teachers leave an impact on students

on the interpersonal level. These findings lend support to Kennedy (1991) and Johnson (1994) who assert that teacher beliefs have a filtering effect in that they shape teachers' responses and perceptions and affect the way they interpret new information and ideas. Participant teachers' beliefs also seem to determine how they assess their own teaching and make judgments on the successful and less successful teaching events and incidents in light of their existing beliefs. This can be seen in the way Munzir measures his own success on the basis of the amount of free, uncontrolled student talk introduced in his classroom. Iman, too, judges her own success on the basis of whether or not enjoyment is fostered with her students. That teacher beliefs act as lens and filters through which teachers interpret new information and view their own teaching is further supported by Woods (1996) and Arias (2004) who argue that it is teachers' beliefs that determine how they will interpret events related to teaching and therefore the teaching decisions that are made and the events that result.

This leads to the discussion of the inherent features of these beliefs that act as filters and affect judgments, which is yet another aspect of the pre-practice influences on the experiences of becoming teachers. The present study shows that participants' beliefs about teaching and learning are, in many cases, unrealistic, straightforward and overly simplistic. Such beliefs as 'enjoyment leads to learning,' 'learning is about arranging bricks of graded bits of knowledge in the coursebook,' and 'students learn if they like their teacher' seem to be held and acted upon by participants as truths in their classrooms. The fact that beginning teachers' hold unrealistic and overly simplistic beliefs about teaching and learning can be attributed to Lortie's claim that teachers had only limited access to their former teachers' 'backstage' processes and hence their concentration was on the observable, accessible practices. They are "on the receiving end of what teachers do and are therefore only in a position to notice teachers' actions and their influence on them as students. They are not in a position to be reflective and analytical about what they see .." (Mewborn & Tyminki, 2006: 30).

While they learn to teach, participants also draw upon beliefs that appear to have been shaped by affective factors. They seem to have focused extensively on observable personal attributes of their former teachers and formulated beliefs

about humane ways of establishing relationships in the language classroom. In their accounts, they talk about teachers who were kind, made learning fun, had a charisma, joked and accepted jokes from students, greeted students outside the classroom, encouraged them and acted in a friendly way and as parents. Accordingly, they seem to embrace similar beliefs with affective dimensions that guide their actions and the way they interpret their teaching in their own classrooms, particularly in terms of how they deal with their students. This finding goes in line with Bailey *et al.*'s (1996) claim that beginning teachers seem to focus on the 'teacher factor.' Iman's story shows how she tends to interpret and make judgements on her own experiences as a beginning teacher on the basis of her perceptions of her former teachers' personalities. She has been influenced by her former positive role-model teacher at university who contributed to many of her current beliefs and teaching philosophies on the interpersonal level. Lortie (1975) seems to have provided an explanation to why beginning teachers draw upon personal attributes asserting that, when they were students, they were not analytical in what they saw and therefore what they learned on their 'apprenticeship of observation' was based on individual personalities rather than pedagogical principles.

(c) Teacher unconscious vs. espoused beliefs

A final important aspect of the pre-practice influences on teachers' experiences of learning to teach is that the beliefs developed during personal learning histories inform teachers' current practices and, in many instances, lead them to teach the way they were taught in the past. Due to the absence of any intervention (e.g. formal teacher education) between the participant teachers' graduation from the Department of English Literature and their initial employment in their educational institutions, the influence of these beliefs appears at its best.

The general picture that appears from the findings is that participant teachers continue to draw upon images of the models of teaching they have witnessed and observed over years of their formal school and university education even when they appear critical of or unsatisfied with these models. For the most part, participant teachers talk about their early experiences as learners in a negative

way citing their prior school experiences and former teachers' methodologies and styles of teaching as providing little help for their EFL learning. Such negative experiences seem to have impacts on their early experience of learning to teach in that they inspire them to be willing to compensate their learners for the poor standards of teaching that they received during their 'apprenticeship of observation.' Beginning teachers appear to want to counter their negative prior learning experiences and offer a contrasting picture to the unsuccessful models of teaching they received or encountered in the past. In many situations, they state clearly that the beliefs they hold are reactions to their prior school experiences which were, to a large extent, negative for them. They seem to make intentional attempts to counter these negative experiences and transform them into more positive experiences for themselves and their learners. This is a common position experienced by beginning teachers that is supported in the literature (e.g. John, 1996; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Zeichner and Gore (1990: 333) assert that teachers "focus more directly on their own learning as pupils and deliberately seek to create in their own teaching those conditions that were missing from their own education." In this study, participants' attempts to counter their early negative experiences are also associated with idealism and enthusiasm to do things differently and introduce alternative styles of teaching.

However, most of their idealism and enthusiasm are expressed in the form of espoused beliefs, ones which they say they believe or come to believe. Their behaviour does not always match their espoused beliefs, and they cannot always help replicating previous practice, which seems to have a powerful unconscious effect on their present teaching experiences. While they say they reject their past negative experiences, they cannot always succeed in escaping from their influence. Their previous learning experiences have unconsciously shaped their practices despite their personal determination to avoid these. They appear to be caught in an ongoing flow of activities and events and somehow enact practices from their deep learning experiences as learners in which they formed many beliefs unconsciously in spite of their reported desires to do things differently. This is quite consistent with Kennedy's (1991: 16) observation that:

Often, despite their intentions to do otherwise, new teachers teach as they were taught. The power of their "apprenticeship of observation," and of the conventional images of teaching that derive from childhood experiences, makes it very difficult to alter teaching practices...

There are many instances in participants' experiences in which they are seen to report certain espoused beliefs, often opposing ones, but tend to fall back to replicate the models of teaching which they have initially criticised. For example, Husein is not satisfied with his own prior school experiences with learning English, and so he asserts that he teaches English communicatively. However, his classroom practice shows a similar model of teaching which he observed at school in which the teacher controls the classroom exchange in a dominant IRF model. Iman, too, reports a desire to act as a facilitator and give more space for students to practise speaking, but finds herself unable to give up her controlling attitude in terms of her dominant teacher talking time in the classroom. This is evidence of the strength of previous learning experiences in unconsciously shaping teachers' beliefs, and a testament to the resistance and lasting power of those beliefs which were formulated unconsciously in the early years of education. Pajares (1992: 317) refers to this position asserting that

the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, for these beliefs subsequently affect perception and strongly influence the processing of information. It is for this reason that newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable.

Falling back on the conventional practices characterising their prior learning experiences seems an important aspect of their current experiences while they learn to teach.

Such a reliance on early school models of teaching also seems to occur due to the lack of alternative views of teaching to act as teachers' preferred models of action. The power and depth of participants' unconscious beliefs prove to create a constant barrier to the emergence of more powerful models of teaching and learning. Even when they show some level of awareness of alternative views, they seem to lack a clear vision of how to effectively act upon these in their actual classroom practices. Thus, these conventional practices in their prior learning experiences seem to unconsciously override teachers' projected beliefs of EFL

teachers and teaching shaping their instructional practices in a way that makes them teach the way they were taught.

The conventionality of the teaching models in teachers' learning histories coupled with the fact that there was no intervention whatsoever between their prior and present experiences makes these traditional school models instilled in them very resistant to change, because teachers have no powerful alternative notions and views to act as a model for their classroom practices. This can be seen in participant teachers' conceptions of the role of EFL teachers as knowledge providers in the classroom and how they view the process of EFL learning as the acquisition of language knowledge. It can also be seen in teachers' approaches to conduct grammar lessons mostly deductively despite sometimes stating otherwise. Farrell (1999) argues that the beliefs of beginning teachers are resistant to change because these teachers are inflexible due to their lack of knowledge about how to adjust their beliefs to serve teaching purposes. Further, participants' beliefs appear resistant to change due to the depth and the perceived familiarity of the surrounding educational system which creates a conflict between their current experiences and what they know through experience as learners to be the teaching norm in that context and which does not allow them to view alternative views of teaching and learning. "Having been in classrooms for many years, they have internalized through an *apprenticeship of observation* [original italics], many of the values, practices and beliefs of their teachers" (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000: 114) and seem to draw upon them in the present. They appear to "revert to precisely those well-established teaching regularities they have implicitly soaked up ..." (Tomlinson, 1999: 537).

7.3.2 In-practice influences shaping the process of learning to teach

Findings of this study suggest that learning to teach is not only a simple matter of acquiring propositional knowledge about the practice of teaching per se, nor is it about simply acting upon one's beliefs and translating these into classroom practices. It is also about learning how to deal with different "sets of behaviors congruent with the environmental demands" (Doyle, 1977: 31, cited in Farrell, 2008: 43) of teachers' contexts of workplaces. The study shows that considering

the teaching context is vital if the process of learning to teach and how one becomes a teacher is to be richly understood. The private language centres with their beliefs and peculiarities as well as the relationships that bind people in them all have implications for how teachers perceive their early experiences while they learn to teach and how they carry out their work.

The in-practice influences on participants' experiences of learning to teach in the first year come in the form of sets of forces and factors created by multiple contexts of teacher work on both the institutional and instructional levels. This study adds to our existing knowledge by taking the concept of teacher work context – one which has long been viewed as synonymous with structural dimensions of schools – and redefining it in terms of sets of organisational policies and procedures as well as social relationships shaping the ways beginning teachers establish themselves in the workplace and perform their teaching tasks. By examining these policies, procedures and relationships within the context of teachers' workplaces, several assumptions about the experience of learning to teach in the first year become apparent.

(a) The 'wash out effect'

One of the most important elements of the in-practice contextual influences as revealed in the findings is what Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) refer to as the 'wash out effect.' Although this term describes the experiences of teachers who have attended previous teacher education, it can also clearly apply to the participants of this study. Participants have formulated a set of teaching ideals, mostly as a reaction to their negative prior learning experiences or their own informal learning experiences (as in Munzir's story who improved his own English at home through films and songs). These ideals are not only abandoned due to the depth and familiarity of the surrounding teaching traditions in the wider educational system but are also 'washed out' by the teaching context and the reality of real-world teaching in the private language centres. Once these beginning teachers start teaching, their ideals, which are generally associated with progressive and liberal attitudes, clash with the specific needs of the employers and the common beliefs and demands of the workplaces. In many situations, participants abandon

their espoused ideals due to external forces and appear with limited choice over their own teaching and how they want to perform their teaching tasks. This is clear in Munzir's continuing conflicts between his own preferred approaches and those promoted in the private language centre where he works. Influenced by his own espoused beliefs as well as his own informal learning experiences, he starts teaching with certain beliefs about the focus of English language teaching on encouraging oral language practice, as this is what constitutes learning a language for him. However, these beliefs are clearly challenged by the institutional preferred models of teaching which focus on strictly delivering the coursebook material in a limited number of sessions. Husein's beliefs about the importance of using students' L1 to explain new vocabulary or save time while explaining the coursebook instructions are also challenged by the institutional policy which strictly bans the use of students' L1 for political reasons.

Teacher beliefs are not only 'washed out' at the institutional level. Student factors such as their educational backgrounds and age groups and interests also play a vital role in posing challenges for beginning teachers. This is congruent with McLaughlin (1993) findings that students are a powerful prominent feature of the workplace and that students define the context of teacher work through their diversity, individual and cohort personalities. Iman's teaching experience involves incidents in which her beliefs are 'washed out' by student factors. This is seen in her perceived dilemma to create balance between her beliefs about making learning 'fun' and the negative attitude of her adult student groups who find her approaches 'childish' and not appropriate. Participant beginning teachers are aware that students shape their work hourly, daily and in each course. They are conscious that on any given day or course, their students might come with different sets of interests and needs. This fluidity create daily challenges for teachers in ways difficult to predict. Teachers' perception of their students influence how they approach their work. Their choices to accommodate their students and their needs and interests take precedence over their beliefs about their preferred approaches. They often articulate a frustrated awareness of the inconsistencies between their stated beliefs and what they actually do in the classroom represented in statements like *'I don't know how to teach adults .. It's a problem. Probably I wasn't*

born to teach adults,' 'Students lead you to be traditional and teach by the coursebook like in schools,' 'I don't feel motivated and don't even know what to prepare. They view everything I do as childish' and 'they paid money to get the coursebook and can never be convinced that 8 units are enough for this course .. They think we're deceiving them.' These dilemmas and challenges have impacts on how teachers make responses when they get their beliefs and ideals overruled and 'washed out' by the environmental demands of their workplaces as well as students making up their classes. This invites the following discussion on how these beginning teachers choose to act in response to this encountered reality.

(b) Strategic compliance: sink or swim?

The 'reality shock' perceived by participant beginning teachers seems to create a

“two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socializing forces of the school culture [and students]” (Day, 1999: 59).

The mismatch perceived between participant teachers' beliefs and ideals and the tasks they are expected to perform including the models of teaching they are required to carry out often leaves them with two scenarios: they either decide to give up or go with the tide.

Time and again, Iman alludes that she would leave the profession if her visions are not met. She had actually left the language centre where she worked before she joined Pioneers because she was constrained by coursebook-based approaches promoted in that language centre, which challenged her style of teaching as 'fun'. She also decides to give up teaching adults reporting feelings of frustration at their poor participation, which affect her self-image as a teacher, and which in turn leads her to announce that she is not successful teaching adult learners and even was not born to teach them. It seems that her position is like Shulman's (1986) description which suggests that beginning teachers usually measure the success of their teaching in terms of students' responses and levels of participation and motivation rather than on their own preparation and planning and approaches. That beginning teachers think of leaving the profession due to

their inability to adapt to their teaching context is not new. M. Borg (2008) finds a similar position when one of her participants decides to leave the teaching profession due to contextual factors that challenged her ideas of teaching as 'fun'.

The second scenario is that beginning teachers start to comply with the norms and values of the workplace despite the fact that these do not match their own beliefs and values. Teachers' beliefs are transformed into situationally appropriate models. Eraut (1994) refers to the importance of teaching contexts in tailoring or transforming teachers' ideas and actions asserting that any idea brought to a new context undergoes a kind of transformation to become acceptable in that context. Most of the participants' ideas and beliefs initially originated in TESEP state school contexts. When these beliefs are brought to the BANA private contexts, they undergo some transformation in order to become applicable in contextually appropriate ways. Participants seem to abandon their own espoused ideals and 'how things *ought to be*' in favour of 'the world of *is*' (Keddie: 1971: 135). Much of their learning-to-teach activity is now seen as "a function of ongoing transformation of roles and understanding in the sociocultural activities in which [they] participate[s]" (Rogoff, 1994: 210). The policies and promoted approaches of teaching in the private sector mould beginning teachers' practices in ways that comply with the institutional regulations but might inhibit their opportunities to teach as they want or even attempt to resolve their own problematic classroom situations. Beginning teachers have little to say regarding the application of their own visions in their classrooms because the institutional policies determine certain modes of action that cut down on their opportunities to act upon what they believe. When their beliefs are 'washed out', beginning teachers are seen to adopt a stance of 'strategic complicity' (Lacey, 1977) in which they comply with the authorities' "definition of situation and the constraints of the situation but retain private reservations about them" (Lacey, 1977: 72). Their survival instincts in the workplace lead them to adjust their perspectives and beliefs to resolve the conflicts that arise from the demands imposed by the surrounding teaching environment. This can be seen in Munzir's story, for example, when he, acting upon his beliefs, introduces a new approach in his classroom in the early weeks of his career, one which is based on student presentations to practise speaking, but finds himself

readjusting this approach to fit in with the product-oriented, coursebook-based type of instruction encouraged in the language centre. He follows the approaches set in the language centre even if they contradict with his preferred approaches. He decides to go along with these institutional policies, though not necessarily believing in their value, for strategic reasons in order to gain acceptance within the private centre. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1985: 1) assert that beginning teachers are made to conform to institutional norms of teacher behaviour. They continue: "Willingly or unwillingly, beginning teachers are seen to be cajoled and molded into shapes acceptable within their schools."

A new important dimension of learning to teach emerges when teachers adopt such a 'strategic compliance' stance in the workplace. Starting their teaching in the new teaching context that can be significantly different from their own former educational context where most of their beliefs were developed, beginning teachers enter a period of discovery and rediscovery of themselves as teachers while they are adapting and coping with the requirements of their work contexts. They engage in thinking about themselves and assessing their own philosophy and practice of teaching, which not only leads to revised assumptions and perspectives but also leads to learning to become a different person as a result of the continuing conflict between 'who am I at this moment?' and 'who do I need to be.' In this sense, learning to teach involves the construction of teacher identities. Having to resolve conflict between who they actually are and who they are required to act as and adjust approaches to fit in with the context of their workplaces involves them having to construct and reconstruct new values and assumptions (Pennington *et al*, 1996). So, part of the process of learning to become a teacher is learning to become a different person with respect to the conditions of their workplaces. Lave and Wenger (1991: 53) put it thus:

Learning [to teach] .. implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings. Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning .. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations.

In the private language centres, participants are required to develop new notions of English language teaching practices through engaging in an activity which requires them to present a different picture from that in public-sector schools and which complies with the workplace policies. The prominent example in this study is teachers' attempts to project an image of a teacher who masters the English language as well as native speakers do. Teachers assume this new 'native-speaker' identity and act according to it during their whole courses. Interestingly, in many instances, they find this 'transformation of self' positively challenging and contributing to their self-image as successful English language teachers.

(c) Personal influences: working relationship systems

A final dimension of the in-practice influences on teachers' learning-to-teach experiences as revealed in this study come in the form of persons the beginning teacher interacts with in the workplace such as colleagues and principals.

Findings of this study support Williams, Prestage & Bedward's (2001) argument that one of the most important factors in becoming a teacher is teachers' relationships with their colleagues. At this level of social relationships, certain themes related to the process of becoming a teacher in the first year become apparent.

Collegial relationships in the workplace appear to have noticeable impacts on participant teachers' work while they learn to teach. The general picture revealed in this study supports Zeichner, Tabachnick and Densmore (1987, cited in Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997: 11) that the socialization process is in fact a complex one because

schools generally contain multiple ideologies in the form of teachers
.. The task of the new teacher becomes one of weaving their way
amongst these often identifying with one like-minded individual of
group of teachers from whom they can seek support

Participants have two contrasting experiences in terms of the social relationships in their workplaces. They are either fortunate to find a 'like-minded individual,' as in Husein and Munzir's story, or unfortunate to be left alone and continue work in isolation, as in Iman's narrative.

Iman finds herself detached from other established teachers in her language centre because they maintain cliques. Not having the opportunity to either meet a trusted colleague or join any group of established teachers reinforces her style of carrying out her work individually. She also experiences trauma which shapes the way she decides to continue teaching in her language centre. Established teachers show her their dominance by reporting her failures to the manager as a way of maintaining the pecking order in the workplace. This intensified her feelings of isolation when she decides not to share her own experience unless she has met a trusted other. That beginning teachers experience isolation in the workplace is not a new finding. Farrell (2006; 2008) finds a similar situation when he studies the early learning-to-teach experience of one English language teacher in Singapore and the complications and dilemmas he goes through. Farrell (2008: 51) notes: “of the three complications Wee Jin [his participant] was faced with during his first year as a teacher, collegial relationships proved to be the most difficult for him to resolve, if he ever did.”

On the other hand, Husein and Munzir, being lucky to have met each other in the language centre, live a more fulfilling experience. They seem to feel secure sharing ideas with each other, which leads them to reflect upon their practices and develop some approaches. Nias (1989) and Hopkins *et al*, (1998) argue that teachers develop professionally through collaborative work which can lead to improved practice. Husein and Munzir seem to be engaged in a process of ‘shared creation’ (Schrage, 1990: 40) in which “two or more individuals with complementary skills [interact] to create a shared understanding that none had previously possessed or could have come to on their own”. Situational constraints such as the distribution of the teaching schedule and working shift systems also seem to explain why Husein and Munzir meet and talk with each other but not with other teachers. Farrell (2003) finds a similar situation where his participant does not seem to collaborate with other teachers because he is detached, in terms of physical location, which denied him access to opportunities for support.

Principals’ roles also appear important in teachers’ learning-to-teach experiences through their actions or inactions. In both language centres, principals play a limited role of encouraging a culture of collaboration in the workplace.

However, while Malek admits that he does not encourage collaborative work because there is no time for this, there is hardly any evidence that Iman's manager was even aware of her dilemmas with her colleagues. On the other hand, principals also contribute to beginning teachers' feelings of well-being and being supported. For example, Malek appears receptive and open to new ideas suggested by Husein and Munzir when he accepts their idea of starting to introduce speaking tests in the language centre, an idea which was previously overlooked until it is discussed and raised. Iman's manager also seems to provide her with protection against parents' complaints and seems to encourage her free agency to teach the way she sees appropriate, which contributes to her feelings of satisfaction in the workplace.

In conclusion, the process of learning to teach as experienced by beginning EFL teachers is a complex process. Teachers' personal beliefs formulated during their 'apprenticeship of observation' appear to be highly influential. These beliefs act as powerful models of action during beginning teachers' experiences of learning to teach. Beginning teachers draw upon these beliefs in their current conceptions and philosophies and when they perform their classroom tasks.

However, although claims can be made that these beginning teachers act in similar ways to each other and to other beginning teachers, having experienced more or less the same range of pre-teaching kinds of influences, the role of the individual, with their own idiosyncratic life history, appears clearly in influencing the extent of engagement in different teaching approaches and teaching styles. More specifically, the study shows how participants' pre-teaching factors are highly influential; nevertheless, Iman's teaching seems different from that of Munzir and Husein.

Iman's prior learning experiences at a Saudi school were more positive and fulfilling than Munzir and Husein's experiences in Syrian schools. She states clearly that her former teachers used visual aids in their teaching and that this has influenced her teaching to a great extent. They were also much friendlier and more responsive on the interpersonal level than their counterparts in Syria, which contributed to her emerging beliefs about the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. Also, in the language centre where she currently works, she

enjoys more freedom and free agency, as her manager does not interfere in how she plans and carries out her teaching, unlike the language centre where Husein and Munzir work. Further, she asserts that she does not work to guarantee employment; instead, she wishes to enjoy what she does. In fact, this provides an interesting perspective of how societal and cultural beliefs can influence teachers' attitudes which in turn shape how they perform their tasks; in Syria and other Islamic countries, females do not have to work or save money to establish themselves financially or support their families. We have seen how Iman decides to withdraw from an adult EFL course when she faces dilemmas of not being able to know the interests of these adult students, which does not make her enjoy teaching. We cannot see a similar situation in Husein, for example, who states that in the summer courses teachers are 'tortured' by the amount of work assigned to them; nevertheless, he does not decide to withdraw from any of these courses. Among the three teachers, Iman talks most about 'teaching as fun.' Similarly, she was most affected by 'affective filter' factors during her prior learning experiences when she moved from Saudi Arabia to a local school in Aleppo, and hence, as a reaction, she highly values the role of enjoyment and positive learning environment in her teaching. She brings with her a positive personal attitude towards learning to the workplace, which can be seen in her attempts to foster a 'learning as fun' environment even at the expense of her payment, as she is seen to spend part of her salary on the design and preparation of supplementary materials.

It is rather surprising how Husein and Munzir tend to describe their environment as constrictive of their preferred teaching styles when they have much more opportunities to negotiate and discuss their teaching than Iman does. They both have a very positive relationship with each other and with their mentor in Bright Future. Brannan and Bleistein (2012) suggest that mentors and co-workers are major support providers in the workplace who contribute to teacher efficacy, i.e. teachers' beliefs in their abilities to organise and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results. It is difficult to know if Husein and Munzir are actually restricted in the workplace or if their individual attitudes at work impact upon their willingness to develop and teach according to what they believe. Research on the role of the individual in teacher learning indicates that individuals'

dispositions and attitudes to learning may influence the extent to which they view their workplace learning environment to be more or less restrictive or expansive (Evans, *et al.* 2006). Even in the constricted environment where Husein and Munzir work, they might have plenty of options and freedom of making choices. So, although their workplace environment is restrictive in some aspects, it could be that it is their individual attitudes and dispositions that define this restrictiveness. Atwal (2013) argues that teachers can make their learning environment more restrictive or expansive dependent on the personal choices they make. A teacher with a more positive disposition to learning may interpret the same situation as a positive affirmation of his/her expectations as a lifelong learner. Individual dispositions to learning therefore impact upon the extent to which individuals engage in the learning opportunities on offer.

So, Husein and Munzir's learning-to-teach experiences confirm previous research on the intensity and power of prior beliefs and workplace environments. However, Iman provides a new perspective; despite sharing many experiences with Husein and Munzir and other similar beginning teachers, her narrative reveals the role of the individual teacher learner in learning to teach and willingness to learn and how far this can contribute to a fulfilling teaching experience in the workplace.

Thus, a focus on teachers' beliefs alone is not a definitive argument to understand their experiences of learning to teach and becoming teachers. This study suggests that relying on the line of argument of teachers' beliefs to understand their learning-to-teach experiences is questionable; the link between beliefs and practice gives only a partial picture of the process of learning to teach. Teachers' practices are not always a reflection of their beliefs, and any attempt to understand teachers' learning to teach without attending to workplace teaching contexts is, in my opinion, conceptually flawed. There is a diverse set of in-practice influences coming from the teaching contexts that shape teachers' early experiences while they learn to teach. Teachers enter a period of discovery and rediscovery of themselves and their activities while they are trying to cope with the daily environmental demands of their workplaces and classrooms. They change many of their previously-held beliefs and perspectives and adjust actions based on

the institutional forces surrounding them as well as their students making up their classes.

Calderhead and Shorrock (1997) call for a combination of the different elements of the process of learning to teach to provide a rich picture of that process. This study provides a multi-layered view of learning to teach and suggests that in order to understand the complexity of this process, we need to look not just at what beginning teachers say and do but also at what happens around them in the institution and classroom, as these contextual structures contribute noticeably to the process of how teachers learn to teach and how they establish themselves as teachers. We need to focus on the process of learning to teach in all its richness, both the more individually-centred processes and the contextual factors which appear to be part and parcel of the general picture.

This study has provided a view of learning to teach as experienced by first-year teachers without any kind of previous formal teacher education and hence addresses a gap in the literature, which usually portrays the experiences of teachers who have previously attended formal teacher education.

The study also adds to the existing knowledge about the early learning-to-teach experiences of English language teachers, which have not received a great deal of attention in the literature of language teacher education and on which more studies need to be undertaken in order to establish a corpus on the first-year experiences of English language teachers (Farrell, 2008).

Finally, this study, with its two dimensions, has implications for teacher educators. Bullough (1997: 95) argues that among the diversity of tales of learning to teach and studies of the content and form of the story, “two conclusions of paramount importance to teacher educators emerge: prior experience and beliefs are central to shaping the story line, as is the context of becoming a teacher.” Findings of this study could be used as a point of departure in order to introduce changes into the curricula of teacher education programmes in the Higher Institute of Languages at the University of Aleppo and other teacher education institutions in the region. The study has relevance and implications for policymakers in planning action promoting professional development in pre-service and in-service teacher education. These implications are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

Implications for Practice and Research

The purpose of this final chapter is to provide some suggested implications for practice and research, particularly to influence the curricula of teacher education programmes in the Higher Institute of Languages at the University of Aleppo and other teacher education institutions in the region. Section 8.1 discusses the main implications of the study for practice in future teacher education programmes. Section 8.2 focuses on the implications of the study for future research.

8.1 Implications for practice and second language teacher education

As the findings of this study suggest, the process of learning to teach is shaped by pre-practice influences coming in the form of beliefs which beginning teachers hold, either consciously or unconsciously, and which have an impact on their current conceptions and classroom practice. It is also shaped by in-practice influences which consist of both macro- and micro-level sets of contextual factors within the educational institution and classroom, to which teachers show diverse responses. Each of these dimensions of the learning-to-teach process suggests several important implications for teacher practitioners and teacher educators in the context of second language teacher education.

8.1.1 Suggestions for untrained teacher practitioners

For beginning teachers who start their teaching without previous preparation and who do not have the opportunity to join a teacher training course, the study offers important implications by narrating the experiences of similar teachers while they learn to teach in the first year. Untrained beginning teachers might find these stories interesting as these teachers need to see what their own experiences will be like when they start teaching in the private sector. Although this cannot guarantee that they will arrive prepared for the profession, they might become more aware of the complications and dilemmas they are likely to encounter as experienced by teachers similar to them. They might also start to conceptualise what it is like to be a newcomer in the private sector, how to be prepared to compromise their own beliefs and assumptions, how to deal with their principals,

how other established teachers might deal with them and how their students' might affect their teaching in the classroom. The study provides scenarios of events and incidents that these teachers might wish to think about in advance and assess their potential influence on their work. It might help private school owners if they set up some form of induction and in-house support for new teachers, which might include monitoring relationships with existing teachers, to discuss issues in teaching. I also advise these teachers to examine the suggestions and guidelines mentioned below. Although some of these might need an expert educator to introduce and encourage in a formal teacher education setting, these teachers are encouraged to engage in similar tasks and activities as far as they can either on their own or, if possible, in collaboration with other similar teachers.

8.1.2 Suggestions for teacher educators

(a) Working with trainees' beliefs

The following are rationale and series of suggestions regarding the sorts of strategies that can be adopted by teacher educators to explore teachers' beliefs:

- It is essential that teacher educators take trainees' prior beliefs into account because any new material introduced in teacher education programmes will be filtered by trainees' prior beliefs and create dilemmas and possibly conflicts which need to be addressed in training.
- Teacher educators might consider creating opportunities for trainee teachers to reflect on and explore their own beliefs about teachers and teaching. They must also provide concrete models of alternative instructional practices for teachers to observe, discuss and reflect upon. Special attention must be given to those unrealistic, overly simplistic beliefs. New ideas about teaching and learning introduced in a course need to be explored, and where there is dissonance with existing beliefs, then there is the basis for discussion. These discussions would inevitably involve deeper discussions about how people learn and the role of learning in teaching.

- It is also important to encourage trainees to recall their informal language learning experiences, as these are equally important in shaping teachers' pre-entry beliefs.
- Because trainee teachers will play an active role in their own experiences of learning to teach when they start actual teaching, teacher educators during teacher education programs must be able to provide them with ways in which they can become reflective practitioners, i.e. more critical and analytical in their evaluations of their own beliefs. The literature provides some powerful activities to encourage such a critical endeavour:
 - Trainee teachers must be encouraged to write 'autobiography assignments' (Bailey, *et al.*, 1996). The purpose is to be able to examine the 'good' and 'bad' teaching in their own learning histories and to predict how these models might affect them in the future. By becoming aware of their own beliefs with regard to those teachers they have witnessed in the past, they can begin to develop teaching philosophies based on choice. Bailey *et al.* (1996) suggest that until prospective teachers begin writing this paper, they do not realise to what extent their concepts of a good language teacher has been molded by their experiences as language learners.
 - Farrell (1999) also suggests a framework which he calls the 'reflective assignment' to unlock prospective teachers' tacitly held beliefs and their influence on their teaching. Although his reflective assignment focuses on grammar teaching approaches, I find it quite adaptable to involve many other classroom techniques. According to Farrell (1999), the reflective assignment consists of three parts: first, teachers are required to write their past experience of learning English and their personal approach to teaching English grammar; second, they must write a detailed lesson plan on a grammar structure of their choice and teach it to some students; third, they are asked to reflect on their grammar lesson in terms of such questions as '*would you change any of your techniques of teaching grammar?*' '*If so, why?*' '*If not, why not?*' '*Any other reflections you would like to make on your experience?*'

- Johnston (1992: 125) indicates that prior beliefs “are not usually consciously articulated without some assistance.” So another activity for these beliefs to be made explicit, identified and analysed is the use of metaphors with the assistance of a teacher educator. Berliner (1990: 86) observes that “Metaphors are powerful forces, conditioning the way we come to think about ourselves and others.” Farrell (2006) proposes a framework for revealing student teachers’ metaphors in an attempt to stimulate critical reflection during and after the teaching practice in teacher education programmes. First, at the beginning of teaching practice, trainees are required to answer questions that encourage metaphor use such as: A teacher is? A classroom is a place where? Language learning means? The second stage takes place after the teaching practice in which the same trainees are encouraged to answer the same questions and then attempt to answer further reflective questions that ask them to say whether their use of metaphors has changed, what the changes are, what caused such changes and if not, what experience(s) resulted in the confirmation of their original metaphor usage.

These three activities help the implicit theories and beliefs of prospective teachers to be ‘outed’ and put to the test (John: 1996). The very act of having to reveal their inner thoughts and unconscious beliefs may help trainee teachers become more critically reflective teachers. When beginning language teachers are encouraged to articulate their beliefs about teaching and learning, they can become more aware of the origin of these beliefs and their influences on their teaching and can then decide whether these beliefs remain valid and useful for their particular context or need to further be tested and challenged and critiqued.

- It can also be necessary that teacher educators allow trainees the space to experiment with new and different teaching styles during teacher education. Based on notions of situated learning and the fact that learning occurs during application, trainee teachers need real opportunities to make sense of what they do, by reflecting on their own instructional practices so that they come to recognise any inconsistencies between what they want to do and what actually

happens. Trainees also need opportunities to teach and to reflect constructively with peers and tutors on these experiences.

- This study has showed how stimulated recall sessions with beginning teachers can stimulate their reflective thinking when they watch and talk about their own teaching. Teacher education programmes can provide prospective teachers with opportunities to watch their own teaching or probably select segments from trainees' teaching and encourage them to reflect on them. To stimulate their critical reflection, teacher educators can ask questions such as: Why did you do what you did here? What could you have done differently? What do you think was done successfully/less successfully in this lesson? etc.

(b) Preparing trainees for the transition to the real world of teaching

The following are suggestions about the sorts of strategies that can be employed by teacher educators to prepare trainees for their actual classroom teaching in the training course planned for the Higher Institute of Languages at the University of Aleppo in the first year:

- This study has identified pre-teaching and while-teaching influences on learning to teach. It would be important to engage student teachers in exploration of pre-teaching learning, i.e., their prior classroom experience as learners, at the initial stage of a course, and then, when introducing new content about learning and teaching, to engage them in discussion of the underlying theories and beliefs about learning and teaching that inform these new teaching ideas. Preparation for teaching practice can draw on this, as well as prepare them for encounters in the practice situation.
- Trainee teachers need to be helped to enquire into the nature of teaching and learning. They should be encouraged to understand both the contextual and social constraints which might influence their work. This will involve them in exploring and thinking about the different factors and dimensions of being a teacher in an actual teaching setting. They have to be guided to understand and think critically about the complexities they might encounter.
- Prospective teachers need to be made aware that they might be caught in a dual conflict between their own beliefs about preferred practices and their

students' willingness and abilities in those practices. Awareness of this inevitable conflict may help teachers to increase their understanding of the nature of the teaching and learning process and to decrease their frustration with preconceptions of compromising beliefs. Prospective teachers need procedural knowledge about the day-to-day operations of managing and teaching in second language classrooms, and to see their second language students as individuals with unique needs, interests, aptitudes, and personalities (Johnson, 1994).

- Learning to teach in the context of workplaces involves interactions that occur between the beginning teachers' own values, beliefs and practices and those of the school. It is important for teacher educators to evaluate, analyse and encourage the trainees' capacity to negotiate and maneuver within a powerful ideological context. Learning to teach reveals the importance of 'political skills' in the workplace. Teacher educators need to raise questions about how trainees might be better prepared to develop and defend their own preferred practices within an institutional context (Claderhead & Shorrocks, 1997).
- Finally, learning the institutional norms of behavior in the workplace is more difficult for beginning teachers within a culture of professional isolation than within a culture of collaboration. Teacher education programmes need to encourage prospective teachers to seek genuine opportunities for collaborative endeavours. Collaboration does not only help in countering individualism but also leads to reflection upon practice and more fulfilling experiences. Brannan and Bleistein (2012) offer a helpful guide of the kind of support coworkers can provide each other in the workplace. Their study reveals two types of support that beginning teachers can seek from their teaching colleagues: pragmatic and affective. In the pragmatic realm, collegial support include sharing ideas about teaching, classroom management, school policies or logistics, peer observation, sharing resources and problem solving assistance related to lesson planning, cultural misunderstandings and classroom management. In the affective realm, on the other hand, collegial support include being heard about stresses and joys, sharing experiences,

perspectives and weaknesses and offering encouragement, emotional support, affirmation and friendship.

8.2 Implications for future research

Several areas of development for continuing research on learning to teach can be identified:

- A number of studies in the ELT domain have emerged from United States, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United Kingdom. There remain many L2 education contexts, e.g. Syria and most Arab countries, where the study of learning to teach has yet to make an impression. Similarly, much of the existing research on teacher beliefs in Syria has taken place in university and state school settings. I believe that much more is required in the private sector.
- Teachers' beliefs are unconsciously held, so a reasonable strategy in formal teacher education is to engage student teachers in discussion of their beliefs. There is much scope of expansion in research exploring useful strategies and techniques to help student teachers' raise awareness of their own beliefs.
- The study of teacher belief is only part of the process of becoming a teacher – in fact teachers' beliefs are an important, but not the only aspect of learning to teach. There is still scope for ELT research development to investigate into the experience of teaching and engagement with a professional community as powerful sources of learning about teaching.
- Research might also best be directed at criticising the abstraction of beginning teachers' beliefs to highlight, instead, the exploration of these beliefs with a focus on how they are socially and culturally shaped and formed, and how professional experience can modify beliefs, as new teachers adapt to their circumstances.
- There has been much debate to date over the extent to which teacher beliefs change over time. Our understanding of the process of cognitive change remains limited. This may be because research into teacher beliefs has been done in limited time frames. More longitudinal research focusing

on how beliefs can change over time is needed to advance our understanding of teacher learning.

- More attention has been paid to the study of teacher beliefs and learning to teach in teacher education contexts. We know very little about the beliefs and their influences on the practice of those teachers who have not followed any formal teacher education. I believe that we still need more studies on the initial experiences of beginning English language teachers, especially in the first two years, to obtain a rich understanding of the background knowledge and contextual influences that shape the process of learning to teach when opportunities for formal teacher training are lacking. Increased understanding of how beginning teachers learn to teach can help teacher educators do a better job of preparing prospective teachers for their future teaching tasks. It can also help us understand the nature of teacher education and better prepare ourselves for our roles as teacher educators. Knowing more about how people learn to teach without access to training opportunities can provide insights into some of the issues encountered in training courses for beginning teachers, in which their previously-acquired beliefs and experience influence their response to new ideas on teaching and learning introduced by a formal programme. Understanding the complexity of students' unconsciously-acquired views of teaching (through participation in classroom life as learners) and its role in shaping responses to alternative views, knowledge and understanding of teaching can be highly beneficial for teacher educators.

Appendices

Appendix I Supervisor's letter for conducting fieldwork

University College Plymouth
St Mark & St John



7 April 2010

University of Aleppo
Aleppo
Syria

To Whom It May Concern
TRAVEL TO SYRIA TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Abdulrahman Jesry (PhD TESOL student under my supervision) will be travelling to Syria on 24th June, 2010 in order to conduct fieldwork and data-gathering for his research project. I estimate that a period of 6 weeks will be sufficient for this work. He will return to the UK to continue with his studies on 7th August, 2010.

Yours sincerely

Tony Wright, PhD

Emeritus Professor of Language Education



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Principal: Professor Margaret Noble

A Church of England College founded in 1840
The University College Plymouth St Mark and St John is a registered charity the trustee of which is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 986239

Appendix II Authentication and translation of supervisor's letter by the Embassy of Syrian Arab Republic in the UK.


سفارة الجمهورية العربية السورية
لندن

الرقم : ٦٤ / ٢٩
التاريخ : ٢٠١٠/٤/٢٩

رئاسة جامعة حلب

مع الموافقة على سفر المعيد الموفد عبد الرحمن جسري الى الوطن بتاريخ ٢٠١٠/٦/٢٤ ولمدة ستة أسابيع وذلك لجمع بعض المعلومات المتعلقة بدراسته . بناء على ما ورد برسالة أستاذه المشرف المرفقة .

يرجى الاطلاع

المكلف بالشؤون الثقافية
الوزير المستشار
عمشان دلا



المرفقات:
- رسالة الأستاذ المشرف

التوزيع:
- ملف البعثة
- اضبارة صاحب العلاقة


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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....
(Signature of participant)

(Date)

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Participant's name:

Age:

Graduation year:

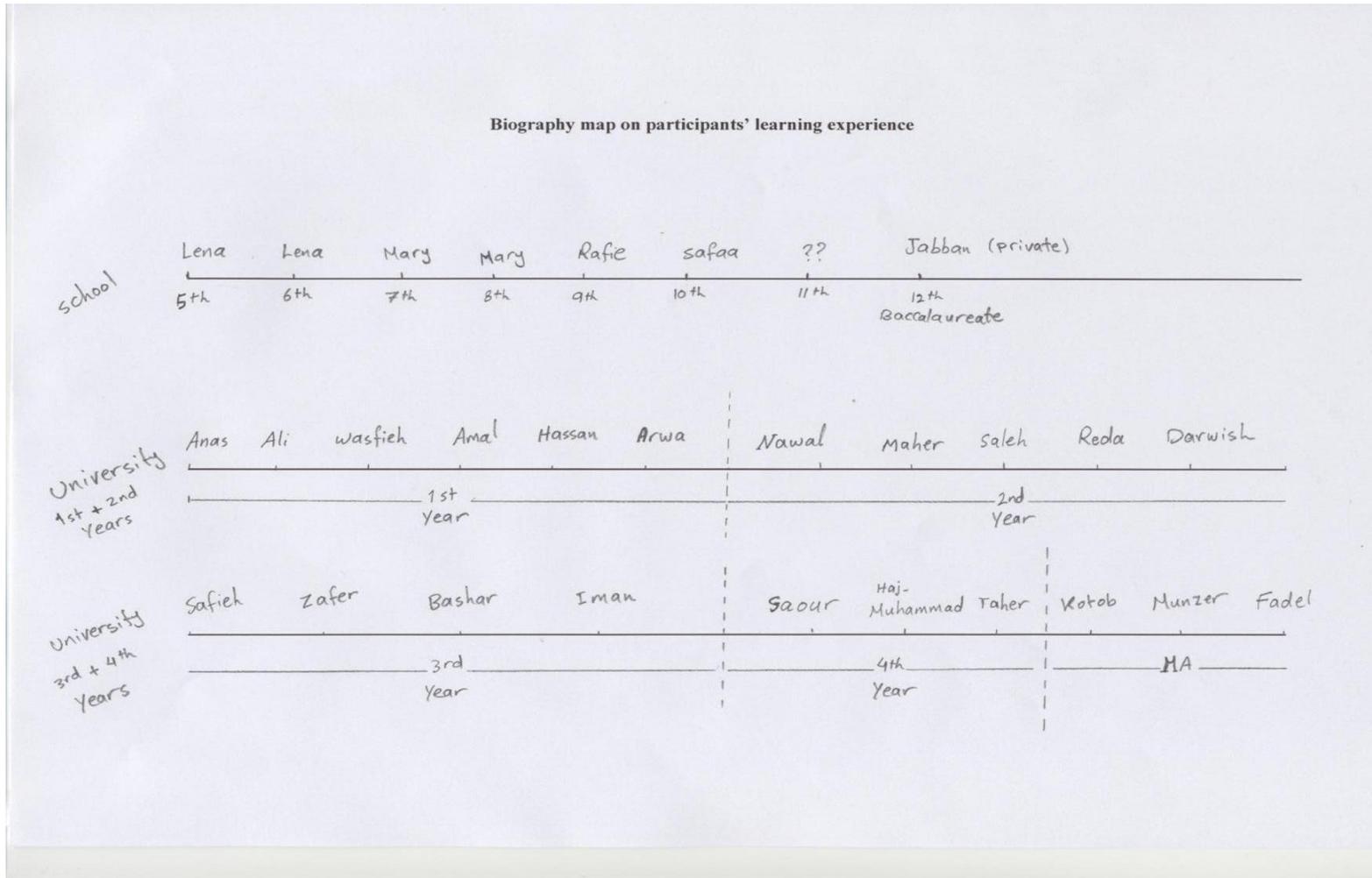
Learning experience: (public/private sector) (how long?)

Teaching experience: (public/private sector) (how long?)

Training (formal/informal):

Appendix V

Biographical map with a focus on participants' former teachers



Appendix VI Autobiographical account

Here are some suggestions on how to approach the writing of your autobiographical account:

1. Set aside a regular time and place each day in which to write your autobiographical account.
2. Do not worry about your style, grammar, or organisation, especially if you are writing in your second language.
3. Support your insights with as many examples as possible where applicable.
4. Write in the first person. It's more personal
5. Write anything and everything you feel. You will be able to edit out anything too personal or embarrassing before you submit your account.
6. Please, look at each question as an individual topic. So, please feel free to give as much detail as you would like.
7. You may wish to write 3000 words or more for the whole task.

(Adapted from Bailey, 1990: 215–226)

Please, answer these questions in detail:

- How do you describe your experience with the English subject at school?
- Do you remember what methods of teaching English your school and university teachers followed?
- What was the typical English lesson like in both schools and universities?
- How would you describe the role of examination in the learning process?
- Which language skills did your former teachers focused on most in their lessons (e.g. speaking, reading, grammar, etc)? and why, do you think?
- Can you remember and describe English teachers and lessons that inspired you?
- In what ways do you think these have influenced your approach to English language teaching?
- Did you have an experience with a teacher(s) who put you off?
- Do you remember aspects you liked or hated most about your English language learning experience?

Thanks for your participation

Section 1: Early learning experiences

- How would you describe English language teaching in Syrian schools across different levels?
 - What approaches were used?
 - Was there any focus on the use of English?
- Did you learn English in another place other than school? (e.g. private language centre?)
 - Was that different from school teaching? In what ways?
 - Which one did you enjoy more? Why?
- How do you describe English language teaching during your university experience?
- Do you think your prior experience as a learner affects your teaching behaviour? In what ways?

Section 2: Becoming a teacher

- Why and how did you become an English teacher? And how do you feel about it?
- Without any kind of professional training, what was your earliest teaching experience like? (i.e. the very first few days). Did you have any problems or difficulties? Did you feel the lack of being prepared? or was it a smooth experience?
- What do you think are the biggest influences on your development as a teacher?

Section 3: Personal notions, opinions and conceptions of EFL teaching and teachers

- How would you describe the successful EFL teacher?
- What role should the successful EFL teacher assume?
- How does a successful teacher deal with students?
- What's your perception about the interaction with students?
- When can you describe an English lesson as successful?
- What is your concept of effective vs. ineffective EFL teaching?
- How would you describe communicative language teaching? And who is the communicative teacher?
- What do you think about using L1 in English classrooms?

Section 4: Classroom teaching approach

- How do you describe your role in the classroom?
- What, do you think, is the most important aspect to focus on in your English teaching? And why?
- What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses as an EFL teacher?
- How do you teach grammar?
- Have you heard of or tried a method of teaching grammar other than the one you mentioned? What do you think of these alternative methods?

- What's your approach to teaching new words?
- How do you teach reading? And what do you think is the purpose of a reading text?
- Do you use extra materials for your lessons?
- How do you prepare your lessons?
- What do you try to do differently from what your school (and university) teachers did?
- How do you deal with students' errors?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of the course book you're teaching? And how do you cope with these?
- Are there any teaching concerns or problems which have remained unsolved?

Section 4: The language centre

- Do you enjoy teaching in this language centre? Why?
- Are there any positive and negative issues about working here?
- Do you normally ask for assistance from colleague teachers\manager\mentor, etc?
- Have you ever been told about any particular style of teaching preferred in this language centre?
- Are there any restrictions on the way you want to teach (e.g. from students, management, etc)?

Appendix VIII

Questions asked to Malek

- Why do students come to private language centres and how are these different from schools?
- How many teachers do you have in this centre?
- How were these teachers appointed? And what were the criteria of your selection?
- What is your language centre trying to do differently from school and other centres across Aleppo?
- Tell me about this language centre in terms of its 'internal culture' which might include
 - your relationship with teachers,
 - their relationships with each other and with students,
 - payment, incentives, promotions,
 - teachers' complaints and how you deal with these complaints,
 - teachers' and students' assessment
 - any other issues or policies?
- How are students allocated to different levels? Are they enrolled according to an oral/written test? Do you use a marking scheme?
- What's the idea behind telling all teachers to use only English with students even in the corridors, café and streets?
- What is your view of using L1 in an English classroom?
- Is there a teachers' room where teachers sit to share ideas?
- Do teachers ask for assistance from you or their colleagues?
- What is the list of DOs and DON'Ts adopted in this language centre?
- In your opinion, who is the 'successful teacher'?
- What's 'effective teaching'?
- When do you think a teacher can be called 'an experienced teacher'?
- Why do you ask teachers to be very 'formal' with students?
- How do you choose the 'instructor of the month'?
- What is the reason behind asking teachers to wear a uniform?
- Why are you using English File coursebook series?
- How important is lesson preparation? And how do you know if your teachers prepare their lessons?

Appendix IX

Samples of repertory-grid elements and constructs

Personal constructs: repertory grid

	¹ Lena	² Mary	³ Rafie	⁴ Safaa	⁵ Jabban	⁶ Zafer
- Use of external materials - no respect to students - knowledgeable			X		X	X
- Mean - ignores less intelligent students.	X	X		X		
- traditional - always sitting on chair - less interested		X	X		X	
- teacher image	X	X	X			
- boring vs. exciting style - authority in classroom.				X	X	X

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Anas	Ali	wasfieh	Amal	Hassan	Arwa	Nawal	Maher	Saleh	Reda	Darwish
- traditional style - interaction with ss	X							X			X
- knowledge - arrogant - keeps distance			X			X			X		
- unmotivated - lots of memorisation		X			X		X				
- no confidence with her info. - never prepares.				X						X	X
- raises personal issues - 'housewife'			X		X		X				
- boredom - experience is wide	X					X				X	
- discipline is essential - not excited.		X		X				X			

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Safieh	Zafer	Bashar	Iman	Saour	Haj-Muh.	Taker	Kotob	Munzer	Fadel
- over reliance on book - killing memorisation	X	X	X							
- $\text{عابث} + \text{شئ} + \text{معلم}$ - boring - 'mean' .. عيبك				X		X		X		
- Bad accent (Aleppo English) - very verbose/indirect							X		X	X
- doesn't allow external resources. - very practical issues		X		X	X					
- lazy + boring - translator - book-based info.			X				X			X
- no questions outside classroom. - too formal	X				X	X				
- tired + hating his job - over preaching - 'feminist'				X				X	X	

Appendix X Classroom observation: video content log

<p>Language focus: there was/there were + singular/plural nouns. Level: Beginners Coursebook: New Interchange Students' No.: 4 males & 1 female Teacher: Husein</p>			
<p>Classroom Physical description: whiteboard, teacher's desk, desktop with sound amplifiers, overhead projector, wall posters, student's desks forming a U shape, window with blinds.</p>			
Time	Teacher's actions	Notes and comments	Theme
00:00:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T reminds students of their homework 	Homework is still essential in the private sector. This could be due to the influence of school teaching or the hidden pressure exerted by students who wish every single activity to be covered in both books.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior learning experiences Coursebook-based instruction
00:01:36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T starts the communication part left from last lesson on <i>there was/there were</i>, page 111. Ss are trying to memorise a picture to ask their partners using <i>was/were there?</i> 		
00:02:48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T selects Students A and Students B 		
00:03:37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T reads instructions word by word from the book. Ss follow from the book. He then does one example and helps a student do another example. 	It seems here that ss follow what the teacher is reading from the book but they expect him to explain what they've all read. So, reading the book instructions is a routine behaviour that gives ss the impression that nothing has been skipped.	Coursebook-based instruction
00:05:17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T monitors students trying to help them produce the target structure. Students are writing down their own questions individually. T checks ss' answers, helps them and gives positive feedback. 	Here, we see a completely different model of teaching from that we see at public schools where the dominant model is the lecture format. And where there's no monitoring of ss, and Ts tend to focus on good students to get the answers from them. Some ss at schools are completely neglected. Also, only good students at school get positive feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher's guide Could be evidence of contextual influences.

<p>00:11:06</p> <p>00:11:23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T reads the second part of the activity instructions from the book where students B should answer As' questions. He then paraphrases the instructions and asks students B to write down the answers and then check the picture. • Students are confused; a student B looks at the picture before he answers his partner A's questions. T explains instructions again. Ss ask and answer in pairs. 		
<p>00:12:17</p> <p>00:14:00</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T takes a piece of paper to take notes of ss' errors. • T checks and gives ss more time to finish and keeps taking notes of their errors. 	<p>Based on an informal chat between Husein and Munzir, Husein was wondering how he could correct ss' errors without interrupting them. Munzir suggested the technique of 'delayed feedback.'</p>	<p>Interaction with other teachers.</p>
<p>00:15:05</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student asks a question and uses an Arabic word. He puts his hand on his mouth. T shows his surprise raising his eye brows and saying funnily "he [the observer] is not looking but the camera is seeing you. It's okay. It's okay" 	<p>This shows how much using Arabic is considered forbidden in Bright Future. Putting his own hand on his mouth after saying an Arabic word implies the s' apology upon breaking the institute's regulations.</p>	<p>'No Arabic' policy</p>
<p>00:15:29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pair of ss have finished and T tells them to check the picture to know who's got the most correct answers. Other ss are still doing the activity. 		
<p>00:16:17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another student is chatting in Arabic with her partner. T puts his hand on his ear saying in a funny way "I've heard 	<p>Again, the T is trying to have control over any Arabic word(s) that may slip from ss' tongues.</p>	<p>'No Arabic' policy</p>

00:16:22	<p>Arabic words here.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T checks the first pair’s scores while the other ss are still doing the activity. 	<p>This activity took 15 minutes. Husein’s major complaint about his own performance in the post-observation interview is concerned with his time management. He appreciates the need for a clearly-structured lesson plan, but he states that the heavy teaching load makes it impossible to sit and write lesson plans for every lesson.</p>	<p>The impact of the heavy teaching load on Ts’ planning.</p>
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