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INTERACTIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESSES OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how foreign language teachers at public schools framed their interactive decision making processes in instruction. We studied interactive decision-making strategies and principles of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with qualitative research methods. The focal participants were four EFL teachers from public high schools in a city in Central Turkey. Data were collected during a focus group interview which targeted a natural discussion on instructional practices among teachers. Data analysis involved transcription, coding, and identification of emergent themes. We found that the teachers primarily refer to class management, facilitation, guidance, rapport, and unpredictability while discussing decision-making processes.

Keywords: Decision-making, Interactive decisions, Strategies, Principles.

DEVLET OKULLARINDA ÇALIŞAN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN DERSLERİNDEKİ ETKİLEŞİMLERİNDE KARAR VERME SÜREÇLERİ

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı devlet okullarında çalışan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders anlatımları esnasındaki etkileşimlerde karar verme süreçlerinin araştırılmasıdır. İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ders esnasında anlık karar verme stratejileri ve ilkeleri nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan odak grup devlet liselerinde çalışmakta olan dört İngilizce öğretmeninden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmaya ait veri, öğretmenlerin ders anlatma süreçleri üzerine doğal bir tartışma ortamının hedeflendiği bir odak grup görüşmesiyle toplanmıştır. Veri analizi transkripsiyon, kodlama ve ortaya çıkan temaların belirlenmesi işlemlerini sırasıyla içermektedir. Öğretmenlerin karar verme süreçleri üzerine tartışmaları süresince, sınıf yönetimi, öğrenmeyi kolaylaştırma, rehberlik etme, öğrenciyle uyumluluk ve öğretmen davranışının tahmin edilemez olması temalarına odaklandıkları tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: karar verme, anlık kararlar, stratejiler, ilkeler.

1. Introduction

In the last three decades, teachers' thinking and their instructional practices have been the focus of research oriented towards thoroughly understanding the domain of teaching (Richards, 1996). Research on teaching and teachers' mental processes had gained momentum in educational research in the 1980s. In foreign language education research, this focus area appeared in the 1990s (Borg, 2006). *Teacher cognition* refers to "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think." (Borg, 2003:81) Currently, there is wide interest in studying the relationship between teacher cognition and instructional processes.

Among areas of inquiry in research on teacher cognition is decision-making processes. As Golombek (2009: 156) noted "the field of teacher cognition surfaced, in part, as a result of work on teacher decision making, exploring the thinking processes of teachers as they planned and implemented their lessons." The decisions a teacher makes also reflect the teacher's beliefs about teaching and learning (Richards & Lockhart, 1996: 82). Teachers' decision making processes are investigated at three levels in the literature: (i) *the abstract level*, which is not based on events in a particular time period; (ii) *the course level*, which covers decisions occurring within the time frame of a course; and (iii) *the lesson level*, which covers decisions made in the classroom during the time frame of a single lesson (Woods, 1996: 25).

In this study, we investigate aspects of foreign language teachers' interactive decision making processes at the abstract level. As we explore teachers' experiences and general beliefs on decision-making, we employ the following research questions:

- 1) How do teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) working at public high schools in a mid-sized city in Central Turkey perceive their interactive decision making processes?
- 2) Which decision making strategies, if any, do they employ?
- 3) Which decision making principles, if any, do they rely on?

The next section presents a review of literature on teachers' decision-making processes.

1.1. Literature Review

Traditionally, teaching has been viewed as a process that naturally includes decision-making processes (Freeman, 1989). These processes are also related to the beliefs and values (Richards & Lockhart, 1996: 30). Teachers' role as decision-makers involves making individual choices for different phases of teaching among a number of alternatives. According to Richards and Lockhart (1996) there are three different types of decisions teachers make related to the stages of a lesson. *Planning decisions* are made before instruction. *Interactive decisions* emerge during lessons. *Evaluative decisions* are made after lessons and they are about effectiveness of teaching.

Interactive decision-making, the focus of this study, involves "in-flight" or "real-time" decisions (Shavelson, 1983: 405). In other words, while enacting interactive decision-making, teachers do not have time to think on additional alternatives. In this context, it is important to note that the term *interactive decision making* may lead to some confusion. As Bailey (1996: 20) noted, "these are decisions made *during* but not necessarily *through* interaction."

Many teachers would note that lessons are dynamic, unpredictable, and constantly changing and that they have to make many interactive decisions during a lesson to manage it effectively (Richards & Lockhart, 1996: 83). Teachers relying merely on planning decisions made before the lesson cannot enable or facilitate learning, since this is not a stable process but rather, as Alwright and Bailey noted (1991: 25), "co-produced by the teacher and the learners." Similarly, Freeman (1989: 37) described teaching as a dynamic decision-making process, in which teachers "range from micro decisions of

whether to sit or stand at a particular juncture in the lesson... to the macro decisions about content, methodology, or classroom dynamics.”

What then are the characteristics of these interactive decisions? Richards and Lockhart (1996: 84) identified a number of sequential components central to an interactive decision. They involve teachers' observing their own lesson in its immediate context as it proceeds. They are:

- (i) Monitoring one's teaching and evaluating what is happening at a particular point in the lesson,
- (ii) Recognizing that a number of different courses of action are possible,
- (iii) Selecting a particular course of action, and
- (iv) Evaluating the consequences of the choice.

In addition, Bailey (1996: 31-32), in her study on six experienced English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' in-class decisions that stray from the lesson plans, revealed six principles that guide the teachers' interactive decision-making processes. These teachers made decisions to (i) serve the common good (departing from the lesson plan due to the thought that dealing with the issue would benefit the whole group); (ii) teach to the moment (deciding on the alternative lesson plan because of its timeliness to open “a window of opportunity”); (iii) further the lesson (decision-making to promote the substance and progress of the lesson); (iv) accommodate students' learning styles (departing from the lesson plan considering the students' preferred learning styles); (v) promote students' involvement (decision-making resulting from the teacher's desire to promote students' involvement and reward relevant contributions); and (vi) distribute the wealth (to keep some learners from dominating classroom interaction, as well as to encourage less outgoing students).

Another major study examined teachers' accounts of what they set out to achieve in lessons and described teachers' decision-making processes in terms of maxims that guide them (Richards, 1996: 287-291). These maxims were:

The Maxim of Involvement: Follow the learners' interests to maintain student involvement.

The Maxim of Planning: Plan your teaching and try to follow your plan.

The Maxim of Order: Maintain order and discipline throughout the lesson.

The Maxim of Encouragement: Seek ways to encourage student learning.

The Maxim of Accuracy: Work for accurate student input.

The Maxim of Efficiency: Make the most efficient use of class time.

The Maxim of Conformity: Make sure your teaching follows the prescribed method.

The Maxim of Empowerment: Give the learners control (Richards 1996: 287-291).

In the Turkish context, a study focusing on English language teacher behaviors has drawn attention to the significant relationship between teachers' beliefs and their classroom actions. A teacher whose vision of classroom management involved a 'high degree of control' opted for such actions while teaching. On the other hand, another teacher who believed that a 'low degree of control' would be desirable demonstrated flexible classroom management actions offering students more autonomy (Turanlı & Yıldırım, 2007).

Whether pre-service teacher education programs or in-service teacher training plays a more pivotal role in shaping teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the profession is another important consideration. In a study analyzing the self-efficacy beliefs of 266 primary school teachers in Southern Turkey, Güven and Çakır (2012) found that the pre-service teacher education programs

had significant impact on teachers' beliefs while in-service training programs did not. Since self-efficacy beliefs are associated with classroom practices, it is necessary to explore this aspect as a factor that may influence teachers' decision-making.

Overall, the literature on teachers' decision-making processes is distributed across disciplines with varying interests. As Borg (2006: 92) pointed out, there is a difficulty in synthesizing the studies in this research area due to the "existence of multiple conceptual frameworks for accounting for the choices teachers make [which] hindered the development of research into this issue."

1.1. Method

In this study, to investigate the interactive decision making strategies and principles of EFL teachers, we utilized qualitative data collection and analysis methods. A focus group interview was conducted and the perspectives of insiders were explored in order to "describe, analyze, and interpret features of a specific situation" (Borko, Whitcomb, & Byrnes, 2008: 1025). Detailed information on the background of the participants and the the interview is provided below due to the situated nature of the study.

1.2. Participants and Setting

The data for this study were collected through a focus group interview. Four participants were identified after a criterion sampling procedure. All participants fulfilled the following criteria. The interviewees were all EFL teachers who worked at different public high schools in a mid-sized city in Central Turkey. The teachers had professional experience ranging between 9 and 20 years. All of the teachers reported that they liked to participate in in-service teacher training programs and seminars organized by universities or the Ministry of Education. They also stated that they were all interested in professional development and tried to do whatever is necessary for their self development in the profession such as voluntarily attending the seminars or staying up-to-date with the new trends in language teaching. Table 1 presents the characteristics of each interviewee.

Table 1: Characteristics of Interviewees

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Teaching experience (in years)</i>	<i>Education Background</i>	<i>School Type</i>
<i>Teacher K</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>B.A. in English Language Teaching</i>	<i>Public Anatolian High School with Foreign Language Instruction Emphasis</i>
<i>Teacher Z</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>B.A. in English Language Teaching; Master's Degree in Educational Sciences; Enrolled in a Doctoral Program</i>	<i>Girls' Vocational High School</i>
<i>Teacher B</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>B.A. in English Language and Literature</i>	<i>Technical and Industrial Vocational High School</i>
<i>Teacher A</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>B.A. in English Language Teaching</i>	<i>Public Anatolian High School Foreign Language Instruction Emphasis</i>

As mentioned before, the participants regularly attended in-service teacher training seminars. The focus group interview was conducted during a one-week in-service teacher training program organized by the Ministry of Education. The teachers participated in the interview voluntarily.

1.3. Data Collection Tools and the Procedure

The data for this research were collected through a focus group interview with four EFL teachers. The interview lasted one hour and it was video-recorded. After the interview, a full transcription of it was made for the analysis. In the semi-structured interview, the interviewees were asked questions about their interactive decision making strategies, principles, and factors they took into consideration. (Interview questions are listed in the appendix). We prepared the interview questions after a thorough reflection on the relevant literature. The initial version was revised after peer reviews of the questions. The first author who facilitated the interview ensured that the participants could comfortably express their perceptions of themselves as teachers and decision makers in their classes.

Following Woods' (1996: 26) suggestions for interviewing, the statements of beliefs, were not "elicited explicitly by the interviewer (...); generalizations and information about beliefs and assumptions arose when volunteered by the teacher." Loaded and directing questions and any comments were avoided by the interviewer. Instead, the questions elicited anecdotes about the participants' previous experiences and their influence on their current practices (Woods, 1996). The reason for not targeting data in the form of statements of beliefs was to avoid leading teachers to answer according to what was expected or appropriate rather than what they actually believed and did. Therefore, in order to obtain results that reflect actual practices and beliefs of the teachers, there was an effort "to talk in concrete terms and use the answers to construct an understanding." (Woods, 1996: 28) At the end of the interview, the participants were debriefed on the focus of the study and further comments were invited.

The interview was carried out in a relaxed atmosphere where the focus was on the sharing of experiences and ideas about the interactive decision making processes that take part during their classroom teaching. Distribution of the power was equal between the interviewer and the interviewees and among the interviewees. As the first author facilitated the interview, the interviewees were not interrupted in any way and turn taking was not controlled by the interviewer. The participants were free to take turns any time they wished.

1.4. Data Analysis

At the first stage of data analysis, the data obtained through the video-recording of the focus group interview were transcribed for the analysis. Second, the transcribed data were coded. The codes were identified inductively. Then, recurrent themes were identified. The statements made by the teachers in the interview were examined. The examined statements, as Woods (1996) did in his study, were the ones reflecting factors, strategies, and principles underlying the decisions they make as well as their beliefs and assumptions. To inquire into the participant narratives we explored 'thematic coherence' which is related to "the recurrence of themes... that tell us something about the underlying values and beliefs of the culture and about the narrator's perceptions of it" (Agar & Hobbs, 1983, cited in Woods, 1996: 31) The interview segments were then interpreted by two researchers and discussed with reference to the literature.

2. Findings and Discussion

Some of the themes identified through the analyses include classroom and activity management issues, strategies for handling decision points, factors taken into account while making decisions, and the place of routines in decision making.

First, the teachers' perceptions of their main roles in their classes were elicited in order to understand if they regarded themselves as decision makers while teaching. Our analysis revealed that three of the teachers, Teachers K, Z, and A perceived themselves as facilitators in their classes. Similarly, Teacher B regarded himself as a "guide". This particular teacher used the metaphor of being an "usher". He said:

Well in the classroom, I, apart from the literature terminology I mean, as the role of the teacher as a facilitator, mentor, prompter whatever you say, I feel myself like an usher. I mean there used to be ushers at cinemas. There are not now. We used to go to the cinemas. We were usually late and they used to show us the way because we were not accustomed to seeing in the dark but after some time, let's say five minutes later on your eyes are getting used to the darkness you see what is around so teachers, for me are like ushers and I feel myself like an usher. (Teacher B)

Like Teacher B, the other teachers did not primarily regard themselves as decision makers in their classes. For these teachers, being facilitators and guides for the smooth functioning of the pre-planned learning processes was central.

Another important theme that emerged was related to the points where the teachers mostly needed to make decisions. The participants all agreed that classroom and activity management issues were the primary areas where they needed to make immediate decisions during instruction. Teacher A noted:

Maybe in the management, classroom management factor. So when I need is mostly grouping the students or when there is some kind of noise. How we, I can just involve them in the activity so I should decide to do something for that point, I need to make a decision especially in classroom management to get them to the... to facilitate the activity (Teacher A).

And Teacher K emphasized her decisions about engaging the students and managing in-class activities:

When I plan to do something in the classroom, if it lasts shorter than I have planned I may need to make a decision. How can I end it, or should I change it or add some other activities also sometimes I may need to make a decision for students who finish their tasks earlier than the others I... at that time I want to make a decision about how to keep them doing some other things. Because if they become off-task they cause problems; they often talk or do some distractive behaviors (Teacher K).

While all participants closely associated decision-making with classroom management issues, two of the teachers, Teacher Z and Teacher B, also specifically focused on how decision-making should be handled in classes. They stated that they involved the students in decision making processes, from the beginning of the academic year. Teacher B additionally emphasized establishing trust between the teacher and the students so that everything could work well. Furthermore, Teachers K and A associate decision making with problems in the classroom and whether to take immediate action or not.

Teacher K: Yes, I think we... also need to make a decision then there is a problem. Because you can't decide what to do, either to deal with the problem at that time, or just with eye contact, try to give the message but deal with it later on.

Teacher A: Because when the problem occurs, immediate solutions, decisions we need. So this is the main part that is challenging for me

As for the issue of handling the decision points in the classroom, the teachers mentioned strategies they used such as telling anecdotes, consistency with the decisions taken, making students believe

in the teacher and create rapport, conferencing with the students, and sharing student diaries. The following vignettes demonstrate teachers' emphases in these areas:

Sometimes I talk about some anecdotes or what I did before, and how I did it, or how it worked so to make them believe. And explaining the reasons, why you have done, or why you have decided such an action, what you're going to do about. So, the students in a way as I mentioned in the first question that they must believe at first, in your decisions. (Teacher B)

Another point, when you have made a decision you must be consistent. If it is especially a classroom management issue. for example if you ..., at the beginning of the school year I always tell my students not to come late, try to be punctual, and... of course, as Mr. B mentioned, at the beginning of the school year we decide on some classroom rules with the students. And I say, if you are late, if you have an excuse tell it to me beforehand but if not you are going to be registered as absentee. So, with the first student I apply this, and for the second student I do the same thing. If you are consistent, it works. (Teacher K)

I use different strategies to... convince them in fact for the proper decisions and... as my dear friend, colleague explained sometimes I give the anecdotes sometimes... sometimes I have the private sessions, private... sessions with my ladies, with my groups because I try to explain them why... and conferencing... and also they keep the diaries and sometimes they'd like to share diaries with me, and I read them and then I have again the conferencing with them to explain. (Teacher Z)

...the most difficult thing is to persuade them, to get them into the lesson. So... as my colleagues mentioned it's really important to create a rapport... or empathy, or... whatever it is to persuade them, to get them into the lesson, because we... sometimes we need to tell anecdotes, as my colleague mentioned, to touch their emotions... so touching their emotions by telling stories, or giving anecdotes helps us... so it works better than anything else. (Teacher A)

As observed in the above excerpts, Teachers B and A emphasized the importance of making explanations by telling anecdotes, creating a rapport with the students as a teacher, and establishing trust. Similarly, Teacher Z mentioned using explanations through conferencing with the students and sharing their ideas through student diaries as strategies for handling decision points. In addition, Teacher K, the most experienced teacher in the group, talked about the importance of consistency for the decisions to work and exemplified how she was able to be consistent in her decisions.

Participants' remarks also led to the emergence of the following salient themes: choosing learning activities and organizing post-stage activities. The excerpts below are related to these teaching practices that involve decision-making the most for the study participants.

Well, choosing the activities ... each stage of language teaching involves some kind of decision making. So, lesson planning, choosing the activities, ... because there are different learner types in the classroom, ... different levels also, they have different backgrounds, ... this is the part, main part that I have to make decisions, and decide which activity and in what order, ... sequence is the point that I need to make decisions. ... because you know... this modern teaching approaches, they say we should involve them in the choosing... involve them also in the amm... decision making process, but still, ... but still, I think the teacher should be, maybe not the dominant but the leader, leading... and give them options. (Teacher A)

... also mainly I think make decisions with post... stage activities because I... plan to do role play, for example... sometimes students may not be in the mood to do that... or to the activity which I have planned before. So I suddenly need to change to the activity which they will want to do. (Teacher K)

... post stages of my teaching; I give them options and ... I observe my learners and according to their mood, to carry these activities, and also performance tasks, I, sometimes they would like to create their

performance tasks in groups, and I ask for them, and for their tasks also when they'd like to create their tasks at home, I give them options also, but for another one, for the other activities I choose it. And I also observe their energy and I can change it... and I have some varieties in my classroom. (Teacher Z)

Based on the statements of the participants, additional themes emerged. These were related to what these teachers took into account while making decisions on these issues. In this regard, there was an emphasis on enabling learner involvement both in the learning activities and in the decision making process and meeting the needs of students. Teacher A reported that she considered different learner types and backgrounds while choosing learning activities and the need to involve them in the decision making processes by providing options. Like Teacher A, Teacher Z mentioned providing options to students. However, she would do this for student involvement in the learning activities and believed that by providing options on the type of the activities, she could facilitate learner involvement. Moreover, Teachers K and Z stated that they took learner needs and the affective domain of teaching and learning into consideration while deciding on the types of learning activities.

When discussing types of unacceptable behavior in classes, the participants referred to student behavior interrupting the flow of teaching, demotivation in the class, and discipline problems especially those affecting other students' learning opportunities. For example, Teacher K noted the following:

If the child's, children's behavior spoils, interrupts my teaching, I first try to warn him with eye contact. If I can't manage this, maybe I can call out his or her name, ... if still he goes on interrupting or disturbing or spoiling my lesson, then I may say... if you go on like that –as you see I can't go on teaching-... while I'm explaining something, and if he really disturbs the students around him. But if the action only, how can we say, affect himself or herself, maybe I may not... interrupt my explanation or session. But if it affects people around him, I usually... well... take immediate action, give immediate attention. (Teacher K)

For Teacher K, maintaining eye-contact with the student who caused unacceptable behavior in the class and if that did not work, reprimanding was necessary. The participants varied in their approaches to such situations. Teacher Z said:

It depends on the impact of the thing, but I in fact some... mostly give the immediate action but my immediate action is different because I like my students and... immediately I can sit near her, or caress, sometimes I kiss them, because these are ladies and they are expecting this, and... it's about the demotivation maybe, and I try to learn why, ... Just I ask it, and do you feel ok, and this is my immediate action in fact. But sometimes I keep silent and they understand "oh, this is serious" because this is a routine of our classes. (Teacher Z)

In addition to approaching students with a very caring attitude, Teacher Z described her strategy as remaining silent and doing nothing in the classroom. Upon seeing this, students typically got the message since this was a routine in their classes. Teacher A also described a situation in which she had ignored the unacceptable behavior of one student. This was an unusual behavior for this student. Teacher A chose not to take immediate action. She stayed calm and this helped her solve the problem.

Another important consideration is whether these teachers' decision-making was based on the routines available to them. Did these teachers stick to routine behavior or did they try new alternative actions? Our analysis revealed that all but one of the instructors relied on the routines they had tested over the years in their decision-making processes. Unlike her colleagues, Teacher B stated that he had no routines and he always tried out new alternatives in the class.

Unpredictability, being unpredictable as a teacher, was the key pattern in the discourse of this participant. He said:

you have to be...unpredictable... crazy sometimes in the eyes of... they will not know how you will react...and... of course... they will know you, they will trust you, but sometimes... they shouldn't be sure of what you are going to do, I mean. ... It is impossible; you cannot standardize the teacher's beliefs and attitudes I mean towards the students. So, if it is impossible... so your reactions, your standard reactions to students for their actions... will cause some problems I think later on. Because In the society ... we are creating some type of people... who behave according to people? So this is not a learnt activity ... -I have to be punctual- is a learnt thing ok?, they learn it in this way, but ... they learnt it just for that teacher or just for him, just for her. So they are, they are not learning to be punctual here in fact. So, I said they become liars, in the society. You cannot standardize people's attitudes... (Teacher B)

According to Teacher B, employing routinized decisions would cause problems not only in classes but also in society. In time, standardized behaviors that are done just for the sake of completing them would become commonplace among citizens. Unlike Teacher B, the other instructors argued that routinized decisions of the teachers ensured that students would be able to make sense of them, this, in turn, would bring respect and consistency in classes. Teacher K said:

I... mainly use... routines because for many years I have tried different ways. So I mainly use the ones which I used in the past and they have worked. And ... I think respect is the key issue. I...really... at the very beginning of the school year, try to establish mutual respect. I respect everybody, it doesn't matter if he is lazy or not, disruptive or not... and they really feel this. So when I do... when they do something wrong, they know how I will react. So they never come after me. They know that, if they are late, I will register them as absentee or, I will talk them after the class, they know that. So, in my teaching experience... if students know how the teacher will react, they behave accordingly... so, I... don't use... much variation. ... Using the routines shows that you are consistent (Teacher K).

Overall, all participants except Teacher B, believed that constantly trying out new alternative actions in classes would confuse the students and that they would not be able to develop an understanding of expected appropriate actions. Clearly, for these instructors, routines in the decision making processes were associated with consistency. For Teacher B, on the other hand, exploring alternative actions in the decision making processes were associated with social change or social transformation.

Finally, in the interview, we elicited factors that affected teachers' decision making processes. The participants reached a consensus on the following factors: learner style, students' needs and feelings, physical environment and the facilities, administration, and the parents' and the system's expectations. In addition to these, Teacher B raised another point to be involved in the decision making processes: school counselors. The next section discusses the results of this analysis with reference to the relevant literature and presents conclusions.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of the interview data in this study revealed that decision making, in general, was associated with classroom management and discipline problems for the participants. Little was mentioned about the very issue of teaching the language. The only points that the teachers mentioned related to decision making on issues of teaching were choosing and structuring the learning activities. We interpreted this result as an indication of these teachers not perceiving themselves as decision-makers in the learning and teaching processes of their classes with regard to issues such as selection and structuring of the content, quantity of learning content,

and setting the instructional objectives, selection of materials (Shavelson, 1983; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). The participants in this study viewed their interactive decision-making processes restricted to the domains of classroom management and selection and construction of the learning activities. That is, they made interactive decisions mostly to control and manage the classroom, to solve a discipline problem that disrupts the flow of teaching, or to arrange or rearrange learning activities according to students' motivation and involvement.

Our analysis showed that the participants employed some strategies while decision making. The elicited strategies they used were: being consistent with their decisions, making students believe and trust them by telling anecdotes and explanations, creating rapport, and making decisions together with the students. These teachers believed that, by employing these strategies in their decision making processes, they could make their decisions work. The participants provided support for their beliefs with descriptions of situations they experienced before. The majority of the teachers in the study stated that they relied on certain routines while making interactive decisions. In a previous study by Joyce (1978-79), it was found that "teachers are reluctant to change their routines, even if they are not proceeding as well as expected" (cited in Shavelson, 1993: 408). That changing routines leads to uncertainty both for the teachers and the students could explain why teachers are not eager to vary their situational reactions (Shavelson, 1993). The participants in this study mentioned similar reasons for relying on routines and stated that routines provided consistency.

Finally, the analysis of the data in this study revealed that the participants relied on some principles in their decision making processes. In congruence with the findings of Bailey's (1996: 29-31) study observing second language teachers in their actual classrooms, this study showed that teachers claimed to make decisions in order to "accommodate students' learning styles" and "promote students' involvement". Furthermore, the findings related to decision making principles are also related to some maxims proposed by Richards (1996). According to Richards (1996: 287-291), "The Maxim of Involvement" is related to "following the learners' interest to maintain student involvement"; "The Maxim of Order" involves "maintaining order and discipline throughout the lesson"; and "The Maxim of Empowerment" is "giving the learners control" and these maxims were among the principles that the EFL teachers reported in this study.

Future studies can also gather data on the teachers' actual classroom practices and interactive decisions with observations. Clearly, the circumstances of educational spaces require much more than normatively framed basic decision making theories. Complex decision making theories such as multi-attribute theory (Wright, 1984) and unconscious thought theory (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006) would provide a useful conceptual frame in analyzing of the type of complexities faced by teachers in classroom contexts (as cited in Eysenck & Keane, 2010: 514-529). The interplay between worldviews and social interaction episodes in the lives of teachers should also be examined when focusing on decision-making processes (Karaman, 2010). It is hoped that this qualitative exploration of a group of language teachers' interactive decision making processes as expressed in their group discussion with examples from their teaching practices and their beliefs would provide insights to other researchers interested in narrative inquiry within the Turkish education context.

Appendix

Focus Group Interview Questions on EFL Teachers' Interactive Decision Making

A) Background Information

- What is the type of program you graduated from?
- For how long have you been teaching English?
- What is the type of school you teach in?

B) Interview Questions

1. (a) How do you consider your main role as a teacher in the class you teach?
(b) Why do you think you have a role as a in your class?
(c) Could you please give an example situation in which you acted as a?
2. (a) When do you mostly need to decision-make in your class?
(b) Could you please exemplify a situation you had to decision-make in a class you teach/taught?
3. In which area of teaching practices you mostly decision-make?
4. (a) How do you handle decision points that emerge during your teaching practices?
(b) Could you please exemplify a situation you handled a decision point by?
5. (a) If unacceptable behavior occurs in your class, do you mostly take immediate action, delayed action, or no action? Could you please exemplify?
6. In case of an unacceptable situation in which you take immediate action in your class, is your decision making based on routines available to you or do you make use of a completely new alternative?
7. Could you please describe your decision making frequency during your classroom teaching?
8. For what reasons do you decision-make during your classroom teaching?
9. What are the factors that affect your decision making during your classroom teaching?

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