

The effect of socialization-oriented in-service teacher training on EFL teachers' development of intercultural competence and performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at measuring the effect of socialization-oriented in-service teacher training on EFL teachers' development of their intercultural competence and performance in their classrooms when they are teaching their students. To perform the study, a course of socialization and introduction to English culture was prepared to teach in-service teachers to see if socialization of English culture influences their intercultural competence and performance. This study was a quantitative and experimental research by application of a standard questionnaire namely Intercultural Abilities Questionnaire adopted by Fantini (2006). Through a test with two answer sheets, both competence and performance of teachers were tested in case of their knowledge, attitude, skill and awareness of the foreign culture. 40 in-service teacher of Farhangian university of Tehran answered the e-learning questionnaire and results were analyzed using SPSS 21.0. The results indicated that there effect of socialization on competence is more than performance in the programs of developing intercultural understanding. It implies that teachers in Iranian schools are competent with intercultural concepts, but the content of lessons and Iranian culture does not let application of cultural concepts since some are taboo and many are illegal and prohibited.

Key Terms: Socialization-Oriented, In-Service Teacher Training, Intercultural Competence, Performance.

Introduction

Several studies have highlighted the need for more competent and efficient teachers (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2005; Lewis & Young, 2013). To put it differently, in order to fulfill the requirements in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, it is necessary that teachers rebuild their specialized expertise, attitudes and practices, which can for the most part be attained via ongoing professional development. In-service EFL teacher training courses can be crucial in this regard. Bearing in mind the critical role of in-service teacher training in their professional development, this study will examine the effect of a professional development program on developing in-service teachers. However, as this concern is too general to account for a research enquiry, the professional development program is focused on socialization and the in-service teachers' development is focused on their intercultural competence and performance.

The professional socialization of EFL teachers is a highly complicated process. It encompasses numerous elements such as: effectively shifting mingling oneself into the school and college environment, along with the provision of academic support (Casprsen & Raen, 2011). Generally, socialization can be

characterized as “the process wherein people obtain the knowledge, abilities, and personality which makes them vastly productive members of community” (Sercu, 2002, p. 5). When joining the teaching industry, beginner teachers have their own viewpoint and perception of what type of teacher they wish to become. Novice teachers' preconceived thoughts are usually formed by their own educational, individual, and biographical encounters (Tsui, 2003). In case of in-service teachers, however, these elements, which are now deep-rooted, contribute to their personal perceptions concerning school life, and how they view of themselves as educators. As a result, reshaping them can be of substantial question. One of the areas in which this reformation can be explored is their intercultural competence and performance.

Many studies have called for professional and efficient teachers and the need to create productive techniques to preparing them for the teaching (e.g., Jourdenais, 2009; Kamhi-Stein, 2009). In order to fulfill these requirements, however, there is no all-accepted agreement on a well-put model for teacher education course; instead, each teaching context, because of its peculiarity, requires different elements seen in the various models offered. No proposed model, to the best of the researcher's information, seems to have catered for intercultural needs of any particular teacher education program. Therefore, to bridge this gap, further study is warranted. This accounts for the primary impetus for conducting this study.

The researcher intended to investigate the effect of implementing a professional development program focused on socialization on intercultural development among Iranian in-service teachers. Included here also are the investigation of this program on both intercultural competence and performance among the participants. The following questions are investigated and answered in this study:

1. Does socialization-oriented teacher training courses have any statistically significant effect on development of in-service teachers' intercultural competence and performance?
2. Is there any significant difference between socialization-oriented teacher training courses and development of in-service teachers' intercultural Performance and their competence (practice)?

Literature Review

Meyer (1991) defined intercultural competence as “the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (p. 138). In the study by Byram (1997) the ability to decentre and take up the other's perspective on their own culture, anticipating and where possible, resolving dysfunctions in communication and behavior” (p. 42). The study on the role of culture in language teaching by Lessard-Clouston (1996) focused on 16 Chinese teachers' views on culture in both EFL learning and teaching. The study showed that “teachers supported the role of culture in their EFL learning” but they suggested the need for a greater understanding of how to focus on culture in their own EFL classes” (p. 125). Sercu (2002) tried to show how and to what extent teachers use intercultural competence in their teaching and concluded that “foreign language teachers supported the aim of interculturalizing foreign language and they were willing to be teachers who develop intercultural communicative competence in their students” (p. 32). Sercu et al., (2005) revealed two distinct teacher profiles, i.e., the favorably disposed foreign language teacher, who believed in the importance of integrating culture into their classroom practices, and the unfavorably disposed foreign language teacher, who did not support this practice” (p. 125).

The study by Beatriz Peña Dix (2018) on intercultural competence in teachers of English language to develop intercultural language education provided “valuable insights into the status quo of ICC and ELT in Colombia and has practical implications for ELT education programmes, teachers and policy makers who are interested in reanalyzing ELT in Colombia” (p. 2). According to Bennet (2015) intercultural competence refers to the awareness implying that cultures are relative, with no one correct or established way of doing things and however all behaviors are culturally malleable and variable in addition, Barret (2011) intercultural competence is “the set of attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours which are required for appropriate and effective interaction and communication with people who are perceived to be from a different cultural background from oneself” (p. 1).

In this regard, Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2001) analyzed 62 studies in teacher preparation and came to the conclusion “there is no study that specifically analyzes what in-service teachers have acquired in their pedagogical preparation and then examines the relationship between that pedagogical knowledge

and teacher practices” (p. 12). As Berliner (1987) long ago asserted, "nurturing any number of children and having gone to school for even numerous years does not make a teacher truly professional" (p. 6). This suggests that effective professional development packages can be seen as an essential component in the development of successful in-service EFL teachers and in enhancement of the current competence and practices of this group of teachers.

Davis, Petish, and Smithy (2006) demonstrated the serious need for doing more investigation on teacher education programs and their graduates to better understand attempts to train teachers who are even long working in teaching. They mentioned that “the standards emphasize culture-conscious teaching, yet our evaluation of the literature shows very little about in-service teachers’ understandings of L2 culture” (p. 636). In-service teachers’ beliefs about learning and teaching sometimes tend to go back to old-fashioned, and usually unproductive conceptions and practices which are common at universities (Fletcher & Luft, 2011).

Since people from diverse cultures are nowadays frequently getting into substantial communication with each other, it has turned out to be essential for them to obtain many competences to be able to deal with the needs of the new era of globalization. Numerous experts have accentuate how essential it is to integrate intercultural competence as an integral part of EFL teaching (Corbett, 2003; Deardorff, 2006; Larzen, 2008). In that regard, Byram et al. (2002) assert that “learners will need not only knowledge in the grammar of a language but also the capability of using the language in culturally proper ways” (p. 7). Additionally, an increasing amount of literature indicates that it is also of much relevance to examine teachers’ beliefs *and* practices as the latter have an equally substantial effect on their classroom decision making (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Errington, 2004).

Atay at al (2009) in studying cultural dimension of foreign language education and acquisition of intercultural competence in learners investigated “the opinions and attitudes of Turkish teachers of English on intercultural competence teaching and to see how and to what extent these opinions and attitudes are reflected in their classroom applications” and indicated that “language teachers seem to be aware of the role of the culture in foreign language education though they do not often integrate culture into their teaching in order to develop intercultural competence in their learners” (p. 123).

Methodology

The method applied in this study aimed at reaching the answer of the two research questions which asked if socialization-oriented teacher training courses have any statistically significant effect on development of in-service teachers' intercultural competence and performance. In this study that is a quantitative and experimental research the quasi-experimental Nonequivalent Control Group Design provided by Campbell and Stanley (1963) was used to see if socialization-oriented teacher training courses have any statistically significant effect on development of in-service teachers' intercultural competence and performance. The study was performed by on-line delivery of the questionnaires to 40 teachers who were involved in project by teaching them a course of cultural concepts through movies, documentary files and papers during a term. Therefore, to examine their performance and competence they answered the specified questionnaire. The in-service teachers selected in this study were in-service teachers of Farhangian University who cooperated in completion of the questionnaire through after their professor’s instruction as a part of their discourse course.

The instrument of the study is the Intercultural Abilities Questionnaire adopted by Fantini (2006) and Byram (1997) for testing in-service teachers. The questionnaire contained four subsections: knowledge (.92), attitude (.81), skill (.77), and awareness (.79). In addition the practice or performance of each category was measured by asking teachers using a five category Likert Scale ranging from Strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). But, the tests were scored based on the strength of questions and some items were removed since they were deviations. Therefore, scores were classified from 5 to 100. To perform the study, SPSS 21.0 was used. and through t-test it was specified whether socialization sources influence teachers intercultural competence and performance or not.

Data Analysis

In this section inferential statistics related to the testing hypothesis is presented. In order to answer the hypothesis one-way ANOVA test was performed to answer the hypothesis of the research.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Intercultural Competency

| Dimension | N | Competence | | Performance | |
|---|----|------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| | | Mean | ST.Error | Mean | Std.Error |
| Knowledge | 40 | 35.15 | 1.39 | 11.14 | 1.35 |
| Attitude | 40 | 43.30 | 1.72 | 22.87 | 3.60 |
| Skill | 40 | 31.12 | 1.77 | 13.15 | 2.45 |
| Awareness | 40 | 53.94 | 3.10 | 20.30 | 4.34 |
| inter Cultural Competence and performance | 40 | 40.87 | 1.99 | 16.86 | 2.93 |

Results of the study shows that teacher's competence of socialization is so that their competence is more than their performance. Thought it is difficult to generalize the results to the entire teachers, but in-service teacher's competence is higher than their performance. In case of Knowledge of cultures, teachers' competence is three times more than performance which indicates that they are proficient with cultural knowledge but they did not use it entirely. The Attitude of teachers for intercultural competence is 43.30 that is around twice of their performance. In case of Skills, the teacher's competence is three times more than their performance. Regarding their awareness the teacher's competence is twice more than their performance. It seems that teacher's competence in general is twice more than their performance of their cultural understanding which might be due to the taboo content of many cultural issues common in English language.

To examine the difference between students overall intercultural competence and performance a test of ANOVA was used.

Table 2: test of ANOVA

| Dimension | T | ST.Error |
|---|-------|----------|
| Knowledge | 13.52 | 2.93 |
| Attitude | 6.157 | 4.97 |
| Skill | 7.05 | 3.98 |
| Awareness | 7.38 | 6.27 |
| Inter Cultural Competence and performance | 8.52 | 4.53 |

Significance at $p < 0.05$

T-test was used to test the significance of means and compare intercultural competence of teachers against their intercultural performance. The p-values in all cases are more than 0.05 which indicates that all there is a significant difference between competence and performance of teachers with regard to their intercultural knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness. In addition, the general intercultural value (8.52) is more than 0.05 which indicates that there is a general significant difference between teachers intercultural competence and performance. However, teachers involved in the test participated in a course about English culture and socialization with English culture to ensure they are accustomed to foreign culture especially that of western countries. But, the result indicated that their competence is twice more than their performance which might have difference reasons.

Discussion

The results of the present study showed that socialization of in-service teachers influences their intercultural competence and performance. In addition, it was specified that their intercultural competence

and performance is not similar so that they do not perform their entire competence into performance. However, it is a phenomenon general to all people since no one has opportunity to perform all his/her competence. Accordingly, the teachers in the study who were educated socialized with foreign cultures of English speaking countries through many digital instruments and papers admitted that they do not use their competence in all cases and it might be due to the content of lessons that students read or confinements of students in Iran which cannot learn taboo cultural contents.

Results of the present study is in line with the results achieved by Bektas-Cetinkaya (2014) who indicated that the prospective teachers who are not aware of the role of culture their language use and had not previously reflected on this role, “could gain cultural competence to a certain level in teacher education programs through a process of acquiring the concept of culture, gaining a knowledge and awareness of one’s own and other cultures, and constant reflection” (116). She indicated that “to a certain degree, it is possible to develop the intercultural competence of foreign-language pre-service teachers through systematic instruction in teacher-education departments in the absence of study abroad experience” (153). In addition, the study was in congruent with the study performed by Estaji and Rahimi (2018) who believed “with the increasing influence of globalization, teachers of language need to become teachers of language and culture, developing the specific elements of intercultural competence” (2). The study by NUR GEDGK BAL indicated that in the age of globalization it is necessary to socialize teachers with foreign cultures and apply them in their teaching. Generally, there is a considerable demand for globalization and intercultural competence among teachers, but it is not possible to take them into practice in teaching conditions in Iran, because many cultural issues are taboo in Iranian culture and they are officially forbidden accordingly teachers admitted that from what they learnt of the foreign culture they can perform or use them at the least degree.

Conclusion

In this study, the effect of socialization-oriented in-service teacher training on their development of intercultural competence and performance was measured. To do the study, around 40 in –service teachers from Farhangian university of Tehran were contacted and agreed to take part in classes concerning English culture through movies and documentary content such as CD, PDFs and booklets which introduces culture specific concepts of English speaking people. Then these teachers were given a questionnaire including 4 general categories of knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness to examine their intercultural competence and performance. Results of the study indicated that socialization of teachers influences their intercultural competence and performance. In addition, there was a significant difference between teachers intercultural competence and their performance. The differences between competence and performance of teacher of teachers was twice, so that their competence was two times of their performance. Though it is recommended that teachers should develop their cultural knowledge and include cultural teaching in their courses they do not have opportunities to use their entire knowledge of cultures, because some content are taboo and illegal in Iranian culture. However, previous studies emphasized the role of traveling English-speaking countries to improve students cultural knowledge, attitudes, skills and awareness, but in Iranian context the opportunity for implementing such intercultural understanding in at its minimum degree.

Appendix

I knew the essential norms and taboos of the host culture
 I could contrast important aspects of the host language and culture with my own
 I could contrast my own behaviors with those of my hosts in important areas
 I could cite important historical and socio-political factors that shape my own & host culture
 I could describe interactional behaviors common among Ecuadorians in social and professional areas.
 I could discuss and contrast various behavioral patterns in my own culture with those in Ecuador
 I could cite a definition of culture and describe its components and complexities
 I recognized signs of culture stress and some strategies for overcoming it
 I knew some techniques to aid my learning of the host language & culture
 I could describe a model of cross-cultural adjustment stages
 I could cite various learning processes & strategies for learning about & adjusting to the host culture

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