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**AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT**

**THESIS BY
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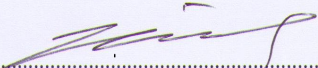
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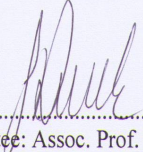
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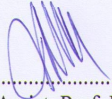
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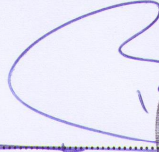
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ÖZET
BİR ÜNİVERSİTEDE ÖĞRETMEN GELİŞTİRME ÜZERİNE
EYLEM ARAŞTIRMA (ACTION RESEARCH) ÇALIŞMASI

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Öğretmen gelişimi konusundaki bu eylem araştırma çalışmasının iki amacı vardır. Çalışmanın birinci amacı üniversitenin İngilizce hazırlık okulunda çalışmakta olan öğretmenlerin küçük ölçekli eylem araştırma çalışması yaparak gelişmelerine yardımcı olmak, ikinci amacı ise Çağ Üniversitesi hazırlık okulunda gelişme kültürü yaratabilmek için bir öğretmen geliştirme biriminin nasıl kurulabileceğini öğrenmektir.

10 haftalık hizmet içi Öğretmen Gelişimi Dersi süresince iki öğretmen kendi sınıflarında küçük çaplı eylem araştırma çalışmaları yapmaları konusunda yönlendirilmiştir. Araştırmacının büyük ölçekli Eylem Araştırma projesinin verileri araştırmacının günlüğü, Öz Değerlendirme Anketleri I ve II (bkz. Ek 1 ve 2), Ders Değerlendirme Anketi (bkz. Ek 3) ve yarı yapıllı izlem görüşmeleri kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Veri içerik analizi kullanılarak çözümlenmiş ve içerik analizini teyid etmek için üçgenleştirme kullanılmıştır.

Çalışma sonuçlarının amacı ilk olarak küçük ölçekli eylem araştırması çalışmalarının öğretmenlerin öğretmen olarak güçlü ve güçsüz yönlerinin farkında olmalarına yardımcı olup olmadığını göstermek, ikinci amacı ise hizmet içi öğretmen geliştirme dersini kurarken hangi faktörleri göz önüne almak gerektiği üzerinedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen Gelişimi, Eylem Araştırması, Yabancı Dil Öğretmen Eğitimi

ABSTRACT
AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
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This Action Research study on teacher development in a university context focused on two aims. The first aim was to help teachers in the university English preparatory school develop themselves through the use of small-scale Action Research in their own classrooms. The second aim was to learn how to establish a teacher development unit at Çağ University's preparatory school in order to encourage a culture of development among the teachers in the preparatory school.

A 10-week in-service Teacher Development Course directed two teachers through small-scale Action Research projects in their individual classrooms. Data for the researcher's large-scale Action Research project was collected using the researcher's diary, Self-Evaluation Questionnaires I and II (see Appendices 1 and 2), a Course Evaluation Questionnaire (see Appendix 3), and semi-structured follow-up interviews. Data was analyzed using content analysis, and triangulation was used to confirm the content analysis.

The results of this study aimed firstly, to show whether or not the small-scale Action Research projects help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers; and secondly, what factors should be considered when establishing an in-service teacher development course.

Keywords: Teacher Development, Action Research, English as a Foreign Language Teacher Education

ABBREVIATIONS

AR: Action Research

CEQ: Course Evaluation Questionnaire

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The long-term success of language programs is dependent upon teachers' opportunities for in-service training. Not only are the knowledge bases of language teaching, linguistics, educational psychology and language learning constantly changing, but teachers' needs are constantly changing (Farrell & Richards, 2005). Some teachers feel pressure to stay up-to-date with current trends in literature, and some teachers have no idea from where or how to enter the discussion of language learning and teaching theory.

In the past, an applied science model was used in the area of teacher learning and development (Wallace, 1991). Knowledge was related to teachers based on objectives in a one-directional way. An expert gave information about scientific knowledge, and trainees were asked to put the information into practice. This information about scientific knowledge was not established by actual teachers, but by researchers, and a wide separation was felt between the trainees and experts. Teachers were generally unmotivated by this type of learning (Wallace, 1991).

More recent concepts of teacher-education processes see teacher learning and development in three different ways: as a cognitive process, as a personal construction, and as a reflective practice (Farrell & Richards, 2005). A program focused on the cognitive process of learning might focus on the nature of teachers' beliefs and thinking and how they influence teachers' thinking. Teachers are encouraged to explore their own beliefs and thinking processes, and examine how these beliefs affect their teaching. Teacher development centered on teachers' personal constructs might emphasize teachers' self-awareness and personal interpretation of classroom behavior through self-monitoring and journals. Finally, teacher learning seen as a reflective process might focus on collecting information and then critically reflecting on the nature of teaching experiences (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

Teachers can learn and develop from all of these models, but the last two will be focused on in this study. This study examined the use of Action Research (from now on referred to as AR) as a tool for teacher learning as a personal construction and as a reflective practice.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In 1990, with the publishing work by Richards and Nunan (1990), containing a number of important studies in the field of language teacher education, the idea of language teacher education became a popular field of research (as cited in Tsui, 2011). In the last

twenty years, the scope of language teacher development has advanced from lecture-style sessions, to workshops, support groups, portfolios, peer coaching, team teaching and AR (Farrell & Richards, 2005). Language teacher development is now available to teachers in many institutions.

As of the 2011-2012 academic school year at Çığ University's preparatory school in Adana, Turkey, there were not many opportunities for teachers to develop in an organized setting. Besides occasional workshops or conferences that two or three teachers were sent to, there were not many other occasions for teacher development. This absence of an organized teacher development program displays a gap between research and practice at this institution. Therefore, an AR cycle was engaged in to learn how to establish a Teacher Development Course to close the gap between theory and teaching practice in this institution.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The aims of this AR study are twofold. The first aim of this AR study is to help teachers develop themselves through the use of small-scale AR in their own classrooms. The teachers' AR would be a means of solving issues in their own classrooms, through reflection, self-evaluation and discussions with other teachers.

The second aim of this AR study is to learn how to establish a teacher development unit at Çığ University's preparatory school, being in line with the culture of creativity, innovation and development at the university. As Farrell & Richards (2005) point out, "Professional development is directed toward both the institution's goals and the teacher's own personal goals" (p. 9). In the mission statement of Çığ University, it states that one of the goals of the institution is "to raise individuals who...are creative and inquisitive, are equipped with modern knowledge, and have analytical and critical thinking abilities...To realize this mission, Çığ University...offers chances for individual development, has innovative academic programs..." (Çığ University, 2010, p. 1) and states some of its values as innovation, responsibility, creativity, leadership and development. A development course for the teachers in the preparatory school would be a part of realizing these goals.

1.4. Significance of the Study

At an individual level, teacher development can help teachers become more knowledgeable about subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, their own self-awareness, their understanding of learners, their understanding of curriculum and materials, and future career advancements. Teachers as a group tend to be interested in improving their professional knowledge, becoming more aware of current theory and practice in the field, and

in improving their skills as teachers (Farrell & Richards, 2005). When they do this, they feel more confident about what they teach and achieve better results with their students.

At an institutional level, teacher development and AR that is integrated into a school or organization can become a “powerful way of facilitating school curriculum renewal and ensure that language teachers retain greater ownership of curriculum implementation” (Burns, 1999, p. 209). Teacher development can contribute to collegiality, research, site-specific information, curriculum initiatives and instructional initiatives (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

More specifically, teachers’ collaboration on small-scale AR has many potential advantages. As summarized by Farrell & Richards (2005), collaboration with others enhances individual learning. Although teaching in general can feel like a very individual activity for teachers, interaction between teachers in a collective AR setting can encourage peer-based learning, mentoring, and a sharing of skills, experience, and solutions to common problems. It also would allow responsibilities and goals to be shared (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

1.5. Research Questions

In accordance with the aims of this study, the following research questions have been formed as a guide for this AR cycle.

1. Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?
2. What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

1.6. Definitions of Terms

Teacher Development: Teacher development refers to general growth that “serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of a teacher’s understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers” (Farrell & Richards, 2005, p. 4).

Action Research: A self-reflective, critical, systematic approach to exploring teaching by identifying a problematic situation or issue to be looked into more deeply and systematically through a four-phase cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Burns, 2010).

English Language Teacher Education: The process of developing English language teachers in their professional identities, using reflective teaching, research, and AR in order to discover the way they learn and how things are done in their classrooms (Freeman, 2009; Burns & Richards, 2009).

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a review of the prominent literature regarding teacher education in the field of English language teaching. It begins with an introductory discussion of in-service English Language Teacher Education, and then moves onto teacher learning and Teacher Development. Action Research and its role in Teacher Development are discussed in the final sections.

2.1. Introduction to English Language Teacher Education

It is commonly observed that the current field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has a much higher level of professionalism than in the past (Burns & Richards, 2009). It is now seen as a career in a field of educational specialization, it requires a specialized knowledge base, and it is a field based on entry requirements and standards (Burns & Richards, 2009). This industry of language teaching is growing and providing teachers with professional training and qualifications, with standards for teachers and language teaching using the help of professional journals, teacher magazines, conferences and professional organizations. “Becoming an English language teacher means becoming part of a worldwide community of professionals with shared goals, values, discourse, and practices but one with a self-critical view of its own practices and a commitment to a transformative approach to its own role” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 3).

The education of in-service teachers in the field of English language learning has been in the process of change in recent years in response to two issues (Burns & Richards, 2009). First of all, an internally initiated change has been evolving as the practices and knowledge base associated with applied linguistics, English language teaching and teacher education have changed. “The emergence of such issues as reflective practice...critical pedagogy...knowledge about language...and teacher identity, for example, arose from within the profession largely as a result of self-imposed initiatives” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 1). The second agent of change in English Language Teacher Education is external pressure due to the globalization of the English language and the subsequent need “for greater central control over teaching and teaching education, and for standards and other forms of accountability” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 1). With improving technology and worldwide access to different countries and cultures, language coursebook and test makers have had to work to globally standardize the way we rate a language learner’s language ability. The Common European Framework of Languages, a list of guidelines to describe achievements of language learners, is one such example (Burns & Richards, 2009). This framework is

available for many different languages. It has changed the field of TESOL and has caused many changes in the way some teacher development courses are organized.

Traditionally, the field of English Language Teacher Education has focused on two different areas within the field – the first being classroom teaching skills and pedagogic issues, and the second being the knowledge about language and language learning. These two areas can also be clarified as *knowledge how* and *knowledge about*. The relationship between these two has often been challenging. The knowledge about language and language teaching has often been the core curriculum of English Language Teacher Education. “An unquestioned assumption was that such knowledge informs teachers’ classroom practices. Recent research, however, shows that teachers in fact often fail to apply such knowledge in practice” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 3). A missing, third strand of the core content of English Language Teacher Education is recently being used to facilitate teacher learning, namely, the nature of teaching itself.

The social contexts in which teachers were educated as undergraduates and the social context in which they are educating students are now being seen as key components in the shaping of the complex ways that teachers think about themselves, their students, the activities of teaching and inevitably the teaching-learning process (Johnson, 2009). As the content of English Language Teacher Education has begun to be defined not only in terms of disciplinary knowledge along with skills of classroom pedagogy, but instead in terms of social practice, “the substance of Second Language Teacher Education became anchored more clearly in classroom interactions and in the activity of teaching itself” (Freeman, 2009, p. 15). Nowadays, instead of teacher education being a survey of issues in applied linguistics, “course work in areas such as reflective teaching, classroom research, and action research now form parts of the core curriculum in many TESOL programs and seek to expand the traditional knowledge base of language teaching” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 3). In this way, the teachers become more aware of their social contexts and are able to reflect on themselves and their beliefs as educators. Teacher educators “have begun to conceptualize L2 teachers as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts” (Johnson, 2009, p. 21). Simply translating theories of applied linguistics and language acquisition into classroom instruction is no longer seen as singular in importance. Creating knowledge based on and emerging out of participation in certain sociocultural practices and contexts is now seen as an integral part in the development of teachers.

2.2. Teacher Learning

The historical framework of the field of TESOL, and subsequently English teacher learning, has been in a constant state of transition, growth and evolution since its beginning (Burns & Richards, 2009; Freeman, 2009). As Freeman (2009) very articulately says, “As is often the case in defining the scope of a complex activity, each subsequent articulation seems to subsume, or refine, those that preceded it” (p. 14). The progression towards our current form of TESOL began in the 1960’s (see Figure 1). This shift began at the same time as the emergence of the field of applied linguistics. With applied linguistics came “a body of specialized academic knowledge and theory that provided the foundation of the new discipline” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 2).

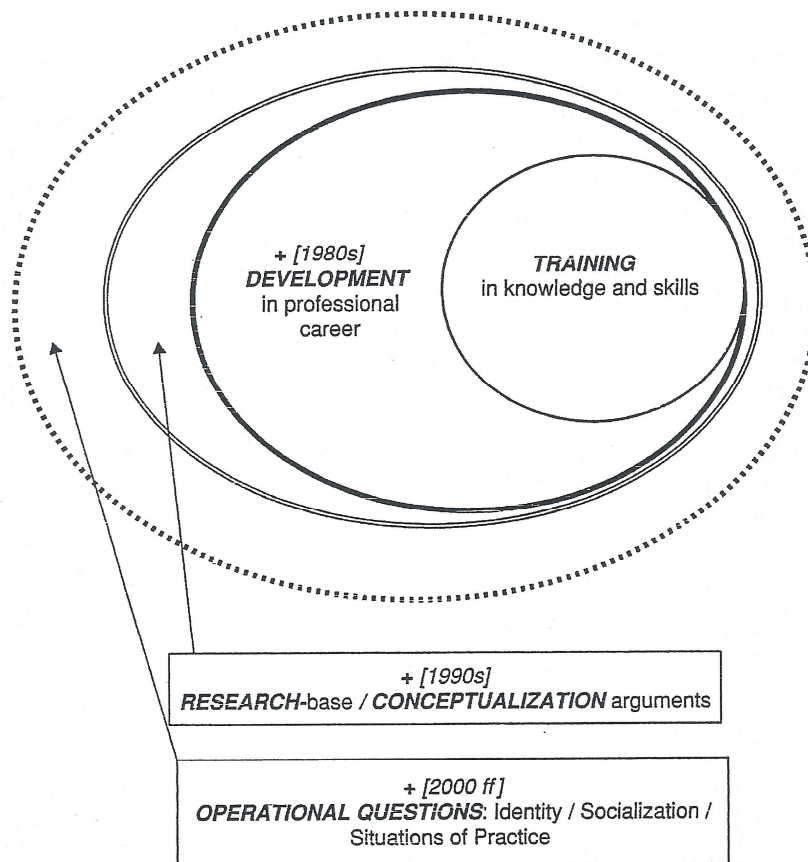


Figure 1: The Widening Gyre of Second Language Teaching Education (Freeman, 2009, p. 14)

In the 1960’s, specific approaches to in-service teacher development began with the intent of equipping teachers with the necessary skills to teach English. These programs were “designed to give prospective teachers the practical classroom skills needed to teach new methods such as Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 2). An applied science model of teacher learning was the preferred approach to

development situations at many educational institutions. Within this framework, practical knowledge is related to teachers using the most appropriate means to reach the specified goals and objectives (Wallace, 1991). This method is traditionally instrumental and one-directional. The findings of scientific knowledge and experimentation are taught to the trainees by an expert. The trainee must then put the scientific findings to use. “Teacher learning from traditional perspectives was seen as a cognitive issue, something the learner did on his or her own” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4). In this way, the problems found in teacher learning were dealt with by improving the effectiveness of the delivery of content. If teachers failed to acquire what was taught, the problem came down to the teachers’ own resistance to change (Burns & Richards, 2009). Changes in this scientific knowledge are not established by teachers but by experts and researchers in the field. “The tendency for the experts to be well removed from the day-to-day working scene is more pronounced in teaching than in some other professions” (Wallace, 1991, p. 10). As Wallace (1991) explains, this separation of trainees and experts, or the separation of experts and the classroom, caused and continues to cause teachers to fail to personalize innovations in language learning research.

The late 1980’s and 1990’s brought a transition away from this framework of knowledge being delivered to teachers by experts (Freeman, 2009; Burns & Richards, 2009; Mann, 2005). According to Freeman (2009), during this time, two major developments regarding teacher learning were, firstly, the differentiation between teacher training and teacher development, and secondly, the definition of the teacher-learner. The difference between teacher training and teacher development was specified. Teacher training is described as entry-level teaching skills that are linked to a specific teaching context (Burns & Richards, 2009). Teacher development, on the other hand, is seen more as the long-term development of the teacher over time (Burns & Richards, 2009). The other development during this time was the definition of the term teacher-learner. This term shows teachers as involved in two fields of activity: one being with students in classrooms where they *teach*, and the other being in formally instructed settings of professional training and informal settings where they *learn* (Freeman, 2009). Looking at both what teachers need to learn to be successful teachers and how they learn became an increasing concern to teacher educators during this time.

Research and literature in the 1990’s focused on developing the research base for, and re-defining English Language Teacher Education (Freeman, 2009). Currently, research in the field is focused on the operationalization of the field (see Figure 1). As Burns & Richards (2009) put it, these newer approaches see teacher learning as the theorization of practice.

They make the nature of practitioner knowledge a focus and provide the means to understand, elaborate and review such knowledge (Burns & Richards, 2009). This newer approach pays more attention to individual development, seeing teachers as “legitimate knowers, producers of legitimate knowledge and as capable of constructing and sustaining their own professional practice over time” (Mann, 2005, p. 106). Key parts of the teacher learning process are “the roles of the participants, the discourses they create and participate in, the activities that take place, and the artifacts and resources that are employed” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4). Together, these factors shape the nature of the learning that occurs.

One of the leading theories of learning prevalent in education literature in the last few decades is the theory of Constructivism. “Constructivism is a learning or meaning-making theory” (Richardson, 2005, p. 3). According to this theory, individuals create new understandings based on interaction of what they already know and believe, and the new ideas that they come into contact with (Richardson, 2005). Richardson (2005) makes an important distinction of what constructivism is, and what it is not. “Constructivism is a descriptive theory of learning (this is the way people learn or develop); it is not a prescriptive theory of learning (this is the way people *should* learn.)” (p. 3). There are various constructivist theories, one of which focuses on the social or sociocultural environments that learning takes place. This is known specifically as Social Constructivism. This form of constructivism derives primarily from L. S. Vygotsky (Richardson, 2005). Learning and development rely on social interactions. “It is within this social interaction that cultural meanings are shared within the group, and then internalized by the individual” (Richardson, 2005, p. 8). Wenger (1991) points out that information is valuable, but by itself, information is meaningless. “It is our participation in social communities and cultural practices that provides the very materials out of which we construct who we are, give meaning to what we do, and understand what we know” (Wenger, 1991, p. 83). In situations that include constructivist learning, both the individual and the environment change as a result (Richardson, 2005).

In current literature, teacher learning is generally seen in four different ways (Farrell & Richards, 2005). First of all, it is traditionally seen as skill learning. The teacher develops a range of skills, and masters those, which underlie successful teaching. This is useful in undergraduate and pre-service teacher training situations. The second approach sees teacher learning as a cognitive process. Here, teaching is viewed as a “complex cognitive activity and focuses on the nature of teachers’ beliefs and thinking and how these influence their teaching and learning” (Farrell & Richards, 2005, p. 6). Teacher education that focuses on learning as a cognitive process would encourage teachers to explore their own beliefs and thinking

processes to understand how it affects their classroom practice. This might include self-monitoring, journaling, or analysis of critical incidents. A third view sees teacher learning as a personal construction. Teachers are believed to acquire knowledge actively, not passively. This happens through active reorganization and reconstruction of knowledge. This might include “activities that focus on the development of self-awareness and personal interpretation through such activities as journal writing and self-monitoring” (Farrell & Richards, 2005, p. 7). Finally, teacher learning is seen as a reflective practice. It is assumed that teachers learn from focused reflection on the meaning and nature of teaching experiences. This kind of reflection would be accompanied by collecting information about one’s own teaching, followed by a critical reflection, through self-monitoring, observation, and case studies (Farrell & Richards, 2005).

The field of general education has brought a focus on teacher cognition into the field of language teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009). Teacher cognition, more specifically, looks at teacher decision making, their theories of teaching, the way that teachers represent subject matter, and the problem solving and improvisational skills that teachers use taking into account different levels of teaching experience (Burns & Richards, 2009). From the perspective of teacher cognition, teaching is much more complex than applying knowledge and learned skills. It is cognitively driven, affected by the context of the classroom, the teacher’s general and specific instructional goals, the motivation of the learners and their response to the material, and the teachers’ management of critical moments in the lesson (Borg, 2009). Teacher cognition is very much related to teachers’ personal approaches to teaching, and can be realized through “questionnaires and self-reporting inventories in which teachers describe beliefs and principles; through interviews and other procedures in which teachers verbalize their thinking and understanding...through observation, either of one’s own lessons or those of other teachers, and through reflective writing in the form of journals, narratives” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 5). These practices cause teachers to move beyond their general knowledge and learned skills to a different level. Here they are able to focus on their context and materials and learners in their situation. They analyze their teaching based on what they think they do versus what they actually do. This kind of cognitive development has been shown to produce long-term change (Burns & Richards, 2009).

Following this line of thought, it is important to provide teachers with the opportunity to reflect on their own behavior, through a process of constant and critical self-awareness (de Sonneville, 2007). Teacher-learners should be active in the learning process, prepared to change their perceptions and behavior as they gain new understanding. This kind of learning

that leads to change in perceptions and behavior can be referred to as transformative learning. The four phases of the transformative learning process can be seen in Table 1, used by Harri-Augstein and Webb (1995) (as cited in de Sonnevile, 2007). In an ideal learning situation, teacher-learners would move from Phase 1 of passively assimilating facts, knowledge and skills, to Phase 2 where teachers become aware of the difference between how they think they behave and their actual classroom behavior. After deep reflection of the teachers' behavior, in Phase 3, the teacher-learners try out their new behavior in the class in an attempt to change the situation. In the last phase, Phase 4, the teacher learner uses the facts, knowledge and skills in an unconscious way, having internalized it through the four phases (de Sonnevile, 2007).

Table 1. Transformative learning

Phases	Description	Characterized by
1	unconscious lower level competence	Learners acquire knowledge of facts and skills, but there is little, if any, change of perception or interpretation
2	conscious lower level competence	The opportunity for change arises, as learners become aware of the discrepancy between what they think they do and what they actually do. They have the possibility to adopt a conscious, critical attitude towards aspects of their teaching.
3	conscious higher level competence	New behavior can be tried out consciously and there is the possibility for change to take place
4	unconscious higher level competence	Learners have internalized the new behavior and use it unconsciously

The reshaping of identity and identities within the social interaction of the classroom are also seen as central to the process of teacher learning. *Identity* refers to the different social and cultural roles that teacher-learners engage in while interacting with their own lecturers and other students who are involved in the process of learning (Burns & Richards, 2009).

Teachers envision themselves and how they act differently when they are involved in different settings. These roles change and emerge throughout participation in a classroom, and may be shaped by many different factors, “including personal biography, gender, culture, working conditions, age and the school and classroom culture” (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 5). During the learning process, it is hoped that a teacher’s identity would be remade by acquiring new modes of discourse and new roles. This happens mainly as teacher-learners negotiate their way through specific activities, relationships and social interactions with their learning community (Burns & Richards, 2009). Therefore, teacher learning is not only based on discovering skills and knowledge about language and language teaching, but on what it means to be a language teacher.

It is possible that this idea of transformative learning and change could be an individual activity, but is better done in correlation with other teachers (Murray, 2010). Teaching can be an isolating activity, as classes are taught independently from other colleagues, but this independence can lead to teachers who are overwhelmed and frustrated. Teachers learning together through “professional development activities can alleviate some of these issues. Such activities can also bring together teachers who have similar experiences and interests” (Murray, 2010, p. 3). For these reasons, teacher-learning ideally happens in a teacher development context in collaboration with other teachers.

2.3. Teacher Development

In a very broad sense of the term, teacher development could be seen as any activity that teachers collaborate in for learning (de Sonneville, 2007), but this definition covers a very broad spectrum and a more concrete definition is necessary. Taylor (1997) defined teacher development as “a process of reflecting on experience, exploring the options for change, deciding what can be achieved through personal effort and setting appropriate goals” (p. 18). Farrell & Richards (2005) define teacher development as general growth that “serves a longer-term goal and seeks to facilitate growth of teacher’s understanding of teaching and of themselves as teachers” (p. 4). From these three definitions, we can understand that collaboration, reflection, change, personal effort and long-term goals are all important aspects in facilitating teacher development.

The focus now of many English Language Teacher Education programs is social practice, (Freeman, 2009). It has refocused equally on the participants’ evolution in their professional identities and on the ways they learn and how things are done in the classroom (Freeman, 2009). Social constructivism guides teacher education in a way that helps teachers understand their own knowledge and understanding, how that knowledge has developed and

the effect of their understanding on their actions (Richardson, 2005). As such, Doolittle (1999) summarizes eight factors that are essential in a socially constructed learning situation.

1. Learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments.
2. Learning should involve social negotiation and mediation.
3. Content and skills should be made relevant to the learner.
4. Content and skills should be understood within the framework of the learner's prior knowledge.
5. Students should be assessed formatively, serving to inform future learning experiences
6. Students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware.
7. Teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors.
8. Teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content (p. 8).

Strategies for teacher development include many things, some of which are reflecting on teaching practice, documenting different kinds of teaching practices, examining beliefs, values and principles, conversations with peers on core issues, and collaborating with peers on classroom projects (Farrell & Richards, 2005). Mann (2005) also gives a wide-ranging list of teacher development possibilities that includes “language development, counseling skills, assertiveness training, confidence building, computing, meditation and cultural broadening” (p. 103). Of course, many things can be learned from these kinds of strategies, but it is also necessary for professional development to go beyond observation and reflection. Initiation by the teacher is necessary in teacher development, since exploration into subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise and understanding of curriculum and materials are also necessary in teacher development (Mann, 2005). “Self-direction is as important in teacher development as it is in language learning” (Mann, 2005, p. 104). When teacher development is self-driven, long-term learning and change can be seen (Mann, 2005; Burns, 1999; Borg, 2009).

As previously stated, ongoing teacher development is vital to the success of long-term language programs. Being an effective teacher is a combination of professional knowledge and specialized skills, along with personal experiences and qualities. “Many English language teaching experts believe that ongoing professional development is essential, especially in today's world of constantly changing technology” (Murray, 2010, p. 3). However, technology

aside, teachers' needs and research in the field of language teaching, linguistics, educational psychology and language learning are constantly changing.

Teacher empowerment is an important step in this process of teacher development. Murray (2010) points out, "one of the main reasons to pursue professional development is to be empowered – to have the opportunity and the confidence to act upon your ideas as well as to influence the way you perform in your profession" (p. 3). Teacher empowerment can be defined as the process through which teachers become skilled in engaging in, sharing control of and influencing events that change their lives (Murray, 2010). When students' learning begins to change after teacher development, significant changes begin to happen in teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Mann, 2005). This kind of empowerment can lead to the manifestation of leadership skills, and also leads to improvement in students' performance and attitude (Murray, 2010).

2.4. Action Research

A trend in teacher development that is finding itself more and more in the spotlight is using Action Research (AR) as a form of teacher development. Action Research in the classroom "is all about gathering evidence to answer questions that concern educators, whether they be about teaching methodologies, learners' strategies, teachers' beliefs, or classroom materials" (McKay, 2009, p. 281). Johnson (1992) points out that one of the main reasons that teachers find themselves doing research in their own classrooms is to become more effective teachers. Action Research does not necessarily give definite answers to questions about the best way to learn a language, or the most effective methods of language teaching. However, it does help give teachers a richer understanding of the different, interrelated factors that are involved in learning in specific environments (Johnson, 1992). Conducting AR can also help teachers become aware of existing research. As teachers become more aware of the available research, they begin to use it in their classroom, and also become more critical of it. They are more able to understand how existing research might be used in their classroom (McKay, 2009). Because of these benefits for teachers, it is important that they be introduced to the idea of AR as early as possible in their teaching careers.

One of the unfortunate realities as English teaching has advanced, as in most fields of study, is the separation between research and practice (Wallace, 1991). "It has long been acknowledged that the division between research and practice is a divisive one. It is also true that a great deal of the practitioner inquiry and AR detailed in Burns (2005) has gone some way to bridging the gap" (Mann, 2005, p. 110). One of the misconceptions about research that Burns (2010) points out is that research is about investigating something in order to discover

new information using particular methods and procedures. However, there are many ways of doing research: different philosophies, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, purposes, methods and sources of data associated with different approaches. Action Research is an approach to research that allows the teacher to define a problem, collect data, and analyze and interpret the data in a more subjective, practical, flexible, open-ended way when compared with a classical scientific approach (Burns, 2010).

Action Research is essentially a kind of research that leads teachers through a four-phase research cycle. As Burns (2010) summarizes, the first step of the research is the *Plan* phase. During this phase, the teacher-researcher identifies a problem or issue in his/her classroom and attempts to develop a plan of action to bring about improvements. The teacher-researcher might consider possible investigations within realistic constraints and also what improvements are possible. During the second phase, the *Action* phase, deliberate intervention is taken into the classroom situation for a period of time in hope of improvements. The third phase is the *Observation* phase, which involves systematic observation of the effects of the action. During this phase, the context, actions and opinions of those involved would be thoroughly observed and documented. During the final *Reflection* stage, the teacher-researcher reflects on, evaluates and describes the results and effects of the action plan. This is done to understand and improve the situation even further. Commonly, new issues arise as the teacher-researcher reflects on the success of the AR, and at this point, it may be beneficial to continue onto a further cycle of AR.

Action Research is an advantageous tool for language teachers in the classroom. It “involves teachers in evaluating and reflecting on their teaching with the aim of bringing about continuing changes and improvements in practice” (Burns, 2010, p. 10). It is research on a small-scale. It is contextualized and local in character. It “gives communities of participants the opportunity to investigate issues of immediate concern collaboratively within their own social situation” (Burns, 2010, p. 10) in order to improve those identified issues. It offers teachers a different way of analyzing what happens in their classroom through systematic data collection and reflection on that data to suggest solutions, as compared to the intuitive thinking that happens naturally every day. Finally, it allows teachers to invest in the curriculum, and empowers them to own change (Burns, 2010).

2.5. Action Research as a tool for Teacher Development

Before the late 1980’s, AR had little impact on English Language Teacher Education, but for nearly two decades, AR has been used as a vehicle for teacher empowerment and development. It is well known that professionals’ having an active role in their own

development process is beneficial (Mann, 2005) and AR is one way that this can happen. “Action Research has played a huge part in putting the practitioner at the center of efforts to understand and develop language teaching and learning practice. Action Research is clearly a primary vehicle for practitioners’ personal and professional development” (Mann, 2005, p. 103). Action Research has such growing interest in development because of its classroom-based, learner-centered design. The notion of a self-reflective, inquiring and critically motivated teacher also accelerated interest in AR (Burns, 2009).

Action Research is developmental and transformative in nature, and when used in collaborative or group situations, can be an effective means of teacher development. According to Burns (2009), one of the foremost researchers of AR in TESOL, there are many ways that AR is oriented towards teacher development in English language teaching. AR helps teachers to find solutions to particular issues in specific teaching or learning situations, to research curriculum innovations and understand educational change through the process, to find ways to reduce gaps between academic research findings and practical classroom applications, to facilitate the professional development of reflective teachers, to acquaint teachers with and enhance their knowledge of research skills and conducting research, and to encourage the development of teachers’ personal practical theories. (Burns, 2009)

Looking at such a list, it is easy to see why AR would be useful in a teacher development situation. However, there is still very limited use of AR in teacher education in both pre-service and in-service teacher development situations (Borg, 2006). Some research has shown that some international, language-learning contexts may be incompatible with AR (Burns, 2009; Borg, 2006). Another issue with AR in teacher education is that teachers lack knowledge of AR’s existence. In one international study of 228 teachers in 10 different countries, Rainey (2000) found that 75.5% of teachers had never heard of AR. Of those teachers who had heard of it, 75.9% claimed that they had conducted some sort of AR individually. These teachers were mainly using AR as a form of professional development, but this study shows the need for more research training about research and AR, and also the need for more teacher support in AR.

Even though there are some pressing issues related to the use of AR in English language classrooms (lack of time and resources, limitations on sources of advice, criticism from colleagues or school administrators, self-doubt), there is much evidence that AR is generally well-received as an effective form of professional development by teachers who conduct it (Burns, 2009). For Wadsworth (1998), there are many ways that AR might help teachers. It helps teachers to become more conscious of problems in practice and more

conscious of who is causing the problems and why; more self-conscious about naming issues in the classroom; more planned, deliberate, systematic and rigorous about inquiring into issues and finding answers; more careful about documenting and recording action and what students and other teachers think about it; more intensive and comprehensive, waiting longer before jumping to conclusions; more self-conscious and skeptical in checking our guesses; more aware of a deeper understanding about the issues being researched. Finally, Wadsworth (1998) finds that teachers change because of being a part of the research process and become motivated to do further research regarding these actions.

Currently, AR in English Language Teacher Education programs falls into three main areas: (a) required components in undergraduate or graduate courses; (b) collaborative teacher projects within established programs or schools; and (c) individual projects by classroom teachers (Burns, 2009). “Participation in a community of inquiry is likely to have a more productive and lasting impact on practice than individualized learning” (Burns, 2009, p. 294). Opportunities could be set up for teachers and researchers to construct knowledge about AR, and teachers could be encouraged to problematize their practices through collaboration and dialogue with other teachers. They could be critically engaged in processes that would lead them to outcomes for challenges in their work environments (Burns, 2009). Within such approaches, teacher educators would scaffold not only the practices of AR, but also the processes that will lead to a greater knowledge base of English language learning and teaching.

2.6. Summary

In order to develop and be empowered, teachers need opportunities to critically reflect on their teaching practices. Teachers should be allowed to be active in the development process, prepared to change as they learn. This kind of learning is transformative and is best done in correlation with other teachers. Organized teacher development is a means for change and empowerment in individual teachers, their classrooms and, inevitably, their schools. Action Research is a vehicle for this kind of development, as teachers are allowed to be legitimate producers of knowledge and, through the process, are encouraged to empower themselves for change.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study aimed at two things: firstly, that teachers would become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers through the use of small-scale Action Research (AR) in their own classrooms, and secondly, that a teacher development unit at Çağ University's preparatory school would be established. This section is dedicated to exploring the research design of this study, the participants involved, the procedure undertaken for the Teacher Development Course, the data collection instruments used, and the data analysis employed.

3.2. Research Design

Action Research was chosen as the research design of this study. The aims of this study were, firstly, that teachers would become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers through the use of small-scale AR in their own classrooms, and secondly, that a teacher development unit at Çağ University's preparatory school would be established. In accordance with these aims, the research questions were as follows:

1. Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?
2. What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

Action Research was seen as the most appropriate tool of reaching the aims of the study and answering these questions in that while the teachers were engaged in small-scale AR in their own classrooms as a form of teacher development, the researcher would be engaged in a large-scale AR cycle.

The designs of the teachers' small-scale AR evolved as the Teacher Development Course carried on. Teachers were led through a ten-week AR cycle, explained in detail in section 3.4., finding solutions for the classroom issues that they identified. The Teacher Development Course provided a framework for teachers to carry out their research.

The design of the large-scale AR was as follows. The researcher first identified the main issue of the study, namely the need for additional opportunities of teacher development for ELT teachers at Çağ University's preparatory school. The researcher then developed a detailed action plan with the purpose of establishing a teacher development course. Weekly, one-hour sessions were created spanning ten weeks. This plan was carried out, and, through detailed observation and data collection, the process was observed while being reflected on throughout the process.

3.3. Participants

The 35 teachers employed at the Çağ University Preparatory School during the 2011-2012 school year were invited to participate in this study. As it is believed that teacher development should be self-initiated to take effect (Burns & Richards, 2009; Mann, 2005), participation in the study was voluntary. A brochure was distributed to the teachers describing the AR process (see Appendix 7), why it is a beneficial medium for teacher development, and what would be expected of participants during the ten-week development course. An informal meeting was held to explain the aims and purposes of the teacher development program and to arouse interests in voluntary participants. Of the 35 teachers in the preparatory school, seven teachers initially expressed interest in the study, and two teachers were able to successfully complete the development course to the end.

3.4. Teacher Development Course Procedure

The Teacher Development Course in this study took place in the spring semester of the 2011-2012 academic year. This course took place for one hour a week during teachers' paid teaching hours and spanned ten weeks. In accordance with the second research question of this study, the researcher used the ten-week development course as a means of understanding the factors in a development course that might affect teacher development.

Over the course of ten weeks, the teachers were themselves involved in a single cycle of AR. Using Burns (2010) as a guide for the development course, the teachers followed the four-step AR cycle outlined in the book. These four AR cycles, as summarized by Burns (2010) are planning, acting, observation and reflection. The researcher used this ten-week course as an attempt to answer the first research question regarding whether or not AR can help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers, so as to find solutions to the issues that they identified; and also, the second research question regarding the factors to consider when planning a teacher development course. In line with the four AR cycles, the course began with teachers working together to discover issues in their classroom to research. Teachers developed an action plan to better understand their issue. Each of the teachers observed the results of their action and spent time reflecting on the outcome of their study.

The Teacher Development Course was created with the intent of helping the teachers to learn what AR is, understand how it could be useful in the classroom, and realize how it could be implemented in their own classrooms. During the ten weeks of hourly meetings, discussions were arranged to bring teachers into dialogue with one another about teacher development, issues in their classrooms and the nature of AR. The researcher led the

discussions but discussions were found to take unexpected directions, depending on the weekly needs of the teachers. Because one-dimensional, information-driven courses tend to be de-motivating to teachers (Wallace, 1991; Burns & Richards, 2009), it was important that, from the beginning, the teachers be involved in their own learning through group discussion and personal research. With the exception of articles and personal research, much of the information during the course was given in the form of discussion questions, with the intent that teachers would arrive at transformative knowledge on their own or through the help of their fellow course attendees. The following sub-points summarize the procedures that were taken during the ten weeks.

3.4.1. Teacher Development

The goal of the first section of the course was to discuss the nature of teacher learning and teacher development. The teachers were asked to reflect on and discuss their previous experiences in teacher development, whether it was activities, courses, seminars or undergraduate pre-service training. They were encouraged to think about the positive and negative aspects of their learning experiences and how they best learned in those situations. Some problematic aspects of teacher learning were discussed, namely the possible isolation felt by many teachers involved in personal development (Murray, 2010). The importance of teacher development in a group setting was highlighted. It was pointed out that learning as a group can alleviate some feelings of isolation, and that teachers can learn from others in similar situations to their own (Murray, 2010).

Teachers discussed transformative learning, as defined by Harri-Augstein and Webb (1995), the kind of learning that leads to change in perceptions about teaching and classroom teaching practices. The teachers were encouraged to share experiences in which they learned something that caused a change in their classroom practices. Teachers were asked to discuss what teacher development is, how it happens, and its ultimate goal: teacher empowerment (Murray, 2010; Mann, 2005). Finally, the teachers were asked to discuss the characteristics of a teacher involved in teacher development, that the teacher might be open to new ideas, critical of classroom practices and open to change.

At the end of the session, teachers were given a copy of Mann (1999) to read. This article discusses the beginning stages of AR, and was given to teachers as a reader-friendly introduction to AR. Teachers were asked to read the article before the next session.

3.4.2. Action Research

The aims of the second section of the course were that teachers would uncover their beliefs about *effecting language teaching* and *effective language teachers*, understand how to

begin AR, begin narrowing down their topics, find a focus for their research projects, and, finally, examine their own beliefs about teaching to weigh the possible effects of those beliefs on their research. Teachers began this section of the course with a quote from their reading of Mann (1999): “Any successful piece of work is seldom done alone” (p. 11). They were asked to discuss their understanding of the quote and why working together is essential for the Teacher Development Course.

Some time was spent discussing together what makes an effective teacher, in hopes that teachers would begin to uncover their personal beliefs about teaching. After writing and sharing metaphors describing *effective teachers*, teachers watched a short video clip prepared by the researcher of some of current students describing what the words *effective teacher* meant to them. Teachers then discussed the gaps between their ideas and the students’ ideas, and what significance it might have on their studies.

The discussion then moved on to AR and teachers’ responses to Mann’s (1999) article. Teachers were asked to reflect on their motivations and purposes for being involved in the Teacher Development Course. They discussed their goals for the course, and were asked to discuss why AR might be an effective means of reaching those goals.

Teachers were then encouraged to begin discussing their initial thoughts regarding a direction for their AR projects. Prior to the discussion, the teachers were briefly introduced to the idea of cooperative development (Edge, 1992), that those who are listening should do so in an accepting manner, without bringing their own opinions, intentions, values or judgments into the discussion, while at the same time being active in helping the speakers uncover their beliefs about their classrooms and potential AR projects. The teachers were given the following prompts from Mann (1999) to consider and discuss:

- I would like to improve...
- Some people are unhappy about... What can I do to change the situation?
- I have an idea I would like to try out in my class. (p. 14)

Teachers began the process of narrowing down their topics, although by the end of the discussion, most teachers were still searching and considering issues. At this point in the course, teachers were given information to read about AR and how to narrow down topics during the *plan* stage (Burns, 2010). This was given that teachers might continue narrowing down their topics.

In order to ensure that all teachers were focused on a topic before moving onto the *planning* stage of the AR, a handout was prepared (see Appendix 4). This handout was prepared to help teachers look at their teaching, classrooms, situations, schools, and

curriculum from many different angles. This handout was mainly useful for individuals to think through their possible AR topics, but some parts were used to help guide discussion in small groups during the Teacher Development Course, mainly the reflection questions.

The following questions were also prepared to help the teachers to begin moving from classroom *issues* in a very broad sense, to clearer aims for their studies.

- Summarize why you are doing this research. What is its importance to you/your students? How does it support your class/school goals and your professional development?
- Identify what differences you want to make for your students and their learning? What benefits do you want the research to offer them?

In the following sessions, more time would be devoted to identifying clear aims. However, this discussion was facilitated that teachers would begin the process of thinking about their aims.

As a final point before moving onto the *planning* stage of the Teacher Development Course, a short discussion was facilitated regarding teacher beliefs and personal teaching philosophies. Teachers were asked to reflect on why this might be an important aspect of an AR project. Burns (2010) points out that teachers all have built-in assumptions about what happens and why in their classrooms, and that being aware of these assumptions, keeping an open mind and acknowledging what research data is trying to say, are all essential in the validity of an AR study. Following the same line of thought, the teachers were asked to reflect on some of the following questions from Burns (2010):

- What do you believe about your role in the classroom?
- How do you want your students to behave towards you?
- What do you believe is the purpose of your students' language learning?
- What attributes or attitudes do you believe your students have about learning languages?
- What kind of instructional techniques do you believe work best in your classroom?
- What kind of materials or resources do you consider to be the most effective? (p. 26)

After discussing some of the questions, teachers were encouraged to discuss why these beliefs and attitudes towards teaching, students and the classroom might affect the AR studies.

Teachers were given relevant information to read about the *planning* stage of AR (Burns, 2010) for the next session. The purpose of this reading was for teachers to begin thinking about how to identify aims and research questions for their AR studies.

3.4.3. Identifying aims and research questions

The aims of this section of the Teacher Development Course were threefold; firstly, for teachers to clearly identify the aims of their research; secondly to choose clearly defined research questions; and finally, to begin thinking of possible, appropriate forms of data collection. It was essential at this point in the course that every teacher would walk away from the sessions with clear aims and research questions to reach those aims. Clarity in direction was made a priority and much time was spent on it due to this being the first experience for these teachers in AR. As Burns (2010) points out, “sometimes finding a focus is difficult because the characteristics and processes of AR are themselves not yet clear to you” (p. 23). This section of the course required time, careful thought, and opportunities to synthesize ideas together and individually.

During this section of the course, the discussion began with discussing the not-yet clearly defined aims of the teachers’ studies. The teachers spend some time discussing what they read in Burns (2010) about planning an AR and writing clear aims for the study. Teachers were encouraged to talk through the following points: *Identify what differences you want to make for your students and their learning. What benefits do you want the research to offer them? List the ways you will know whether the research has been successful. What indicators will tell you that the research has produced results?* (Fischer, 2001).

Prior to this section, the researcher prepared a handout to help the teachers clearly organize their aims, research questions and data collection tools (see Appendix 5). The handout included a chart that clearly showed the flow from the first aim of a study, to its research question, to its data collection tool, finally to its form of data analysis. Teachers were given a completed chart with an AR that the researcher’s had been involved in, and were encouraged to begin filling in the blank chart as their aims became clear to them.

After discussion was completed and the involved teachers had clearly defined aims of their studies, the discussion moved onto research questions. Firstly, the teachers discussed what exactly research questions are and their necessity in AR. Then a list was made together of adjectives that might describe good research questions. A short handout was prepared by the researcher to guide the teachers through the research question writing process (see Appendix 6). This handout gave tips to the teachers for writing good research questions (Burns, 2010). Teachers discussed what would make bad research questions, why broad

questions might not be ideal, and what kinds of questions might cause research or researchers to burn out. At this point, teachers were encouraged to begin writing their research questions. As they wrote, they shared their questions with the group, and discussion ensued about how to refine the questions to make them even clearer and more focused.

Readings were given to the teachers about the *act* stage of AR (Burns, 2010) to read for the next session. The hope of this reading was to give teachers an introduction to data collection before the next section of the course began.

3.4.4. Data Collection

This section of the Teacher Development Course was designed to give teachers a brief overview of a few different, applicable forms of data collection. The goals of this section were that teachers would firstly have solid research questions and know what type or types of data collection methods and tools they would use for their questions, and that they would develop an action plan for their AR project. The four styles of data collection tools that were briefly discussed were peer observation, questionnaires, interviews, and diary keeping.

To begin the discussion on data collection, the teachers were asked to brainstorm a list of activities that they often do in the classroom. The list was discussed as a group with the intent of uncovering how these could be turned into data collection activities. It was discussed how in AR, as Burns (2010) points out, data collection should balance well with teaching in order to be time-effective and manageable. Teachers were encouraged to be creative and adaptable in their data collection. Four different aims and research questions were shown to the teachers, and they were encouraged to discuss the best ways to collect data for those questions. The teachers' were encouraged to look at their own *Aims* Handout (see Appendix 5). The teachers' aims and research questions were discussed one by one with the intent of uncovering the best data collection method.

Further readings were given to each of the teachers on the *act* stage of AR (Burns, 2010), depending on what kind of data collection method they chose. The aim of these sections was to give teachers a better understanding of their chosen form of data collection, whether it was peer observation, questionnaires, interviews, or diary keeping.

At this point in the course, teachers were encouraged to write a plan including goals to not only guide them through the rest of the *act* stage of their AR projects, but to also help with the transition into the observation stage of their research. This plan was provided to keep teachers focused, on track and accountable to the group.

At the completion of the data collection portion of the Teacher Development Course, sections on the *observe* stage of AR were given to the teachers (Burns, 2010). The intent of

this section of reading was to begin the process of making sense of the data that was collected by the teachers.

3.4.5. Observation

This portion of the Teacher Development Course was developed with the following aims in mind: firstly, that teachers would begin observing the results of their action plans, and secondly, that they would choose possible next steps to continue answering their research questions. During the observation process, the teachers were encouraged to be continually reflecting on their data collection processes as the data was collected, as many people new to AR can find the process of data analyzing and interpretation challenging (Burns, 2010). As Burns (2010) points out, continual reflection is not only satisfying for the researcher; it actually makes the research more worthwhile.

The researcher began this section of the Teacher Development Course with a small reminder of the cyclical nature of AR, in order to point out that sometimes one round of data collection is not sufficient. Sometimes one form of data collection leads to the need for a different kind of data, and teachers were reminded to think continually what the data was trying to show them about their situations. The discussion then led to how the week of data collection went and what kind of data was gathered. During the discussion, the teachers were encouraged to try to begin making sense of the data that had been collected. The following questions from Burns (2010) were shown to help guide the teachers through the discussion about their data collection.

- Do these data answer my questions? If so, how?
- What are the main messages so far?
- What are the gaps in the messages I still need to fill?
- Am I still asking the right questions or are the data telling me that something else is more important?
- Do I need other kinds of data to help me really see what I am looking for?
- To answer my questions, are some pieces of data more important than others? (p. 104)

Each of the teachers was encouraged to spend some time talking about their study and their data collection process with the previous questions in mind. The other participants and the researcher had the role of helping the teacher uncover what the main messages of the data were so far and what gaps there were in the data. With each teacher, the group was encouraged to look back at the original research questions to find if those questions had been

answered by the data thus far; if not, discussion was focused on what might be done to continue finding answers to the questions.

At this section of the study, each of the teachers met individually with the researcher during the development course hour in order to look more closely at their personal data analysis. Each of the teachers were given specific sections about observing and analyzing data (Burns, 2010), depending on the type of data being collected for their study. These sections were given with the intent of helping each individual analyze and interpret data according to their study. In the discussion with the researcher, the teacher and researcher discussed how to assemble the data, how to categorize or code the data, how to compare the categories or codes, and how to begin building meaning and interpretation from the data. Before the discussion was over, the researcher wanted to make sure each of the teachers felt comfortable with the next steps of his or her AR project.

Teachers were also given sections to read on the *Reflect* stage of AR (Burns, 2010). The intent of this section of reading was to help teachers begin to understand reflection, the final stage of AR.

3.4.6. Reflection

The goals of the final section of the Teacher Development Course were threefold: firstly, that teachers would understand the importance of reflection on the AR process; secondly, that they would be confident about how to end the AR process; and finally, that teachers would plan next steps for their research. One of the most basic and essential features of development as classroom teachers is to reflect on our experiences. AR is based on the deep kind of reflection that happens from systematic investigating the classroom (Burns, 2010). Therefore, throughout the AR process, reflection on practice, on the research process, on beliefs and values, and on the feelings and experiences is the core from which teacher development happens.

During this section of the development course, discussion began with a look back at previous weeks, beginning with the original aims of the teachers' individual AR projects. The question was posed of whether or not those aims had been achieved and what still must be done to reach those aims. The role of reflection in AR was discussed, along with the connection between reflection and teacher development. It was emphasized that reflection is essential for development and change to happen.

Teachers were then encouraged to continue the process of reflecting on their classroom practice. The following questions from Burns (2010) were given to guide teachers

as a group through a brief reflection on classroom practice and any effective changes that resulted from the AR.

- How did I select my practical actions to improve my classroom situation?
- Why did I select these particular actions?
- How did the actions I selected work to improve the situation? For me as the teacher? For my students? For other people involved?
- Were the actions effective? Did I need to change them? (p. 143)

Teachers were given some time to quietly take notes on the questions, and were then encouraged to share some of their thoughts. It was pointed out during the discussion that the practices that were a part of the research are always subject to reflection, and that reflection on this practice is what gives further ideas for practice (Burns, 2010).

The next part of the discussion was based on reflection of the research process. It was pointed out that all good teachers reflect on their practices, but that AR makes the relationship between research and teaching more systematic and ongoing. Therefore, research causes teaching to be a much more intense experience (Burns, 2010). Teachers were encouraged to talk through the following questions from Burns (2010) in order to guide their reflection on the research process.

- How did I go about “testing out” my practical actions?
- How have I collected data to inform my practical actions?
- How did I use the data to illuminate what was working in my classroom?
- How have I used my data to change direction, if necessary?
- How has my experience helped me to extend my knowledge of how to do research? (p. 143)

Teachers were encouraged to think about how the research might continue in the future, and how it could be a more positive experience for the teacher and the students.

Teachers were then encouraged to reflect on their beliefs and values. It was pointed out that improving and changing classroom conditions are key in AR, and that our personal beliefs and values are central in that process. Examining, exploring and expanding our beliefs and values contribute greatly to teacher development (Burns, 2010). The following questions from Burns (2010) were given to the teachers.

- What are two of my strongest personal beliefs about teaching? What are two of my strongest personal beliefs about learning?
- How did these beliefs affect the decisions I made as I did my research?

- How has my research deepened my understanding of my personal beliefs and values about language teaching?
- In what ways have my practical theories about teaching developed?
- How has developing my personal theories helped to build my knowledge? About teaching? About research? (p. 144)

Teachers were encouraged to take these questions and spend time answering them in their research diaries.

The final reflection point that teachers were led through was reflection on feelings and experiences. Being open to change in our classrooms can be both positive and negative, and it can certainly be emotional at times (Burns, 2010). Reflecting on our feelings and experiences means honestly opening ourselves to problems, possibilities and opportunities in our teaching contexts. The following questions were given to the teachers to help them reflect on their feelings and experiences.

- What were your personal reactions to the changes that resulted from your practical actions? Were they positive or negative?
- How did you deal with negative reactions? What impact did the positive reactions have?
- Did the negative reactions trigger ideas that you had not thought about before? If so, how, and what did you do?
- How did your personal feelings contribute to the way you did your AR?
- What personal feelings and experiences arose from finishing your AR? Were they positive, negative or both?

The teachers were encouraged to reflect on these questions in their teacher diaries in order to explore their feelings and experiences in the AR process.

The final goal of the reflection section of the course was that teachers would begin to plan next steps for their research. One final discussion was facilitated with the hopes that teachers would understand how to finish their AR projects well, how to continue their research projects in the future, how to share their research with others, and how to write brief AR reports.

The question was again posed of whether or not the teachers felt that their research projects were at a logical stopping point. Teachers discussed that the AR process is almost certainly a messy and complex experience – that is the nature of AR (Burns, 2010). It was

stressed that AR has no specific length of time, and no ideal number of research cycles. The teachers also discussed possible focuses for future AR cycles that they might engage in.

The discussion then moved onto the importance of sharing AR with others, and how that might be done in our teaching situations. Teachers were asked to list the benefits of sharing research with other teachers, and to discuss who the possible audience might be. Then a short time of the session was devoted to how to write a brief AR report. The following prompts from Burns (2010) were given to the teachers as a guide to writing their brief reports:

- Actions completed
- Data collection technique used
- Data collected
- Insights/Findings
- Reflections/Observations
- Questions/Challenges
- Where next? (p. 158)

The teachers were encouraged to write their AR reports in order to share the research that was done with the rest of the preparatory department.

3.5. Data Collection

In this study, data was collected using the following instruments: Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II (see Appendices 1 and 2), Course Evaluation Questionnaire (see Appendix 3), semi-structured follow-up interviews, and the researcher's diary.

3.5.1. Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II

Self-Assessment Questionnaire I (see Appendix 1) was used with the purpose of helping teachers reflect on their work as language teachers. This was given at the beginning of the study. Self-Assessment Questionnaire II (see Appendix 2) was used in order to help teachers and the researcher become aware of changes that might have happened over the semester due to the Teacher Development Course. This questionnaire was given at the end of the course.

The aim of giving this questionnaire was answer the first research question: Does AR help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers? The purpose of the questions in this questionnaire were to elicit teachers' feelings about their jobs, to raise awareness about the responsibility teachers take, to encourage them to articulate their strengths and interests, to find out what teachers' involvement has been in developing themselves as teachers, and to understand any of the teachers articulated targets.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire I was given to the teachers upon expressing interest in the study. The teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire prior to the first week of the Teacher Development Course. Self-Assessment Questionnaire II was given to the teachers after the final session of the Teacher Development Course to be filled out during their spare time.

3.5.2. Course Evaluation Questionnaire

The Course Evaluation Questionnaire (from now on referred to as CEQ) was given to the teachers at the completion of the Teacher Development Course (see Appendix 3). The teachers were asked to be as honest and reflective as possible on the Teacher Development Course as a whole and also on its individual components.

In the first section of the CEQ, teachers were asked to rate individual components of the course using a 5-point scale. They were also asked to comment on the reasons for their ratings. The purpose of this first section was to elicit teachers' opinions about the main procedure followed during the course.

The second section of the CEQ asked the teachers two questions about the Teacher Development Course as a whole. The purpose of this section was to get the teachers' perspectives on the course to utilize as implications for future AR courses.

The CEQ was used to answer the second research question: What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

3.5.3. Semi-structured follow-up interviews

The third data collection technique was the semi-structured follow-up interviews. This form of data collection was used following the Self-Evaluation Questionnaire II. The researcher asked questions based on the questionnaire, firstly to eliminate any misunderstandings written on the questionnaire, and secondly to elicit any further responses from the teachers.

The aim of the semi-structured post interview was to answer the first research question: Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?

3.5.4. Researcher's diary

Throughout the study, the researcher kept a diary to be used both as a reflection tool and as a data collection instrument. This form of data collection was used in order that the researcher would be reflective and self-aware throughout the process of the Teacher Development Course, and that the researcher would evaluate the Teacher Development Course and its components on a continual basis.

Prior to the beginning of the Teacher Development Course, weekly throughout the course, and after the completion of the course, the researcher was involved in reflection through a research diary. The researcher attempted to reflect on as much of the action during the study as possible, including ideas, techniques, conclusions, and feelings toward each of the weekly meetings. This data collection instrument was used to answer the second research question: What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

3.6. Data Analysis

The analysis of this study was based on data obtained from Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II (see Appendices 1 and 2), the CEQ (see Appendix 3), the semi-structured post interviews, and the researcher's diary.

3.6.1. Self-Assessment Questionnaire I and II

The analysis for the Self-Assessment Questionnaires (see Appendices 1 and 2) was done in the following ways: firstly, using content analysis, a method of studying and analyzing communication through categorization (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006); and, secondly, in order to confirm the content analysis, using triangulation with the findings of the semi-structured post interviews and researcher's diary.

3.6.2. Course Evaluation Questionnaire

The analysis for the CEQ (see Appendix 3) was done in the following ways: firstly, by counting responses on the 5-point scale to identify the frequency of teachers' ratings; secondly, by using content analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006); and, thirdly, to confirm the findings of the content analysis, using triangulation with the findings of the semi-structured post interviews and the researcher's diary.

3.6.3. Semi-structured post interviews

The semi-structured post interviews were analyzed, firstly, using content analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) and, secondly, to confirm the content analysis, using triangulation with the findings of the Self-Assessment Questionnaires, the CEQ and the researcher's diary.

3.6.4. Researcher's diary

The researcher's diary was analyzed, firstly, using content analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), and, secondly, to confirm the content analysis, using triangulation with the findings of the Self-Assessment Questionnaires, the CEQ and the semi-structured post interviews.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the research design of this study, the participants, the procedure, the data collection instruments and the data analysis methods. The following

chapter is devoted to showing how the data collected was analyzed. The findings are presented in light of the results obtained in the analysis.

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This Action Research (AR) study had two aims. The first aim was to help teachers develop themselves through the use of small-scale AR studies in their own classrooms. The second aim was to establish a teacher development unit at Çağ University's preparatory school. Two research questions were focused on in this study in order to reach these aims.

1. Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?
2. What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

To answer the first question, Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II (see Appendices 1 and 2) were given to teachers, semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted, and the researcher kept a diary in order to collect data. To answer the second question, data was collected using the Course Evaluation Questionnaires (see Appendix 3), semi-structured follow-up interviews, and the researcher's diary. Chapter 4 discusses the findings obtained from the AR study, beginning with the teachers' understandings of their own professional strengths and weaknesses, and finishing with an evaluation of the Teacher Development Course.

4.2. Findings Related to the Teachers' Understandings of Their Own Professional Strengths and Weaknesses

In this section, information is presented on each of the teachers involved in the Teacher Development Course, including a brief profile of the teacher, an account of the subject chosen for his or her action research project, the teacher's understanding of his or her personal strengths and weaknesses before and after the study, and development as professionals between the beginning and end of the study as identified through the data collection tools.

4.2.1. Discussion of Teacher 1 and his Findings

The 2011-2012 school year is Teacher 1's first year teaching English at Çağ University, but he had been teaching general English for a year in a tutoring role and in evening courses. He graduated from Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, with a degree in Applied Linguistics, and he is very interested in getting students to speak in a natural way with him as the teacher.

Teacher 1 began his AR cycle wanting to appeal to students in their desire to talk to their friends in the classroom in Turkish all of the time. He aimed at channeling that desire

and habit to help the students speak comfortably in a Listening and Speaking course. The study began with the assumption that students were unmotivated and uninterested in speaking English. Teacher 1 was researching how to help students motivate themselves. However, as the study went on, Teacher 1 found this assumption to be untrue. Using a questionnaire and informal discussions with the students, he found that students understood why they were studying English and that they had focus, students were worried about the consequences of failing, and that students believed they had improved in the ability to focus on learning English throughout the day. He even found his students seeking him out to practice speaking. The combination of the questionnaire, informal interactions and observations, Teacher 1 came to the conclusion that students were motivated. This led him to a second question: Why then, aren't they talking in class?

Teacher 1 found his research shifting from motivation to understanding students' personal struggles and class dynamics. At the end of his study, Teacher 1 found three main reasons why students in his classes didn't seem to have the proper motivation to speak in class: firstly, the personality of the student was affecting some students, for example, being shy or uncomfortable in large groups; secondly, class bullying, or stronger students making fun of and harassing weaker students; and finally temporary loss of focus.

Teacher 1 understood that knowing and understanding the personalities of the weaker students in classes would help improve the proficiency of the class in general. He decided to focus on class management and group speaking techniques in the future.

4.2.1.1. Teacher 1's Understanding of Professional Strengths and Weaknesses at the Beginning of the Study

In the Self-Assessment Questionnaire I, Teacher 1's wording seems to show uncertainty of what strengths he brings to the preparatory department or to his classroom. He is aware of some strengths and weaknesses, but described them hesitatingly. In Self-Assessment Questionnaire I, when asked what contributions he makes to the Çağ University Preparatory School, he answered, "We assist other teachers in clarifying English; a good attitude; sometimes my wife brings food or cookies. Other than that I feel a little guilty to say not much." In the Self-Assessment Questionnaire I, when asked what pleased him in the previous semester, he answered that he was pleased to see progress in his students' language abilities. In the same questionnaire, when asked about what he could contribute to other responsibilities within the department, he replied, "As an amateur teacher, I'm not sure." In terms of his professional development as a teacher, Teacher 1 wrote that he occasionally looks online and that he was going through a book on teaching principles. In Self-Assessment

Questionnaire I, Teacher 1's answers seemed mainly confined to his own personal classroom and experiences without knowing how to relate the questionnaire questions to other colleagues or the department. When asked what his aims were for the second semester, he stated that he wanted to analyze his methodologies more objectively during the Teacher Development Course and to observe what others are doing.

4.2.1.2. Teacher 1's Understanding of Professional Strengths and Weaknesses at the End of the Study

Teacher 1 showed much more certainty in his answers on the Self-Assessment Questionnaire II and also demonstrated a better understanding of his strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. When asked what pleased him in his work second semester in Self-Assessment Questionnaire II, he reported that he still found "great joy in witnessing progress, but now" he was seeing "progress in (his) class's weak areas." This time when asked in the questionnaire what contributions he makes to the department, he answered, "I collaborate better with colleagues as we brainstorm ways to improve our class time." He stated his willingness to contribute other responsibilities to the department as well. "Perhaps I'll share my research results with everyone, also I can do this as an ongoing contribution to my colleagues, I would also be willing to create surveys for other purposes." When asked in the questionnaire what he did to further his own professional development in the last semester, he stated that he read more on teaching practices and found AR very helpful in developing his skills. Teacher 1 saw progress in "understanding (his) students a whole lot more." He asserted that his research is "not totally finished but more research is needed," that he would be "willing to share...research results with everyone" in our department "as an ongoing contribution to (his) colleagues" and that he is "committed to doing something AR-like every semester."

4.2.1.3. Reflection on the Changes Observed Between the Beginning and End of the Study in Teacher 1

Looking at Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II, it is easy to see change in Teacher 1's understanding of his own personal strengths and weaknesses as a teacher due to the AR and the Teacher Development Course. As far as his contributions to the department, he progressed from seeing himself as someone helping to clarify English with a good attitude, to a person who could collaborate with other teachers to improve classroom time by sharing research results, help to create surveys for further research, and continue working on AR projects that might improve the department.

In the follow-up interview, Teacher 1 stated that AR allowed him to “take (his) own practices under a microscope, what (he) was doing wrong.” He reported in the interview that his initial research issue was regarding why he couldn’t have a constructive class. This issue evolved during the research and he was able to see many other peer and social dynamics in the classroom. He said, “I’m able to understand how to have a discussion...and how I can best use class time...specifically class discussion.” Action Research really seemed to guide Teacher 1 to an answer of the issue he set out with in the beginning of the Teacher Development Course.

Action Research not only helped Teacher 1 with his issue, though. A noticeable shift occurred in between Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II. He went from discussing his work and contributions in a very isolated way, to talking about being able to “collaborate...with colleagues, brainstorm ways to improve our classroom time, share (his) research results with everyone, and work as an ongoing contribution to his colleagues.” In the follow-up interview, he continued explaining that doing AR has helped him get out of the trap that many teachers face of “come to school, go to class, go home... It just kind of helped me think a little more critically. Like, ‘What can I contribute?’...I should be contributing something! And so it...caused me to...take a step back, and frankly, I’ve learned a little more about that.”

4.2.2. Discussion of Teacher 2 and her Findings

The 2011-2012 school year is Teacher 2’s first year at Çağ University’s Preparatory School, although she has been teaching English full-time for 3 years. She graduated from Huddersfield University in 1996 with a Bachelor of Science degree in textile design. Before working at Çağ University, she mainly taught private English lessons. She is interested in speaking and motivating students to discuss more in the classroom.

During the first semester of the school year, Teacher 2 noticed more and more that the students in her classes were directing most discussion towards her, even when asked to discuss with partners. During her AR project, she aimed at improving students’ communication skills. Her focus was on getting students to discuss naturally with one another, rather than with the teacher. Teacher 2 used student questionnaires, observations and reflections in a teacher journal to collect data. Her study had the following results:

- Students were scared of making mistakes in front of their friends.
- Embarrassment prevented the students from discussing naturally with their friends.
- Students were afraid of learning mistakes in grammar and pronunciation from their friends.

At the end of the study, she was able to find solutions to minimize students' embarrassment and fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates. She began to speak less in the classroom, give the students more time to do tasks, but also understand when the students were getting bored and needed to move on.

She saw an improvement in students' willingness to discuss with classmates, and found the students less and less dependent on her to have a discussion in the class. In the Self-Assessment Questionnaire II, Teacher 2 stated, "Progress has been made but the target has not been met in full. Although there were lots of positive outcomes, more work still needs to be done to achieve the required results." In her follow-up interview, she also commented on a desire to carry on the study into the next year, recognizing that each time you do something, you see something different.

4.2.2.1. Teacher 2's Understanding of Professional Strengths and Weaknesses at the Beginning of the Study

Teacher 2 had an observable understanding of some of her strengths and weaknesses in Self-Assessment Questionnaire I. When asked what pleased her in her work the semester previous to the questionnaire, she reported "being able to offer support and encouragement to the students and giving them confidence in their ability to learn." When asked what contributions she made to the department, she reported "always trying to improve teaching skills and find alternative teaching methods in order to make the classroom a fun learning environment." When asked about any other contributions she could make to the department, she wrote "extra speaking lessons" and "speaking club". She reportedly wanted to "speak with other teachers about their techniques" and "read others lesson plans" in order to further her own professional development, and aimed "to generally improve (her) teaching skills by observing (herself)."

4.2.2.2. Teacher 2's Understanding of Professional Strengths and Weaknesses at the End of the Study

It appears from Teacher 2's answers that she has a strong understanding of her professional strengths and weaknesses at the end of the study. In Self-Assessment Questionnaire II, she reports an ability to "adapt teaching methods in order to minimize...difficulties," she creates "new and effective communicative lessons to work alongside and compliment the course book," and she states a willingness to "carry on with observation of classes and give feedback about" her AR findings. In the follow-up interview, Teacher 2 was able to very clearly state her strengths and weaknesses as a teacher:

“I've seen quite a few of my strengths...I would say my general interaction with the students is pretty good. I'm very motivating towards them, I've noticed that and I've heard that back from the students too. My weakness, yes, I picked up on quite a few. My first one was generally that I spoke too much in the classroom. The second one I noticed I wasn't giving enough time to the students. And also the third one was I was taking too much time on some of the areas, when I should have gotten through it quicker. And the students were becoming a bit bored.” *Teacher 2 in follow-up interview*

Without giving much thought to it, Teacher 2 was able to very clearly articulate the strengths and weaknesses that she was able to identify because of the Teacher Development Course.

4.2.2.3. Reflection on the Changes Observed Between the Beginning and End of the Study in Teacher 2

Although Teacher 2 was aware of her strengths in the beginning of the study, the amount of clarity she has when describing her strengths and weaknesses in the follow-up interview is definitely noteworthy. She attributes this awareness to the work that was done in the Teacher Development Course.

As a result of the AR Teacher 2 did, she states a new awareness of what she is doing in the classroom.

“It's made me think in a different way. When I'm teaching, I can sort of see ahead a little bit more. I can see what I should be doing the next time around because I seem to always be analyzing what I'm doing and what's working in the class and what isn't. So, I think going forward, I can put that into practice - especially next year. I know that I will change a lot of different things.” *Teacher 2 in follow-up interview*

She reports a new empathy to students' language learning issues thanks to her research. “It's given me more awareness...of the students' difficulties and how to...be more...empathetic to those problems, and not sort of think, ‘Just sort it out!’” She is more able to think about students' problems and help them solve them. Finally, Teacher 2 discussed the benefits of trying new things in the classroom. “I've been able to implement some of the teaching skills that I wanted to and I've seen that they do work. But there's still more to do.” Overall, the changes observed between the beginning and the end of the study for Teacher 2, in terms of personal awareness, students' learning and professional development, are overwhelmingly positive.

4.3. Findings on Teachers' Overall Understanding of Professional Strengths and Weaknesses

In both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, significant changes can be seen in their understanding of their professional strengths and weaknesses. In the researcher diary, a few changes were observed after looking at the questionnaires and follow-up interviews. First of all, both teachers have a much clearer idea of what their strengths are by the end of the Teacher Development Course. Teacher 1 shifted from being almost unable to list his strengths and contributions to the department to being able to make a clear list of his strengths and what things he could do to make the department a better place. Although Teacher 2 was aware in the beginning of her strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, at the end of the study, she was able to list in a very clear way what she had noticed about her own strengths and weaknesses as a result of the Teacher Development Course.

In the researcher's diary, another noteworthy observation from the data is the shift in Teacher 1 from a focus on his own personal classroom, to the department as a whole. He began seeing what he does as a part of a whole department rather than just his single classroom. At the end of his study and the Teacher Development Course, he had clear ideas of what he could do to help improve not only his classroom but the department as a whole.

4.4. Evaluation of the Teacher Development Course

This section includes an evaluation of the Teacher Development Course. Data collection tools included the responses given by the teachers to the Course Evaluation Questionnaire (see Appendix 3), their responses in the follow-up interview, and the researcher's diary.

4.4.1. Course Evaluation Questionnaire: Section A

Section A of the CEQ was written with the aim of eliciting the teachers' opinion about the activities that they were offered, in addition to the procedures they followed during the Teacher Development Course. Teachers were asked to rate each of the sub-sections on a 5-point scale in terms of usefulness and were asked to give reasons for their ratings.

4.4.1.1. Activities offered for the understanding of teacher learning and development

To begin, the Teacher Development Course, activities were provided for teachers to discuss and uncover their understanding of teacher learning and development. These activities were organized with the intention of making teachers aware of their own learning and development potential. The aim was that teachers would discuss what activities might lead to transformative learning and their own possible development, as it was expected for teachers to be actively involved in their learning throughout the Teacher Development Course.

Both of the teachers indicated that they found these activities useful. The researcher's diary and teachers' comments also supported this. It appeared that simple discussion about what was happening in classrooms was helpful and motivating, as observed in the researcher diary and in Teacher 1's CEQ.

"Open discussions with others were especially helpful." *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

"I realized that one thing the teachers really want is just to talk about what is going on in their classrooms. They want to have a discussion about what they are doing, how they can do it better, what other teachers are doing, just some kind of dialogue."

Excerpt from Researcher's Diary

In addition to this, the teachers commented that the activities and articles were also useful.

"I found the activities useful, especially activities and information about the reflective practice process. This is not an area that I would have usually considered as part of my self-development, but once explained, I could see how valuable it would be to evaluate and observe myself whilst teaching." *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

"The articles were very helpful in opening my eyes to the areas of teaching and classroom dynamics I hadn't thought about before." *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

These comments taken from the CEQs and the Researcher Diary support the assumption that these activities helped teachers understand the nature of teacher learning and development.

4.4.1.2. Activities offered for the understanding of Action Research

These activities were organized with the aim of helping the teachers understand the nature of AR and to help them in the organizing of their research project. Both of the teachers claimed in their CEQs that these activities were useful.

"Reading was helpful together with discussions, but really the ways in which we talked about flushing it out practically was most helpful." *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

"I think that the activities and information were generally clear, and helped me understand each step of the action research process. I found the whole action research process somewhat confusing in the first session, but thereafter it got easier to understand when each step was approached separately." *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

Group discussions, reading articles and activities dedicated to the understanding of AR in the Teacher Development Course were seen as useful by the teachers and the researcher.

4.4.1.3. Activities offered for the introduction to data collection techniques (Peer Observation, Questionnaires, Interviews, Diary-keeping)

These activities were designed with the intention that teachers who have never engaged in research before would feel comfortable and confident in how they would collect

data to answer their research questions. Both of the teachers reported in the CEQ that these activities were very useful, and this was supported by the Researcher's Diary as well.

“A very tempting wide range of tools were available, but I found questionnaires and diaries to be the most helpful.” *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

“I think the activities offered highlighted the importance of data collection. They emphasized that it was crucial to use a number of ways to collect data in order to ensure the reliability of the findings.” *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

The teachers “all seem to be excited about doing their research, and are genuinely curious about the results.” *Excerpt from Researcher's Diary*

The teachers appeared to understand the importance of data collection, reliability, and the activities helped teacher to get excited about doing research in their classrooms.

4.4.1.4. Working as a teacher-researcher throughout the action research cycle

It was hoped that teachers would act as researchers throughout the Teacher Development Course, causing them to be active members in their development. The active nature of doing research would ideally lead the teachers to transformational learning and development. Both teachers indicated in their CEQs that this part of the research process was very helpful.

“It forced me to think more creatively and analytically about the classroom, in a way that I wouldn't otherwise think.” *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

“I found that the whole process had a very positive effect on me. That I had a better understanding of my actions and my students' actions. Instead of jumping to conclusions about a certain situation, I found myself questioning why it was happening and what I could do to change it.” *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

To summarize the teachers' responses, this aspect of the Teacher Development Course helped the teachers to analyze, think creatively, question, reach conclusions, and create change in their own classrooms.

4.4.1.5. Writing an Action Research Report

This section of the Teacher Development Course was created with the intention that teachers would firstly take time to sit and summarize their research, and secondly, put their research down on paper that would make it easy to share with others. Teacher 1 commented in the CEQ that this aspect was very helpful. “Writing is learning for me, so it was what I needed.” Teacher 2 was neutral in regards to the usefulness of writing an AR project.

“It didn’t benefit me as I already knew the results, but I can see how the information could be helpful to a teacher who is experiencing the same problems and is keen to try a different approach in the classroom.” *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

Although the personal benefits of writing an AR project were seen differently by Teachers 1 and 2, they both saw the usefulness of this section of the course to other teachers.

4.4.2. Course Evaluation Questionnaire: Section B

The teachers were asked to comment on two open-ended questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Teacher Development Course. These questions aimed at understanding the overall strengths and weaknesses of the course.

4.4.2.1. Strengths of the Teacher Development Course

Between the CEQs of Teachers 1 and 2, three major strengths were seen. Firstly, Teacher 1 reported that the group discussions were a strength of the course. This was also seen in the Researcher’s Diary. Throughout the course, there were times that the researcher was unprepared or discouraged. However, the teachers were always ready to discuss their issues with one another.

“I realized that one thing the teachers really want is just to talk about what is going on in their classrooms. They want to have a discussion about what they are doing, how they can do it better, what other teachers are doing, just some kind of dialogue...The discussion went really well, and the teachers seemed to benefit from some of what we did, but I felt like I could have been so much more prepared and so much better than I was...The only problem I had with how the session went today was that so much time was spent discussing.” *Excerpt from Researcher’s Diary*

All of the teachers involved were very eager to participate in discussion and all were active on a weekly basis in the discussions.

Both of the teachers reported that a second strength of the Teacher Development Course was being able to think differently.

“The way you are allowed to think about the classroom in a different way.” *Teacher 1 in CEQ*

“The main strength of the course is that it encourages teachers to think differently.” *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

The teachers were encouraged to think differently and look at their classrooms in an analytical way, and both reported this as a strength of the course.

A final strength of the course reported by Teacher 2 is that the activities helped raise awareness of her teaching practices.

“It teaches methods that enable teachers to become more aware of their teaching practices and the challenges students face in the classroom. Teachers are more aware of the options available to them and possibilities for change.” *Teacher 2 in CEQ*

Having a new awareness of possible change in the classroom and awareness of the possible options available to teachers were both seen as strengths of the course.

According to the teachers, and confirmed by the Researcher’s Diary, the three strengths of the course were seen as the discussions, allowing the teachers a time to think differently, and finally raising awareness of what is happening in the classroom.

4.4.2.2. Weaknesses of the Teacher Development Course

Teacher 2 reported that she couldn’t think of any areas of the course that needed improvement. Teacher 1, however, reported in the CEQ that one area in the Teacher Development Course that lacking was the absence of a discussion at the end of the course about the results from the teachers’ AR projects. He stated that the course could be improved “if I could have talked with someone one-on-one after the project, and went through the results with me.” A similar issue was reported in the Researcher Diary. The last week of the Teacher Development Course ended at the same time as the last week of the semester. Because of this, it was difficult to collect the teachers one last time to meet and conclude the study. The researcher also noticed that although the teachers’ AR studies were finished, the teachers felt like they couldn’t put into practice what they had learned because the Teacher Development Course and AR projects finished the same week as the semester finished.

4.5. Summary

This chapter has focused on the findings obtained from the AR study, beginning with the teachers’ understandings of their own professional strengths and weaknesses, and finishing with an evaluation of the Teacher Development Course. The next chapter will include a discussion of the study, its implications for the field of English teaching, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter contains a summary of the study, a discussion of the conclusions arrived at from the research findings with regards to the research questions, as well as the implications for the field of English language teaching and recommendations for further research.

5.1. Summary of the Study

There are two aims that were focused on in this Action Research (AR) study. The first aim was to help teachers develop themselves through the use of small-scale AR in their own classrooms. The second aim was to establish a teacher development unit at Çağ University's preparatory school in order to encourage a culture of development among the teachers in the preparatory school. Keeping these goals in mind, the study focused on these research questions as a guide:

1. Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?
2. What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?

In order to answer these questions, a large-scale AR cycle was engaged in. This large-scale AR cycle included developing a 10-week Teacher Development Course that directed teachers through small-scale AR projects in their individual classrooms. During this Teacher Development Course, teachers were led to discover the purpose of teacher development, AR's potential role in improving language teaching practices, and were guided through an experiential understanding of the cycles of AR.

Data was collected using the researcher's diary, Self-Evaluation Questionnaires I and II (see Appendices 1 and 2), a Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ) (see Appendix 3), and semi-structured follow-up interviews. Data was analyzed using content analysis, and triangulation was used to confirm the content analysis.

5.2. Conclusions of the Study for Teacher Development Framework Design:

Research Question 1

The first research question of this study is as follows: *Does Action Research help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers?* Data was collected to answer this question using the Self-Assessment Questionnaires I and II, semi-structured follow-up interviews and the Researcher's Diary.

Reflection on classroom behavior helps teachers to be active in the learning process (Farrell & Richards, 2005; de Sonneville, 2007; Burns & Richards, 2009). Action Research,

more specifically, helps teachers answer questions about methodology, learner strategies, and classroom materials, and helps them see the different, interrelated factors involved in their classroom environments (Johnson, 1992; McKay, 2009). In line with these researchers, it is discernable from the data that the AR projects engaged in by the teachers aided them in becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Within their research cycles, the teachers became more confident in understanding what was happening in their own classrooms. They reported being able to help students progress and be motivated in the classroom, interact with them better, understand them better, adapt teaching materials to minimize difficulties in the classroom and create new lessons that work with and compliment the course book (see Sections 4.2.1.2. and 4.2.2.2.). Teachers also reported becoming aware of the following weaknesses because of their AR projects: speaking too much in the classroom, not giving enough time to students for activities and causing students to become bored by taking too much time on other areas.

As far as teachers' professional strengths outside of the classroom, they were aware of their ability to collaborate better with colleagues, to possibly create surveys for other research within the department and to contribute to other responsibilities in the department. This is in line with what Murray (2010) points out, that organized professional development activities can bring teachers together and help them realize the potential of collaboration.

There are other studies in Turkey which have found similar results. Şimşek (2007) reported a change in the content and structure of fourth and fifth grade English teachers' beliefs at the end of an AR cycle. In another study, it was found that AR brought change and improvement to teacher's behavior in the classroom and also change in their beliefs, ideas, perceptions and emotions (Özdemir, 2001). Önel (1998) found that teachers benefited from being engaged in AR. She reported that awareness of class-related issues increased and that teachers were more systematic in the classroom. Atikler (1997) reported that AR can contribute to the self-development of an English language teacher as it helps them accumulate knowledge, develops their teaching skills and enhances their awareness of personal and professional aspects of teaching. In another study, it was reported that AR can contribute to the professional development of teachers by bringing about changes in beliefs and attitudes, leading to improvement in teaching practices (Korucu, 2001).

5.3. Conclusions of the Study for Teacher Development: Research Question 2

The second research question of the large-scale AR study was as follows: *What are the factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course?* Data was collected to answer this question using the CEQ and the Researcher's Diary. At the end of the study, it

was clear that there were three main factors to consider when establishing a teacher development course.

As seen in the CEQs, the follow-up interviews and the Researcher's Diary, one of the most valuable and most enjoyable elements of the course was the group discussions. Teachers were eager to participate in the group discussions and reported them to be useful in their development. Collaborating in social situations allows teachers to share with one another (Burns, 2010), provides them with the ability to reconstruct their idea of who they are and understand what they know (Wenger, 1991; Richardson, 2005). The social factor of the Teacher Development Course was reported to be overwhelmingly positive in regards to participant learning for both the teachers and the researcher.

The second factor that encouraged the teachers in their development was the opportunity to think about teaching and their classrooms differently. The teachers were encouraged to look at their classrooms in an exploratory, analytical way, with the use of a small AR project. As Burns & Richards (2009) point out, questionnaires, interviews, reflective writing and observations of one's classroom and teaching practices can cause a teacher to move beyond general knowledge and learned skills to focus on their context, materials and learners in their own situation. Cognitive development of this kind is shown to produce long-term change (Burns & Richards, 2009). Teachers reported that looking at their teaching situations in a new way was beneficial to their development.

The activities that the teachers were led through as a part of the Teacher Development Course were the third factor that helped lead the teachers toward development. These activities helped raise the teachers' awareness of what was happening in their classrooms and what could be done to improve different issues in their classrooms. In her extensive work with teachers doing AR, Burns (2009) reported that it is generally a well-received form of professional development. The activities involved in this AR study in particular were well-received by the teachers and allowed them to see their classrooms differently.

The Teacher Development Course could have been even more effective had one more factor been taken into account. The Teacher Development Course was concluded the same week that the spring semester ended for the students. Unfortunately this meant that the teachers were unable to have a final discussion to share their findings from their AR projects with one another. This also meant that as the teachers were finishing their AR projects and finding solutions to issues that they had identified in their classrooms, the time with their classes was finished, preventing the teachers from putting into practice what they had learned.

In similar Teacher Development Courses that might happen in the future, this factor should be taken into account.

5.4. Implications for English Language Teaching

Teacher Development plays an important role in the success of language teaching. Along with previously conducted research using AR as a tool for Teacher Development (Burns, 1999; Burns, 2009; Burns, 2010; Edge, 2001; Fischer, 2001; Mann, 1999; Yumru, 2000), this study has shown AR is an efficient way to help teachers become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers. The Teacher Development Course also included factors that were effective in encouraging the teachers' professional development.

Teachers were aided by the Teacher Development Course in becoming aware of their strengths and weaknesses as teachers. They were better able to help students' progress and be motivated in the classroom, were able to interact with students better, understand them better, adapt teaching materials to minimize difficulties in the classrooms, and create new, more effective lessons for their classes. These kinds of results from the Teacher Development Course could be beneficial in any university preparatory school context. Teachers who are involved in teacher development become more knowledgeable about subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, self-awareness and their understanding of learners (Farrell & Richards, 2005) and such a development course would encourage such change in participants.

In this study, three factors were employed that encouraged teacher development. According to the results of the study, teacher development was encouraged by group discussions, by the opportunity to think about classrooms differently, and by the activities that were employed in the Teacher Development Course. Teacher Development Courses similar to the one laid out in this study could be employed in university preparatory contexts in order to encourage teacher development. Such development courses could facilitate similar group discussions, encouraging the participants to think about their classrooms differently.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Research

1. Further Teacher Development Courses based on AR projects could be offered in the first semester rather than the second semester. In this way, teachers will be able to use the findings from their studies before students disperse for the summer.
2. Further studies should prioritize the sharing of results with teachers outside of the Teacher Development Course. The course could be organized in a way that the final week of the course could be dedicated to participants sharing their results with other teachers.

3. The researcher could be in contact with the participating teachers' students. Students could be asked about noticeable changes in the effectiveness of their courses and teachers as a result of the Teacher Development Course.

4. All 35 of the teachers working at the Çağ University preparatory school were invited to join this study. Only 8 began the study, and only three finished. Further studies could look into teachers' motivation for joining such a development and barriers that prevent them from doing so.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. APPENDIX 1: Self-Assessment Questionnaire I

Name:

Self-Assessment Questionnaire I

Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible.

1) What pleased you in your work as a language teacher last semester?

2) What contributions do you make to the Çağ University Preparatory School?

3) Could you contribute to any different responsibilities within the department?

4) Do you seek opportunities to review and to improve your teaching performance? If yes, what do you do to further your own professional development?

5) Do you have any personal ambitions for second semester? If yes, what targets can you set for yourself to realize them?

Adapted from Yumru, 2000.

7.2. APPENDIX 2: Self-Assessment Questionnaire II

Name:

Self-Assessment Questionnaire II

Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible.

- 1) What has pleased you in your work as a language teacher since you last assessed yourself?

- 2) What contributions do you make to the Çağ University Preparatory School?

- 3) Could you contribute to any different responsibilities within the department?

- 4) What have you done to further your own professional development?

- 5) What progress have you made towards the targets which were made prior to the teacher development course?

Adapted from Yumru, 2000.

7.3. APPENDIX 3: Course Evaluation Questionnaire

Course Evaluation Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible in order to help us make the necessary changes for future courses.

A. Rate the following course components and the procedures employed considering the extent you think they have been useful to you in carrying out your action research projects and developing yourself as an EFL teacher.

1) Activities offered for the understanding of teacher learning and development

5	4	3	2	1
Very useful				Not very useful

2) Activities offered for the understanding of Action Research

5	4	3	2	1
Very useful				Not very useful

3) Activities offered for the introduction to data collection techniques (Peer Observation, Questionnaires, Interviews, Diary-keeping)

5	4	3	2	1
Very useful				Not very useful

4) Working as a Teacher-Researcher throughout your action research cycle

5	4	3	2	1
Very useful				Not very useful

5) Writing an Action Research project

5	4	3	2	1
Very useful				Not very useful

B. Please answer the following questions.

1) What were the strengths of the course?

2) What areas of the course needed improvement?

Adapted from Yumru, 2000.

7.4. APPENDIX 4: Handout: *Ideas for getting started*



Ideas for getting started and narrowing down your topic

Which of the following four topics are you interested in?

1. your teaching and making changes in teaching
2. your learners and how they learn
3. your interaction with the current curriculum and with current innovation
4. your teaching beliefs and philosophies and their connection with daily practice

Starters for reflective journal:

- I don't know enough about how my students...
- My students don't like... Why is this?
- I'd like to find out more about what my students do when they...

Make a list of questions about your school that have puzzled you for some time.

Consider how your personal beliefs influence your attitudes toward instruction, activities, classroom management, teacher-student interaction, assessment, etc.

- What do you believe about your role in the classroom?
- How do you want your students to behave towards you?
- What do you believe is the purpose of your students' language learning?
- What attributes or attitudes do you believe your students have about learning languages?
- What kind of instructional techniques do you believe work best in your classroom?
- What kind of materials or resources do you consider to be the most effective?

Beginning reflection:

- Is there something in your teaching situation you would like to change?
- What "burning question" do you have about your students' learning?
- Have you ever tried out a new teaching idea in your classroom and wondered whether it really helped your students to learn?
- Are there aspects of the way you teach that you would like to improve?
- What do you feel passionate about?
- What do you feel curious about?
- What new approaches to learning or teaching are you interested in trying?
- What will make you a more effective teacher?
- What gaps are there between your current teaching situation and what you would like to see happening?
- Why are some of your students not achieving in the same way as others?
- Why are some of your students behaving the way they do?

7.5. APPENDIX 5: Handout: *Aims*

Aims of the Study	Research Questions	Data Collection Tools	Data Analysis
1.	1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	
2.	2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	

7.6. APPENDIX 6: Handout: *Research Questions*

Shaping our research questions

- Avoid questions you can do little about.
- Tailor your questions to fit within the time limit you have available.
- Focus on one issue to see where it takes you rather than trying to look at multiple aspects
- Choose areas of direct relevance and interest to you, your immediate teaching context, or your school.

Things to remember:

- General but focused
- Answerable
- Flexible
- *What Why* and *How* questions might be helpful

Check out pages 30-33 from the “Plan” article for some examples of good questions and bad questions.

(Burns, 2010, pages 30-33)

7.7. APPENDIX 7: Brochure: *What is Action Research?*

What is Action Research?

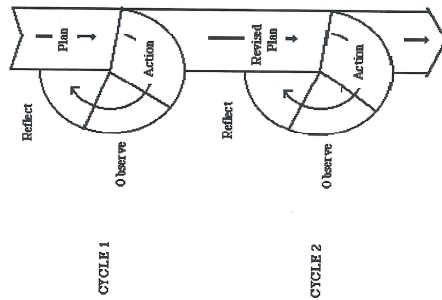
Action Research is based on the following assumptions:

- Teachers work best on problems they have identified for themselves.
- Teachers become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently.
- Teachers help each other by working collaboratively.
- Working with colleagues helps teachers in their professional development.

A definition of Action Research:

Action research is a practical way of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be. Action research is done by the teacher. It involves the teacher thinking about and reflecting on his/her work. It is centrally a form of self-reflective practice. In traditional forms of research – empirical research – researchers do research on other people. In action research, researchers do research on themselves. Empirical researchers enquire into other people's lives. Action researchers enquire into their own lives.

The Action Research Cycle



Are there issues in your classroom that you would like to discuss with other teachers?

Are you interested in improving your language classes and our department?

Would you like to know where to begin change?

Be a part of
Action
Research at
Çağ
University
Preparatory
School

What are the stages in Action Research?

Stage One: Plan – *Identify an issue, Make an Action Plan*
Generally, teachers have several issues they wish to investigate, but the teacher chooses one meaningful, desirable question. The teacher then makes a plan of action to bring about improvements.
Collecting data through interviews, journals, observation, surveys, etc. can help the teacher understand better how the problem is affecting the classroom.

Stage Two: Action – *Deliberate intervention*
The teacher deliberately intervenes in the classroom with his/her Action Plan. The teacher continually questions his/her assumptions about the situation and plans new and alternative ways to do things.

Stage Three: Observation – *The effects of the Action Plan*
The teacher begins observing the effects of the action and documenting the actions and opinions of those involved. Being open-eyed and open-minded are key in collecting this information.

Stage Four: Reflect – *Reflect on and evaluate the action*
The teacher assess the effects of the intervention to determine if improvement has occurred and to understand better what has been explored.
This stage could end the Action Research Cycle, or it could lead into another discovery of a problem. The Action Research Cycle is never ending!

*One of the most important factors in Action Research is that it is *collaborative*. During each stage of the Action Research Cycle, the teacher is discussing his/her plans, actions, observations and reflections with other colleagues, in order to have a more objective outlook on the situation. Discussing with colleagues can help the teacher see the problem from different perspectives, stay focused on the original problem and generate new ideas.

Can I see an example of Action Research?

Stage One: Plan – *Identify an issue, Make an Action Plan*
In the fall semester 2011, a teacher noticed a significant lack of listening skills in her class. She video recorded a lesson and noticed that the problem was worse than she realized. During initial observation, the problem seemed unconnected to students' language abilities, but more to their lack of active listening skills. She read some research and found some ideas for improving active listening skills and made a plan to help students see the importance of active listening, with the intention of improving their active listening skills during lesson times.

Stage Two: Action – *Deliberate intervention*
The teacher led the students through some activities to help them become aware of their need to listen actively. Students discussed what active listening was and why it is important. At the same time, new things were implemented into classroom time designed to help students pay attention more and remember to listen actively.

Stage Three: Observation – *The effects of the Action Plan*
After the intervention, the teacher continually observed the students to see the effects of the intervention. Students were also given an informal survey of four questions in order for the teacher to understand their thoughts on active listening. During the entire process, the teacher was discussing the effects of the plan with other colleagues in order to see the outcome in a more objective, open-minded way.

Stage Four: Reflect – *Reflect on and evaluate the action*
The teacher saw an improvement in her students listening during the class. Students seemed to listen more actively, especially when reminded of what active listening was and why it is important. From the informal survey, the teacher was also able to see why students may be listening more attentively at some points during the lesson, but not during other points. The teacher was pleased with the results, as she had more attentive students, and the students were pleased having learned a skill that will be useful for them in daily life and in their future.

What will I do?

Participation is absolutely voluntary. The research will be informal, but focused.

You will go through a round of Action Research, with the purpose of developing yourself as a teacher.

Your research will be driven by your own questions, your own issues and your own concerns about your classroom.

You will work collaboratively with other teachers with the intention of finding solutions to your questions. This will involve a meeting 3-4 times a month during the second semester.

The research will not take a significant amount of time outside of class.

At the end of your action research cycle, you will be asked to share your research in a written form. In this way, our research can be shared with others encountering similar issues, in the hopes of improving our department as a whole.