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Teacher Cognition and Classroom Practice in the Context of Curricular Reform

Case studies of secondary school teachers' beliefs about English
language teaching and learning

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Applied Linguistics and Communication
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2017

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Parwaneh Parvaresh

Dedication

To my husband, son, and daughter

With endless love and gratitude

Abstract

This study investigates how teacher cognition-what language teachers think, know, and believe-contributes to the practices of eight secondary school EFL teachers in Iran within the context of constructivist/communicative-oriented teaching (CCOT) curriculum reform. Specifically, highlighting the influence of both macro- and micro-contexts, this study takes into account the contextual factors influencing teachers' beliefs and the role they play in pedagogic practice and curriculum delivery.

To gain a better understanding of the complex features of teacher beliefs and dynamic interactions among beliefs, practices, and context, this inquiry used a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected using multiple instruments, namely, in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews, which have allowed for triangulation of the findings.

Findings reveal that language teachers' practices are shaped in unique and often unpredictable ways by their beliefs that have emerged from teachers' diverse personal and language learning histories, language teacher education experiences, and the specific contexts in which they do or learn to do their work. These contextual factors are interrelated and collectively broaden the mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practice of CCOT and to the limited uptake of reform implementation. The research interestingly reveals that the less experienced teachers introduced a stronger element of CCOT recommended by the curriculum into their lessons, while the more experienced teachers displayed more traditional approach to teaching.

This study advances thinking on teachers' beliefs and practice by highlighting the need to view teachers' beliefs as a system, to explore the interactive features of teachers' beliefs, and how such interactions impact their practice. The study also highlights the situated nature of teachers' beliefs with significant implications for teachers as well as other stakeholders such as teacher educators, policy makers, curriculum developers, and many other important issues in secondary foreign language education in Iran and other similar contexts internationally.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

The last 20 years have witnessed a surge of interest in the study of language teacher cognition - what language teachers think, know and believe - and of its relationship to teachers' classroom practices (Borg, 2006). The motive for such an interest has been the recognition of the fact that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers with a central role in shaping classroom events. In other words, in the teaching process, teachers are constantly observing, diagnosing, and responding to various situations and their behaviours are shaped by their beliefs about teaching (Borg, 2003, 2006). Johnson (2006) asserts that the emergence of a substantial body of research now referred to as teacher cognition (Borg, 2003; Burns, 1996; Ng and Farrell, 2003; Woods, 1996) is the most significant development in the field of second language teacher education. The findings of research also suggest important relationship among teachers' belief, teachers' practice and educational contexts (e.g. Borg, 2003, 2006, 2011; Pejares, 1992; Johnson, 2006), which contribute to our understanding of teacher beliefs. Given that the social setting in which teachers work have a significant impact on their belief and practice, it is crucial to explore interaction of teacher belief and practice in a specific educational context (Zheng, 2015). Despite the fact that teacher belief is a well-established research area, a further study needs to be conducted to extrapolate the dynamic interactions among teacher belief, practice, and context.

The literature on second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) teaching has grown tremendously in the past three decades as a result of changes in the conceptual frameworks and learning theories that guide L2 instructional practices and pedagogy. In recent decades, teachers in EFL context, where English is not commonly used as a language of education or government (Brown, 2007), have been encouraged to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to improve students' abilities to use English appropriately in context. Therefore, the majority of second language

educators today adopt a communicative and more learner-centred approach to language teaching.

Research on educational change reveals that a successful implementation of any educational reform is related to how teachers perceive the reform, and their perceptions can be influenced by their beliefs about English language education. Therefore, the success of reforms in English language education is contingent upon teachers' beliefs. Past reform efforts of many countries have shown that top-down educational reforms may not achieve the intended results if teachers' beliefs are not congruent with the ideas underpinning innovation (Weddell, 2009). As agents of change, teachers need to incorporate reform ideas into their belief systems before they can make changes in their teaching practice. Thus, the significant mediating effect of teachers' beliefs in curriculum implementation must be taken into account. The socio-cultural conflicts coupled with the complex daily work environment of teachers may also hinder changes in teachers' beliefs and practices. Therefore, in order to ensure the successful translation of curriculum into teaching practice, teachers' beliefs and the context that shapes teachers' beliefs must be clearly understood.

The present study investigates EFL teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning in the context of Iran to discover to what extent teachers' beliefs are compatible with their own classroom practice with regard to the principles of constructivist/communicative curriculum. Thereafter, this form of constructivist/communicative orientation to teaching will be referred as CCOT in the rest of the thesis. This study also aims to examine factors influencing the way in which teachers apply their beliefs in their classroom practices. It looks beyond observable behaviours and pinpoints the inner logic which underlies the teachers' actions (Zheng, 2015), to reveal the dynamic relationship between the teachers' beliefs, practice and contextual factors.

The next section of this chapter presents a general picture of the context of the study and ELT educational reform followed by highlighting a statement of purpose, significance of the study, rationale and research gap, introducing the research questions, and finally providing an overview of the organisation of the thesis.

1.2. Context of the study

This section presents the social, cultural and historical contexts of English education in Iran. It first presents an overview of the educational system in Iran, including the characteristics of its educational culture, and provide background about English language teaching in Iran. This background sheds light on the various challenges of English language teaching in Iran including the reasons which led to the introduction of curriculum reform. It also provides a general overview of the curriculum reform and illustrates how this curriculum represented a significant shift for English language teachers in Iran.

1.2.1. The educational system of Iran

The educational system of Iran has changed several times since 1979, when the Islamic Republic has come into power. In 2013, the Iranian Ministry of Education (MOE) reformed the educational curricula and officially announced the 6-3-3 system. Currently, the educational system is divided into three levels: six years of elementary school (Grades 1–6), three years of lower secondary school (Grades 7–9) and three years of upper secondary school (Grades 10–12). Figure 1.1 below shows the reformed educational system.

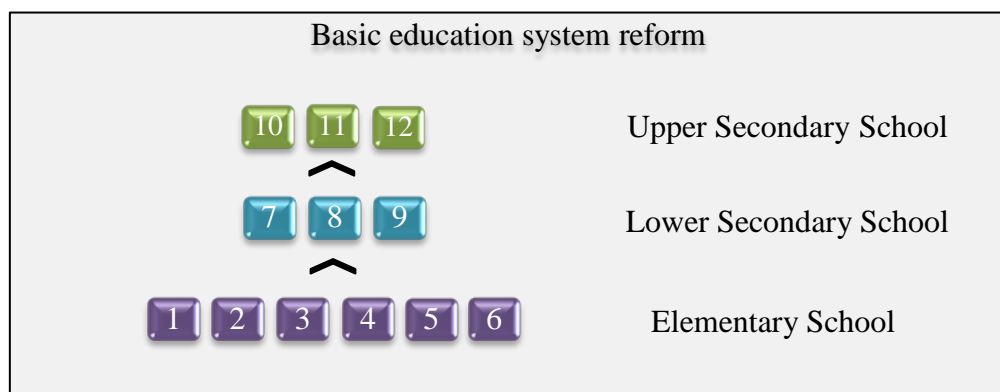


Figure 1.1 *Basic education system reform*

English is formally taught from the first year of lower secondary schools to the final year of upper secondary schools, providing six years of English instruction in all. The education system falls under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MOE) and all textbooks including those for English are developed and authorised by Iran's Ministry of Education. In secondary schools, the teaching of EFL is usually test driven, preparing learners for the university entrance examinations.

Table 1.1 represents the distribution of time for all age groups in Iranian ELT curriculum.

Table 1.1. Overview of EFL instruction in Iran

Grade	Age	Levels	Amount of instruction
1- 6	6-11	Elementary School	-
7- 9	12-14	Lower-Secondary School	2-3 hours a week
10-12	15-17	Upper-Secondary School	2-3 hours a week

A centralised system of education requires that all students in all public and private schools throughout the country receive the same curriculum and instruction, which are provided by the curriculum development centre of the MOE. Moreover, English receives significant attention and probably extra hours of practice in almost all secondary schools in Iran. The official language of Iran is Persian, which is known as Farsi. The next section introduces the background of English language teaching in Iran.

1.2.2. The EFL context in Iran

The story of English language teaching (ELT) in Iran, as one of the most notable anti-imperialistic countries in the world, has experienced a host of extreme ups and downs. Before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, as a result of extensive collaboration with the West, especially the USA and UK, on economics, education, political and cultural affairs, English and English education received much attention such that French lost ground to English, which at that time became Iran's principal foreign language (Foroozandeh and Forouzani, 2015). Following the Islamic Revolution, a change of scene took place and the language was faced with waves of hostility from some post-revolutionary officials. According to Borjian (2013), during these years, the questions as to what to do with English and whether it should stay on school and university curricula or be entirely banned were at the centre of the debates among the new ruling powers. Such debates finally led to teaching English and new roles were defined for ELT in order to nationalise its use. Given that the main challenge was western culture of the educational system, western culture was removed from all books including English books and students just learnt vocabularies and grammar. Farhady, Hezaveh, and Hedayati, (2010) pointed out that unlike many countries such

as China, Japan, and South Korea, which try to develop English teaching and learning at the educational system both for students and teachers, foreign language teaching in Iran is viewed more conservatively. They further noted that the present situation is a consequence of politicising English after the Islamic revolution. It appears that, to a great extent, English was restricted to areas such as diplomacy and science (Farhady et al., 2010).

In the third decade onwards around the beginning of the 21st century, society paid more attention to English as the language of globalisation, communication, science, and technology. Currently, the dominant trend in Iran is towards an increasing emphasis upon language teaching (Dahmardeh and Hunt, 2012), because of globalisation and the Internet, as well as social, cultural and educational transformations such as the expansion of higher education, the growth of mass media and the ease of communication with other societies and cultures. The role of foreign languages, especially English, is now a key element in educational development. Knowing English is now considered a marker of educational as well as social achievement in Iran (Sadeghi and Richards, 2016). In the schools and universities, English is regarded as a tool providing access to new knowledge and technology; hence, there is an emphasis on reading comprehension. English, as the world's international language, now features prominently in Iran's official education curriculum and even more so in the private education sectors. Despite changes and innovations in the private sector, there was no sign of change in the public education structure and an imposed top-down resistance was apparent. Growing attention to English as well as a perceived failure of the public education system, characterised by a traditional teacher-centred approach and a grammar-translation method, led to a flourishing private sector, despite some officials' sensitivity and resistance.

At present, the number of private language institutions in the country is growing, a distinctive feature of which is introducing English at primary school level. They established a growing number of large-city branches and shouldered the responsibility of English extension, especially among well-off families (Davari and Aghagolzadeh, 2015). In almost all private schools English receives a great deal of attention and probably extra hours of practice (Aliakbari, 2004). The undeniable shortcomings of English learning in centralised public sector English learning,

leading to the growth of private sector ELT market, have been mainly rooted in policy makers' ambivalence towards English education.

The educational system of Iran is based on the banking model of education (Safari, 2016) in which the format of language classrooms and school systems is primarily lecture-based or based on the 'sage on the stage' model of language teaching and learning. This type of instruction involves information delivery from an authoritative figure to passive and silent students who, according to Izadinia and Abednia (2010), rarely show any tendency to participate in classroom activities. Good teachers should be knowledgeable, capable of passing on knowledge to students effectively. In this hierarchical system of education, teacher talk is favoured over student talk (Wang, 2010). Thus, with respect to the rigid and authoritarian nature of Iran's educational system, teachers' role is restricted to transmitting the bits and pieces of knowledge into the empty minds of students (Safari and Rashidi, 2015).

The traditional way of English teaching has been criticised for many years as it puts great emphasis on linguistic knowledge and fails to develop an adequate level of communicative competence. It has been argued that grammar translation dominates Iran's mainstream education system (Riazi 2005) and that structural properties and English grammar are still the main features of English classes in Iran (Jahangard, 2007; Hayati and Mashhadi, 2010). Teaching does not focus on how teachers and students can create, construct, and apply knowledge in an experiential approach, but on how extant authoritative knowledge can be transmitted and internalised. In order to improve this situation and influenced by the private sector's qualified success, as stated earlier, the need for changes in the national curriculum arose. However, changes in the curriculum cannot guarantee equivalent changes in teachers' beliefs and practices.

Compared to EFL learners in other contexts, Iranian EFL students do not have much exposure to English outside the classroom. In traditional Iranian language classes, the passive students copy down the information and knowledge on which the teacher lectures. Most of the teachers pursue a familiar routine in language classrooms, including checking students' assignments, presenting and teaching a new lesson, and giving seatwork to students. Iranian EFL teachers still practise traditional teaching

methods such as grammar translation and audio-lingual methods, which fail to provide opportunities for students to use language communicatively.

In addition, In Iran, EFL teachers are mainly recruited through two different ways: a) TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) programs and b) B.A. or M.A. holders of English translation or English literature majors. The teacher education programs have been in charge of developing teachers' competency in both English and education at the levels of teacher training centres and universities (Eslami, 2008). However, according to Motallebzadeh (2012), the type of training courses offered in universities, teacher training centres, and language institutes emphasise ELT knowledge transmission and shaping EFL teachers through imitation of a master trainer. The Ministry of Education also offers in-service training to teachers and instructors of all subjects, placing more emphasis on teaching English. A number of workshops and seminars are run during every academic year to support teachers and to help them develop professionally.

1.2.3. ELT educational reform

The impacts of globalisation have led to educational reforms across the world. In order to enhance national competitiveness, many countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) or second language (ESL), have reviewed the curricula. Like in many EFL contexts, Iran has practiced the teacher-dominated educational model for centuries. Understanding the context of teaching and learning is essential before initiating any educational change, as Wedell and Malderez (2013, p.228) call it 'the starting point for change'. The first document dealing with English language, *Comprehensive policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding globalization*, was approved in 2004. English and French are introduced as global languages that are necessary for Iran's active participation in the current world, though there does not appear to be any legal requirement for implementation (Davari and Aghagolzadeh, 2015). The second publication entitled *The National Curriculum Document* was finalised in 2009. According to this document, besides computer literacy, knowing a foreign language is one of the two essential tools of literacy in the third millennium, but is also important in the development of tourism, business, technology, science and political awareness. Regarding foreign language education, the document recommends a communicative approach and stresses learning all four language skills.

Given that policy-making in Iran is highly centralised, with no local policy-makers involved (Atai and Mazlum, 2013), the reform was being developed by a team working under the supervision of the MOE which recommended a more communicative orientation in English language teaching (Dahmardeh, 2009). However, later in 2011, the third document regarding English language, *the fundamental transformation of education*, was finalised and approved by the Ministry of Education. The educational curricula and the policy makers officially announced communicative language teaching (CLT) as the main principle governing the materials. Although it was stated in the curriculum document that the theoretical frameworks of the curriculum are designed based on the communicative approach (Iranian National curriculum, 2011), the curriculum displays a lot of characteristics of constructivism at the same time. Hence, major revisions of secondary school syllabuses were undertaken to reflect the new constructivist/ communicative principles.

A central aim of the reform is to transform the traditional examination-oriented and teacher-centred teaching to a more inquiry-oriented and student-centred teaching. Moreover, the aim is to foster in students active and unique ways of learning through teacher-student interaction, encouraging autonomous learning, and inquisitive spirit in practice. Teachers would be expected to help learners to work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole class. In this new curriculum, English education has been reconceptualised not only to encourage students' active participation in the learning process and use of the target language in communication, but also to encourage teachers to promote students' communicative skills and minimise mother tongue use. In addition, the inductive teaching of grammar is required; but mistakes are not considered signs of weakness.

As mentioned earlier, one of the main objectives of the reformed curriculum is teaching four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and making the students familiar with the communicative approaches. This approach was fundamentally different from the Reading Method on which the school English books had been based for 26 years despite minor revisions (Foroozandeh and Forouzani, 2015). Previously, English language teaching (ELT) in Iran had been portrayed in the literature as predominantly teacher-centred, textbook-directed and memorisation-based. Although the current reformed curriculum recommends that English classes be

conducted in English, they are typically conducted in the students' mother tongue (Farsi) due to the learners' (and sometimes the teachers') limited English proficiency.

1.2.4. Material and assessments

The MOE also provides guidelines about the materials used in classes. With regards to the English textbooks used in schools, periodically minor changes have been made to the content and structure during the last three decades (Sadeghi and Richards, 2016). Birth after the Iranian Ministry of Education reformed the educational curricula in 2011 and officially announced the 6-3-3 system. Recent years have seen a gradual increase in the inclusion of elements of communicative approaches in textbooks. Major changes to English textbooks are planned in order to focus on 'active meaning-oriented communication' to give attention to mastery of the language skills and to communicative abilities. A series of course books called English for schools including: 'Prospect 1, 2, 3' for lower secondary school and 'Vision 1, 2, 3,' for upper secondary school are taught. The books are organised around activities based on the communicative principles by focusing on presenting meaningful tasks rather than focus on the grammatical structure. As the main authors of the new textbooks, Kheirabadi and Alavi Moghaddam (2014, p.231) call this reform 'the revolutionary process'. They have tried to blend communicative language teaching with local topics and culture to enrich the learners' cultural affinity and local identity (Leather and Motallebzadeh, 2015). Most textbooks begin every lesson with conversations, followed by a reading text, with form-focused instruction and pattern drills coming later. However, hardly any interactive tasks or activities are provided either in the student book or teachers' manual. A typical textbook contains nine units to be completed in one academic year (around eight months).

Testing and assessment is another area where responsibility is shared between the MOE and the individual schools. While the curriculum in Iranian secondary schools changed, the assessment procedure did not. In the context of secondary schools in Iran, the most important test is the university entrance examination (*Konkur*). The exam still only tests students' vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension, omitting listening and speaking. Hence, most language teachers still follow transmission-based grammar-oriented approach to teaching, reinforced by the assessment system that tests linguistic knowledge rather than communicative ability.

Consequently, the classroom instruction continued to focus on grammar and memorisation. Farsi is used most of the time and the way of teaching is mainly characterised by the teacher centred approach. A few opportunities are given to students to practise the target language and their performance is based on repetition and drills.

1.2.5. Challenges in implementing the reform

Curriculum reform is a long and slow process. Despite major progress made in the systemic curriculum reform in Iran, problems and challenges exist which need policy attention and actions for solution. There have been a variety of obstacles for the implementation of the new principles in the curriculum reform. First, Iranian teachers personally feel that they have a duty of preparing students for the exams. Therefore, they focus more on transmitting language knowledge and enhancing students' scores in exams. English teachers indicate that it is very hard to implement the new curriculum reform under the current examination system as examination success determines students' future paths and thus, can determine the expectations of the parents, the reputation of the schools and its teachers. Preparing and administrating end-of-year proficiency exams needs to be in tune with the communicative approach, yet the exams have remained much the same as before and no parallel reform has been made to the English examination system in Iranian schools.

Another challenge was the limited number of English hours in the curriculum: three hours a week in a total of 26 weeks in the academic year (from September to May), far below the minimum requirement for sufficient exposure to the target language in a CLT classroom. Implementing a communicative approach, especially in those societies where English is a foreign rather than a second or additional language, involves substantial time allocation to increase students' proficiency.

The third obstacle concerns the inadequate teacher training. Success cannot be guaranteed in the absence of appropriate in-service training for the teachers used to traditional methods and now presented with new books and content. In Iran, few teachers have opportunities to study in an English-speaking country. One of the first requirements of implementing a communicative approach is the use of trained and fluent teachers. English language teachers' language proficiency, content knowledge and pedagogical skills will need upgrading to meet the curriculum's requirements.

Thus, due to an insufficient supply of qualified teachers, and a lack of in-service training to maintain and increase teachers' proficiency, the curriculum may not be able to fulfil its expectations. English teachers generally express two complaints about current teacher training. First, teachers indicate that teacher training is still conducted in a traditional way which it is meant to replace, with teachers listening to theory-based lectures, lacking sufficient training for the practical application of the new approaches and teachers as the main body of training are not integrated in the discussion and investigation of the new approach. Second, teacher training courses are reported to train all the teachers in the same way, ignoring teachers' individual differences.

The views outlined above could partly explain the low acceptance of communicative approaches by many non-native English speaker teachers. There is clearly a gap between theory and practice. Given this issue, the question has been raised as to whether the theories that have been developed in Western countries be applied to other parts of the world. Contextual differences such as culture (Hu, 2002) may prove to be a decisive factor in the implementation of communicative approaches. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) suggests, there is no 'one best method' for all contexts. We do not adopt communicative approaches wholesale, but adapt their main principles to our own contexts.

In addition, Wedell (2009) argues that teachers' views are not taken into account when implementing pedagogic innovations, a view shared by Carless (2003). When teachers learn a new approach, they are adding new information into old sets of beliefs and knowledge (Ellis, 1996); the new information may conflict with pre-existing beliefs and make them resistant to change (Karavas-Doukas, 1996). Therefore, it is unlikely that significant changes would take place in teachers' pedagogical practice if they are simply introduced to an approach. Teachers' beliefs is an element too important to be neglected. Teachers' beliefs, teacher knowledge and teachers' behaviours interact with each other, and at the same time, interact with their specific contexts.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was first to examine secondary school teachers' beliefs about EFL teaching and learning regarding the CCOT approach. The second purpose

was to investigate the extent to which teachers' beliefs correspond with their applications of CCOT in their classroom practices. The third and final purpose of this study was to examine the way in which different contextual and experiential factors mediated their understanding and implementation of curriculum reform in the classroom to get a more holistic view of the various elements that shaped teachers' beliefs and practices.

Despite the fact that teacher belief is a well-established research domain, how teacher belief dynamically interacts with practice and context and mutually inform each other should be put on research agenda for a deeper understanding of teacher belief (Zheng, 2013). Given that social settings in which teachers work have a significant impact on their beliefs and practice, it is important to explore the interaction of teacher beliefs and practice in a specific educational context. As far as the context of the study is concerned, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been no research which looked into Iranian secondary school English language teachers' beliefs and practice with regards to the key features of curricular reform.

Shifts in educational orientation in the curriculum do not necessarily lead to the change of teacher belief and practice, which presents a dynamic context for the research. Accordingly, setting the research in Iran may well represent the educational context under change. Moreover, this paradigm shift from traditional to constructivist teaching challenged teachers' traditional beliefs about EFL teaching and learning, which caused constant clashes between teachers' beliefs and practices. Wedell (2003) points out that the success of any educational reform depends greatly on what teachers' beliefs are, what teachers think and what they actually do during the process of the implementation. This study regards teachers' beliefs as a complex system in which their thoughts about EFL teaching and learning, practices and contexts are 'sets of interacting components' (Zheng, 2013, p.333). In this respect, the general aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive presentation of how teachers' beliefs with complex features relate to their practice in their dynamic teaching context.

1.4. Significance of the study

The relationships between teacher beliefs and practices have been discussed in both general and second/foreign language education. Although a number of studies related to the current research have been undertaken previously, the focus of most of these

earlier researches was based predominantly on self-report, rather than actual classroom behaviour. Borg (2006, p.273) asserts that teacher cognition research should include ‘the study of actual classroom practices and of the relationships between cognitions and these practices’. Arguably, there remains a need to incorporate a qualitative approach to examine the connection between teacher beliefs and practices. This current study sets out to investigate this research gap in the context of Iran and provides more comprehensive evidence covering teachers’ professed beliefs and their actual practices, as well as the mediating contextual and experiential factors.

Apart from the potential to address research gaps, the current study aims to contribute to knowledge in several areas. Despite the recognised importance of the study of teachers’ beliefs (e.g. Barnards and Burns, 2012; Borg, 2006, 2009; Borg and Burns, 2008; Farrell, 2009), this research avenue has not been well-established in Iran. Given that foreign language teaching in Iran is relatively unique in terms of its teaching and learning environment; such an investigation could contribute to the knowledge base of teacher education programs and may help educators to develop an understanding of teacher behaviours, classroom decisions, and actions. Thus, the uniqueness of the contexts in which the research has been carried out contributes to the significance of the study.

Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to the understanding of teacher cognition in the English language teaching and learning arena and thus to have some impact on theoretical and methodological assumptions about teacher education and teacher development. More specifically, the study is expected to increase our understanding of how and to what extent teachers’ beliefs about learning and teaching are influential in the implementation of the educational practices within the context of curricular reform. In addition, the study may extend awareness among educators of the complexity of EFL teaching and learning by gaining insights into the psychological context of language learning and teaching. Therefore, the findings of this research could shed light on the aspect of L2 teaching in a variety of similar contexts, and could be useful for educational policymakers, curriculum developers, practitioners, and teacher educators.

Finally, this study provides a framework for drawing a picture of English language teaching in state schools and understanding at least some of the reasons for the problems in foreign language education in Iranian EFL contexts in which traditional practices of language teaching have been adopted for over 30 years. Although no generalisation of the findings of the present study was intended, transferability of the findings to other similar contexts is possible. Moreover, the potential benefits of this study were not limited to research and practices in Iran. This study yielded some important implications for many other countries where teacher demographics are still mostly ethnically homogeneous and government-led education practices are dominant.

1.5. Motivation and rationale for the study

It is often a researcher's personal involvement in certain educational contexts or academic interest in a particular field of study that guide decisions about research questions. My personal experience as a language teacher and an ELT educator at secondary school and then at the university level in the Iranian context has inspired my interest in understanding teachers' mind and looking at what actually happens inside the classrooms. Given that teachers are decision makers in classrooms and they are mainly responsible for what goes on there, I felt that their voices need to be heard to explore certain issues regarding their beliefs.

In addition, in a context characterised by: a focus on theoretical knowledge, traditional methods of teaching, a top-down curriculum, a lack of in-service teacher training, and a few opportunities for professional development for secondary school teachers, it was of particular interest to me to investigate teacher conceptualisations of their teaching, their beliefs about curriculum principles and how these translate to classroom instruction, as well as the difficulties that the teachers face applying their beliefs in actual classroom practices. Given that teachers' beliefs influence their behaviours in the classroom, it is reasonable to expect that, in the context of Iran, implementing reform without considering EFL teachers' beliefs might not lead to the intended and desired outcomes such reform is seeking. Therefore, to understand the limited uptake of CCOT curriculum reform in Iran, one must heed the growing body of international research pointing to the central role of teachers' beliefs in teacher education and reform efforts. For the reasons given above and a dearth of research

conducted in Iranian contexts on how teachers' beliefs and practices are interrelated in the context of curriculum reform, this study was motivated by the need to bridge the gaps in the present literature.

Moreover, the review of existing literature discussed in Chapter 2 suggests that although teacher beliefs can influence their pedagogic practice, their teaching practices may not be consistent with their beliefs. At the same time, research suggests that there are factors that may affect the translation of teacher beliefs to concrete teaching practices. These factors may differ across educational contexts and vary between teachers, dependent on their own personal experiences in life, educational, and work environments. Therefore, since teachers' beliefs are situated and context-dependent, the relationship between teacher beliefs and their practices need to be explored in a variety of different contexts, along with factors that may influence the translation of beliefs into concrete teaching practices.

1.6. Research questions

The main aim of the study was to investigate English teachers' actual practices of CCOT focusing, in particular, on the relationship between their beliefs about and their actual practices of CCOT. It also aimed at investigating the factors that influence CCOT implementation.

As stated earlier, the present study aims to address the following gaps in the existing research. First, despite the growing international consensus around the centrality of teachers' beliefs, there has been no in-depth and systematic investigation into the role of teachers' beliefs in pedagogical reforms in Iran. Since the introduction of the new ELT curriculum, little descriptive data about EFL teachers' beliefs and practices under the CCOT reform are available, and even less insight has been provided into the beliefs and factors (teacher education, experience, or any other emerging aspects) influencing teachers' pedagogical practices of CCOT, a gap that the present study seeks to fill.

Second, in language teacher cognition research, much effort has been paid on studying the cognition of pre-service teachers or ESL teachers teaching in either private language schools or at the university level and little is known regarding the practices and cognitions of EFL practising teachers in international contexts where

languages are taught by non-native teachers (Borg, 2009). The few studies which focused on non-native speaker teachers of English in non-English-speaking countries were done mostly by English native speaker researchers who did not share either the cultural or linguistic background of the participants. Thus, the present study fills a gap in the research by focusing on EFL in-service secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices of curricular reform in an under-resourced context of Iran, a population that has been given little attention thus far in studying teacher beliefs.

Taking into consideration the contexts of this study as well as the discussion in the literature review chapter, the rationale of the research is structured by the following four research questions:

- 1) What beliefs do the Iranian secondary school EFL teachers hold about English teaching and learning with regard to the key features of curricular reform?
- 2) To what extent are teachers' stated beliefs reflected in their classroom practice?
- 3) What are the reasons, according to the teachers, behind possible inconsistencies between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practice?
- 4) What factors shape the way in which they apply their beliefs in practice?

It is hoped that the findings of this research will generate useful insights for teachers, teacher educators, administrators and policymakers in Iran, to better understand teachers' beliefs, their role in the implementation of curriculum principles, and ways to begin engaging with these beliefs within teacher education and teacher training programmes. It is also hoped that this research will contribute to the teacher education literature both internationally and in Iran, by throwing further light into the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice specifically within the Iranian context, which has not been explored thus far.

Finally, the study highlights the importance of engaging with teacher beliefs and how these shape teachers' pedagogy, the importance of addressing these beliefs within teacher education and reform efforts, and the need for questioning and contextualising Western originating pedagogies in light of local culture and contexts, in order to ensure the success of these reforms.

1.7. Organisation of this thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the background and the context of the study, offering an overview of the purposes, and research questions of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework used in this research and reviews literature relevant to teachers' beliefs and their relationship to classroom practices in the context of educational reform.

Chapter 3 describes the qualitative research undertaken, as well as the rationale for the choice of research paradigm. In addition, the chapter discusses the procedures and methods of collecting and analysing the data.

Chapter 4 reports the findings of the case studies. Themes that emerge from classroom observations, interviews, and field notes are presented and analysed. It also presents different contextual and experiential factors which mediated teachers' understanding and enactment of reform in the classroom.

Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the results with reference to the reviewed literature and the conceptual framework. It discusses some of the salient points from the data analysis and draws a tentative conclusion.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion to the whole study, revisits the research questions, discusses the research's contribution to knowledge, and ends with implications for research and practice as well as the researcher's reflections on carrying out the study.

1.8. Conclusion

This chapter provided a rationale for this qualitative study and presented its research questions. The chapter also provided contextual information; a statement of the research problem; the research aims and objectives; and finally the significance of the study. The structure of the thesis was also outlined.

The next chapter reviews a body of relevant literature on teacher cognition and its influence on teaching practices, in order to inform my study and to construct a conceptual framework within which the present investigation is carried out.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The present study focuses on language teacher cognition, emphasising the central role teacher belief plays in the understanding of the process of teachers' instructional practices in the context of English language teaching curricular reform. The study of language teachers' beliefs and how they shape and are shaped by the activity of language teaching in diverse socio-cultural contexts has been one of the most growing topics in applied linguistics that has become known as language teacher cognition (Kubanyiova, and Feryok, 2015). This developing interest can be explained as one attempt to understand teachers and the psychological processes by which they make sense of their work. Thus, teaching is no longer being viewed solely in terms of behaviour but rather as a cognitive process involving the individual and social construction of knowledge, and teachers are no longer being viewed as 'mechanical implementers of external prescriptions' but as active decision-makers who use their beliefs and knowledge when making instructional decisions in the classroom (Borg, 2006, p.7). Teachers have also been recognised as central agents in determining the successful implementation of educational reform in the classrooms (Levitt, 2002; Lumpe, Haney, and Czerniak, 2000; Weddell, 2009). To that end, research has shown that teachers might possess beliefs that hinder the appropriate enactment of educational reform (Allen, 2002; Bliem and Davinroy, 1997). However, English-language teachers' implementation of CCOT reform and how their beliefs and other contextual factors influence the way they interpret and implement such reform has attracted insufficient attention. Thus, this study aims: 1) to investigate to the extent to which Iranian teachers' beliefs are consistent with their in-class English teaching and learning practices (as determined by a set of five key features) and 2) to shed light on the factors which had an impact on these teachers' practices.

This chapter first presents the conceptual framework of this study and then reviews literature that has informed my understanding of teachers' beliefs, the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices, and factors that shape teachers'

beliefs. The next section reviews the main studies on language teacher beliefs and how these beliefs might have an impact on teachers' practices or vice versa. Then the constructivist approach to second/foreign language teaching and learning will be discussed followed by research on teacher beliefs and curricular reforms, and the context of the present study. The final section summarises the chapter and highlights the research gap in which the present study aims to situate itself.

2.2. Conceptual framework of the study

The study of teacher cognition emerged from a shift in the focus of classroom research from teachers' behaviours to their thinking and thought processes. Theories of language teacher cognition, specifically, highlight the internal mind of a language teacher, providing an in-depth view of 'the psychological processes through which teachers make sense of their work' (Borg, 2006, p.7). It can be inferred that the way teachers think affects the classroom experiences of teachers. According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition as an unobservable cognitive dimension of thinking includes beliefs, knowledge, principles, theories, and attitudes, in addition to the thoughts and reflections teachers have before, during and after teaching.

Borg (2003) developed a model specific to ESL/EFL teachers of language in which he identifies four central constructs that impacted teachers' beliefs and practices. Such sources were believed to be critical in influencing the consistency of teachers' beliefs and behaviours. Borg (2006, p.280) claimed that the field lacked 'a programmatic research agenda conceived within an overall unifying framework'. Therefore, he developed a schematic conceptualisation of language teacher cognition which implies that teachers have cognition about all features of their work. In his updated framework, Borg (2006) highlighted the key dimensions in the study of language teacher cognition, including their schooling experience, their professional coursework, their classroom teaching, and contextual factors. Figure 2.1 framework adapted from Borg, 2006, p.283.

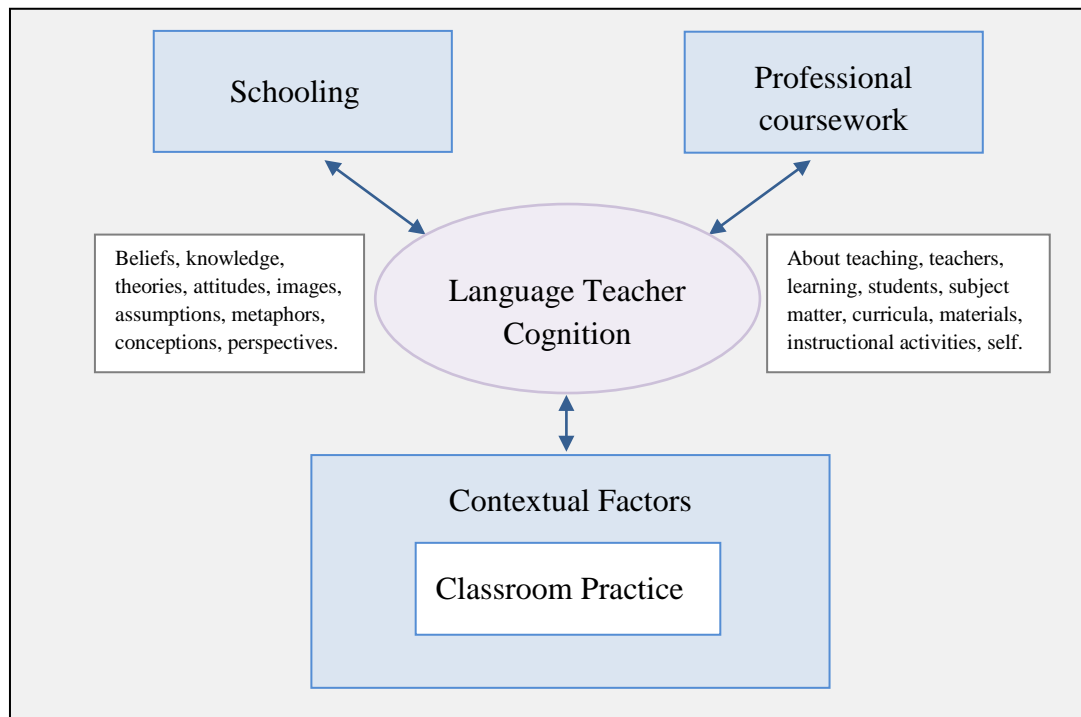


Figure 2.1 Borg's (2006) conceptual framework of language teacher cognition

This framework presents an overview of some fundamental issues emerging from research on teacher cognition. It forms a basis for this study of teacher cognition and their practices of curriculum features, as will be detailed in this section. According to Borg (2006), language teachers' broad early life experience, including schooling and professional interaction with other influential adults, such as parents, can inform cognition about language learning and teaching throughout their career. In his review of the literature, Borg found that these cognitions are so strong that they can continue to influence teachers throughout their career. In addition, Borg explains that professional coursework, which includes pre- and in-service teacher education programmes, is affected by teachers' experiences of schooling, and also be impacted by teachers' current cognitions about teaching and learning. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Borg found that teacher cognitions were bi-directionally influenced by classroom practice, 'with contextual factors playing an important role in mediating the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions' (Borg, 2006, p.284). Moreover, contextual factors exist both around and inside the classroom, mediating teachers' beliefs and practice.

Since language teachers' beliefs are considered a powerful conceptual tool that influences their behaviours in the classroom and acts as a filter through which they interpret new information and educational reform policies, this study draws upon the conceptual framework of beliefs in order to examine Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices with regards to the principles of curriculum reform. Teachers are also influenced by context, thus, the participating teachers in the current study are viewed as people who were in the process of changing their practices as a part of implementing the English curriculum reform.

This study, therefore, is grounded in Borg's (2006) conceptual framework of language teacher cognition to draw a holistic view of EFL teachers' beliefs and the contextual factors that shape their beliefs and practices. As indicated in Figure 2.2, the present study expands Borg's model to include the cultural contexts of education of Iranian language teachers in order to better understand the alignment between their pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices related to CCOT instruction. To convey an accurate sense of the scope of this research, some of the labels will be slightly modified. According to Borg (2006), *schooling* refers to personal histories and specific experiences of classrooms, which define their perceptions of education. I have, therefore, replaced this label with *past language learning experiences*. Similarly, for greater terminological accuracy, *professional coursework* has been replaced with *teaching experiences*. I have also replaced language *teacher cognition* with *EFL teacher beliefs about CCOT*. I also considered the contexts around and inside the classroom as an interactive agent which mediate teachers' beliefs and practice, therefore, I replaced *contextual factor* with *macro and micro context of the society, school, and classroom*. This framework regards EFL teachers' beliefs as a system composed of different types of agent and elements, connecting and interacting with each other in specific context of EFL classrooms in state secondary school in Iran (Figure 2.2).

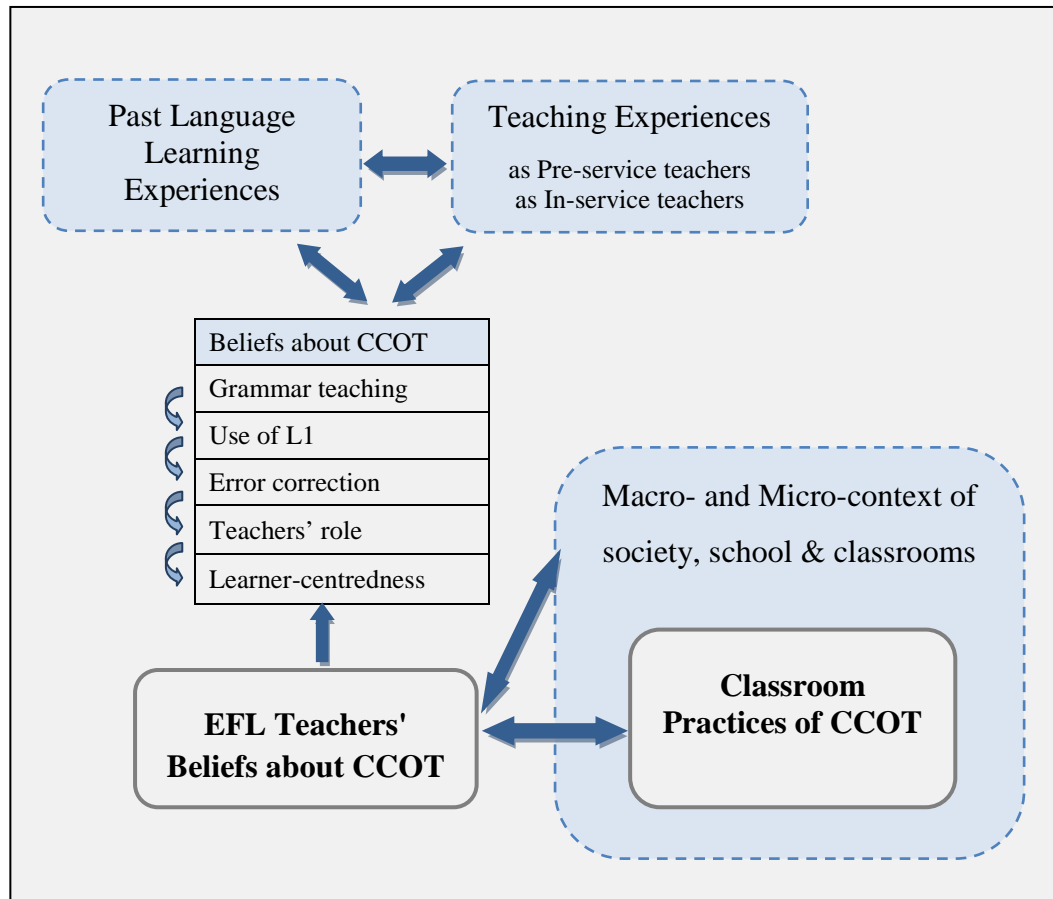


Figure 2.2 *Conceptual framework of EFL teachers' beliefs and practices*

Accordingly, grounded in prior research into language teacher cognition, and Borg's (2006) schematic conceptualisation of teacher cognition, this diagram (Figure 2.2) provides a conceptual framework that guided the current study as it reflects the different factors that shape teachers' beliefs about CCOT reform, such as their past learning and teaching experiences, their professional experiences, and the context in which teachers work.

However, the conceptual framework discussed in this section was only adapted to inform the collection of my data and to enable me to construct a justification for the focus of my research and the way that I have carried it out. They are, therefore, not presented here as a fixed approach in studying teachers' beliefs. Moreover, the relationship between beliefs, practice, and context is far more complex than that depicted in this framework if viewed from situated and dynamic perspectives. From a contextualised perspective, the contexts around and inside the classroom should also

be viewed as an interactive agent, which mediate teachers' beliefs and practice and in the meantime are influenced by teachers' beliefs and practice (Zheng, 2015). Hence, in order to capture the complex and multifaceted nature of teaching as it is actually lived out in a specific setting, this study aims to re-examine the interrelationship between teachers' beliefs, practice, and contexts and develop a research agenda capable of assessing the complexity of language teaching from the perspective of teacher cognition.

Furthermore, this study draws upon two main ideas. Firstly, it recognises the unique and individual perspectives that foreign language teachers may have, even when they have similar backgrounds and operate in similar social situations. Secondly, it appreciates the substantial influence of socio-cultural factors as teachers construct thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning a foreign language.

The following section, first defines teacher cognition as the key term in this study and then presents the definition of teacher beliefs and the different ways that belief has previously been conceptualised and defined, focusing particularly on the knowledge/belief distinction, the sources of beliefs, and the relationship between teacher beliefs, teaching practice, and curriculum reform.

2.3. Teacher cognition

The development of teacher cognition research has been accompanied by a proliferation of terms used to describe similar or even identical concepts. Although there have been various attempts to redraw the boundaries of language teacher cognition, the term still calls for re-definition (Golombek, 2015) and the drawback related to terminological variability in language teacher cognition research is still one of the primary issues to be figured out. As Borg (2003) states below, there is a need for a unifying framework which explains these constructs more holistically.

'The body of work is characterised by conceptual, terminological and definitional variability. Though understandable during the decade of change in this field research, the emergence of unifying, rather than disparate, frameworks for understanding language teachers' cognitions and practices would seem to be an appropriate goal in this domain of research.' (p.98)

The term teacher cognition, as defined by Borg (2003, p.81), refers to ‘the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching- what teachers know, believe, and think’. The term ‘cognition’ thus seems to embrace knowledge, beliefs and conceptualisations, and indeed these four terms are often used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Gao and Ma, 2011). For that reason, I also use the term ‘belief’ and ‘cognition’ in this study interchangeably.

As will be explained in section 2.6, teacher cognition affects and is affected by elements such as teachers’ former experiences as language learners, their professional preparation, their classroom practice, and the actual contexts in which they operate. Although a variety of terms have been used to qualify what teacher cognition is made of – attitudes, theories, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspectives, mental lives – the two features most commonly referred to in both general education and L2 teaching research as inherent to the concept of teacher cognition are beliefs and knowledge.

2.3.1. Teacher beliefs

Teachers’ beliefs are an important construct for teacher cognition researchers as they are generally viewed as the core mental structure that influences what teachers learn and how they make instructional decisions (Nespor, 1987). Teacher beliefs are now seen as one of the most influential factors behind teachers’ decisions and actions in the classroom (Barcelos, 2016). Research has revealed that teachers’ beliefs provide a strong basis for their classroom actions (Farrell, 2015; Farrell and Ives, 2015) and can have a great impact on instructional practices and professional development (Borg, 1998, 2003; Farrell and Lim, 2005). Pajares (1992, p.308), pointed out that it is impossible for the researchers ‘to come to grips with teachers’ beliefs’ without first ‘deciding what they wish belief to mean and how this meaning will differ from that similar constructs’.

Despite many attempts that have been made to define the term ‘beliefs’ (Calderhead 1996; Murphy 2000; Pajares 1992), there is considerable debate about the definition and characteristics of beliefs. Borg (2003) argues that a clear definitional consensus on what the construct of teachers’ beliefs refers to has been lacking in the field. What makes defining beliefs difficult may be explained by confusion arising from the

different agendas of researchers and studies and by the lack of concrete observable results of beliefs (Pajares, 1992). According to Zheng (2015), understanding the concept of beliefs should be based on the elaboration of the issues surrounding the distinction between beliefs and knowledge, different research contexts, and methods of exploring beliefs. Thus, definitions of teacher beliefs are study-bound, culture-based and context-specific.

In his study, Borg (2011, p.370) asserts that ‘beliefs are propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change’. The idea of beliefs as being tacitly held, as Borg (2011) claimed, is also characteristic of a number of studies of teacher beliefs conducted since 2000 as well (e.g., Basturkmen, 2012; Basturkmen, et al., 2004; Farrell, 2006). According to Phipps and Borg (2009), in language teacher education, teachers’ beliefs can be broadly defined as ideas and propositions that language teachers hold about all aspects of their work. Teacher beliefs are the ideas that influence how they conceptualise teaching. M. Borg (2001) also defines belief as:

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

For the purpose of this study, these definitions of teachers’ beliefs (for example, S. Borg, 2011; M. Borg, 2001; Phipps and Borg, 2009) will be used, since they highlight belief’s personal, affective, and evaluative nature and suggest a bi-directional relationship between beliefs and behaviour which is the focus of the study. Hence, it can be argued that beliefs (whether conscious or unconscious) affect and are affected by teachers’ practice, such as their planning, decision-making in the classroom, what teaching strategies they use and do not use, and their relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators. Moreover, since these beliefs are constructed by teachers themselves, they ‘can have a strong evaluative and affective component’ (Borg, 2011, p.370) and can be ‘deep-rooted’ (Phipps and Borg, 2009, p.381) and, therefore, resistant to change (Borg, 2011). Furthermore, Borg (2003, p.81) suggests that ‘teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive

networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs'. This argument is in line with my research in that the language teachers make personalised decisions within the boundaries they meet whether stemming from the context they teach, their own beliefs and/or the impact of the ELT reform policy.

Teacher beliefs reflect personal values and ideologies (Verloop, Van Driel, and Meijer, 2001), and as Nespor (1987) has pointed out, teachers construct and articulate their personal knowledge, theories, perceptions, assumptions, perspectives, ideologies, principles, and so forth in the form of belief systems or filter them through belief structures. It is generally accepted that teachers' beliefs provide a basis for action (Borg, 2011) and that beliefs affect and guide teachers' decision making (Arnett and Turnbull, 2008). Teachers' beliefs are considered as relatively stable and act as a filter through which new knowledge and experiences are screened for meaning (Kagan, 1992) and that underlie teachers' planning, decision making, and behaviour in the classroom.

Beliefs can also be categorised into 'stated beliefs' and 'enacted beliefs' (Borg, 2006). Stated/professed beliefs are what teachers say they think about teaching and learning (these can be articulated in interviews), while enacted beliefs or beliefs in practice are their actual practices in the classroom that can be revealed by observation. Since teachers' beliefs are considered to be the 'hidden side of teaching' (Freeman, 2002, p.1), they are not directly observable (Borg, 2006). Therefore, what teachers do in class may/may not be what they actually believe in because their beliefs are personal, context-dependent, dynamic and fluctuating, complex and dialectical, multifaceted and often contradictory, and related to action in complex ways (Barcelos and Kalaja, 2011; Barnard and Burns, 2012; Borg, 2011; Phipps and Borg, 2009).

On the basis of the above understanding of teacher beliefs, this study adopted the term 'beliefs' to refer to teachers' psychologically held thinking, conceptions, and understanding about EFL teaching and learning. Moreover, teacher beliefs are seen as having two common features. First, beliefs are generally contextualised and associated with a particular situation. Hence, a fuller understanding of teacher beliefs should include beliefs emergent from the context. Second, teacher beliefs are personal constructs of their practical EFL teaching and learning experiences, and these beliefs

are formulated as a result of their experience and interaction with their social and cultural context (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988). In this sense, EFL teacher beliefs are interpretive and reflective that serve as bases for subsequent action. Also, this study holds that some beliefs are explicit to the teacher whereas others are implicit but that all beliefs exist within a complex, interconnected, and multidimensional system.

Perhaps the most complex issue in research on teachers' beliefs is how to distinguish beliefs from knowledge (Allen, 2002; Borg, 2003; Calderhead, 1996; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996). Many researchers voice concern that it is difficult to pinpoint where beliefs end and knowledge begins or vice versa. The following section will discuss the relevant literature about belief and knowledge.

2.3.2. Teacher beliefs and knowledge

Knowledge and beliefs as constituents of teacher cognition have been found to be difficult to separate (Verloop et al., 2001; Zheng, 2009) and that is hard to identify whether the teachers make their decisions upon their knowledge or what they believe. Thus, the distinction between knowledge and beliefs has been a particular concern for researchers and the sources of much debate, since the two terms are not always easily distinguishable. In the literature, knowledge is either taken as being intrinsically different from beliefs, or it is used as an overarching term without distinguishing between what we know and what we believe.

The literature reveals that there are two schools of thought when it comes to identifying the relationship between beliefs and knowledge: one that draws a clear distinction between both terms (Abelson, 1979; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968), and the other that regards them as two interchangeable constructs (Borg, 2003; Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Kegan, 1990). Moreover, as Phipps (2009) argues, some have further complicated the debate by characterising the two together with a third term; perceptions (Freeman, 1996), assumptions (Woods, 1996) and insights (Ellis, 2006).

On the one hand, some researchers argue for the conceptual differences between knowledge and beliefs and regard them as two distinct terms. For example, Fenstermacher (1994) argued that knowledge is epistemologically different from

beliefs, as knowledge relates to factual propositions, whereas beliefs relate to personal values, which may not have epistemic merit. Nespor (1987) claimed that while knowledge is conscious and often changes, beliefs may be unconsciously held, and are often tacit and resistant to change. He argues that knowledge systems are of a cognitive nature, while beliefs systems are affective. Similarly, Woods (1996) considered beliefs to be more subjective and implicit, and knowledge to be more objective and explicit.

On the other hand, some researchers hold a different view, arguing that there may not be such a clear-cut distinction in teachers' minds between knowledge and beliefs (Andrews, 2003; Kagan, 1990; Pajares, 1992; Tsui, 2003) and claim that the two terms are inseparable, synonymous, and interchangeable based on the rationale that both constructs share an element of subjectivity. For example, Pajares (1992) viewed belief as merely one form of teacher cognition and further indicated that other terms such as attitude, values, perceptions, theories, and images are all beliefs in disguise. He discussed the difficulty of pinpointing where knowledge ends and belief begins and argues that distinguishing between beliefs and knowledge tends to be messy because beliefs and knowledge are 'inextricably intertwined' (Pajares, 1992, p.325). Likewise, Verloop et al., (2001) argued that 'in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined' (p.446). Kagan (1990) explained that her decision of using the terms beliefs and knowledge synonymously was due to the 'mounting evidence that much of what a teacher knows of his or her craft appears to be defined in highly subjective terms' (p.421).

Other researchers use terms or concepts that can subsume both beliefs and knowledge. For example, Woods (1996) proposed an integrated network of language teacher beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (BAK). He argued that these terms do not refer to distinct concepts, but are points on a spectrum of meaning. Borg (1999b, p.95) adopted the term 'teacher cognition' as an overarching term and defined it as the sum of 'the beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions, and attitudes that teachers hold on all aspects of their work'. Borg (2006, pp.33-34) concluded that 'aiming to separate knowledge, belief, and related concepts is not a particularly fruitful exercise

given that in the mind of the teachers these constructs are not held or perceived distinctively’.

Based on the above discussion of the characteristics of beliefs and knowledge, one can draw a distinction between the two constructs based on some of the unique features of each. Nevertheless, research has shown that the two concepts have overlapping qualities that make it hard to examine one without referring to the other. Within the framework of this study, belief is conceptualised as an element of ‘cognition’, in line with Kagan (1990), Calderhead (1996), and Borg (2003). In this regard, this study does not draw clear distinctions between beliefs and knowledge, taking teachers’ beliefs about learning and teaching to be propositions about learning and teaching that a teacher holds to be true, which in turn act as a guide to her or his thought and behaviours.

2.4. Sources of teacher beliefs

It is widely accepted that beliefs do influence teachers’ pedagogical decisions and classroom practices. This influence beliefs have on teachers’ instructional practice is linked to how beliefs originate and develop over a lifetime. Teachers’ beliefs are shaped by many factors which may include: (1) teachers’ prior learning experiences, (2) their professional teacher education, (3) their teaching experiences, and (4) their work context. In this regard, examining the sources of teachers’ beliefs is quite important in order to highlight the various factors that influence teachers’ understanding and conceptualisation of the process of teaching and learning. Research has highlighted a number of sources that impact on the development of teachers’ beliefs.

2.4.1. Teacher belief and prior language learning experiences

The existing body of research on teacher beliefs provides us with evidence that language teachers’ prior learning contexts play a central role in shaping their beliefs and therefore their classroom implementations. The first important and widely researched source of teachers’ beliefs is what Lortie (1975) calls the ‘apprenticeship of observation’, which refers to the years of observations teachers have as learners in their high school and college. Teachers’ prior experiences as students have a great impact on their beliefs and assumptions regarding how teaching should be

approached, because, by the time they become teachers, they have been in many classrooms as students, watching a variety of teachers. M. Borg (2004, p.275) argued that the apprenticeship of observation may be a factor in explaining why L2 teacher education has been found to have only a ‘weak effect on student teachers’. Borg (2003) asserts that,

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

Various studies have drawn attention to the important role of teachers’ prior language learning in forming their beliefs (Almarza, 1996; Borg, 2005; Farrell, 1999; Johnson, 1994; Moodie, 2016; Ng, Nicholas, and Williams, 2010; Richards and Pennington, 1998; Woods, 1996). Johnson (1994, p.450) argued, for a pre-service teacher, their prior language education will in ‘all likelihood represent their dominant model of action’. This notion emphasises the fact that teacher beliefs are shaped by the many hours they experienced as students, during which time they have internalised the teaching models and teacher behaviour they have been exposed to, and that these beliefs remain hidden, but surface when they start teaching and have classes of their own. Thus, these early experiences shape teachers’ teaching philosophies and form their beliefs, which are said to be so pervasive that they tend to pose strong barriers to change (Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992).

More recent literature has reiterated that language teachers need to become aware of how their experience as learners shapes their beliefs so that they may move beyond them (M. Borg, 2004; Farrell, 2007; Moodie, 2016; Wright, 2010). Borg (2003, p.81) asserted that ‘there is ample evidence’ that second and foreign language teachers’ prior L2 learning can influence their L2 teaching practices throughout their careers. Moodie (2016) also discusses that understanding prior L2 learning is important for understanding the beliefs, practices, and development of language teachers. In his study, nearly all participants described negative learning environments and they were critical of their public school experience. For example, most participants implicated teachers and teaching methods in describing their worst memories.

The influence of apprenticeship of observation is further evident in a study by Ellis (2006) who based her research principles on the idea that ‘teachers’ prior personal experiences as foreign language learners strengthen their understanding of second language teaching. She asserted that teachers who have already experienced L2 learning would certainly have different beliefs about L2 learning than a native speaker who has never had such an experience. Hence, the context of prior education is an important aspect for understanding the apprenticeship of observation (Moodie, 2016), since teachers bring with them a set of well-established beliefs that are firm and resistant to change.

2.4.2. Beliefs and the impact of teacher education

A second source of teachers’ beliefs is teacher education. Teacher education programs may have a powerful impact on the behaviour of teachers in training, but their ability to transform teachers’ beliefs may be more limited. In the constructivist framework, prospective teachers’ beliefs play a significant role in shaping what they learn, and how they learn it, in teacher education and other forms of professional development programs.

A large number of studies provide evidence of change in student teachers’ beliefs during language teacher education (Borg, 1999b, 2011; Busch, 2010; Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000; Donahue, 2003; Clarke, 2008; Johnson, 1994; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Peacock, 2001; Richardson, 1996; Tillema, 2006; Zhang, 2012). In their study on 20 pre-service teachers’ beliefs during a one-year PGCE program, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) found that except for one participant whose beliefs seemed to remain constant, the rest of the participants experienced various changes in their beliefs. They pointed out that all these belief change processes of the participants can be attributed to both their university coursework (with theoretical and reflective components) and school-based learning experience where they could construct the meaning of language teaching and learning in real classrooms.

In the same manner, Borg (2011) claimed that teachers’ beliefs can be strengthened and extended through teacher education; teachers can learn how to put their beliefs into practice and also develop links between their beliefs and theory. He concluded that teacher education can also be the source of new beliefs for teachers and the Delta

course provided a range of opportunities that contributed in variable ways in impacting on the beliefs of the teachers studied. Mattheoudakis (2007, p.1281) also indicated that while ‘student teachers seem to be going through a slow and gradual process of developing and modifying their beliefs’, their participation in teaching practicum may have a low impact on the development of their beliefs, which can be attributed to various factors in the situated socio-cultural contexts.

Pre-service teachers’ beliefs act as a filter through which they internalise their teacher education experiences. If we assume that learning occurs through constant interaction between established knowledge and new experiences, then addressing former beliefs and unpacking prior experiences become a priority for teacher educators (Borg, 2009). Furthermore, according to Ruohoti-Lyhty (2016, p.170), ‘teachers’ beliefs about themselves in relation to other people and the environment have a great influence on their professional development and the emergence of their later beliefs about language teaching’. Therefore, belief should be given greater attention in pre-service education and teacher education program should provide the opportunity for student teachers to reflect on their beliefs so as to constantly develop their profession. This suggests that wider conceptualisation of language teachers’ beliefs is needed in research.

2.4.3. Belief and the impact of teaching experience

A third source of teachers’ beliefs is the teachers’ formal knowledge acquired from their own experience of teaching and professional training. This is, of course, particularly important in the case of in-service or practising teachers. Experienced teachers are believed to have combined years of service and a repertoire of classroom skills and strategies. It also includes teachers’ classroom management experience, instructional mode, classroom environment, etc. (Richardson, 1996). As suggested by Borg (2003), teachers’ classroom work is shaped by their cognition; however, cognition, in turn, is shaped by accumulated teaching experience. The influence of many years of teaching experience on teachers’ beliefs is also reported by some other researchers (e.g. Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, and Thwaite, 2001; Larcote, 2005; Mok, 1994; Nunan, 1992). The study conducted by Phipps and Borg (2009) also indicates that teachers’ beliefs which are grounded in their teaching experience exert most influence on their practices.

A study by Aliakbari and Heidarzadi (2015) show that as teachers become more experienced, the congruency between their beliefs and actual classroom management practices decrease, whereas less experienced teachers actually practice less teacher-controlling classroom management and interact more with students in comparison to experienced teachers. The findings provide evidence that teachers tend to change their belief as they gain experience over the time.

2.4.4. Teacher cognition, practice, and context

There is a strand of research which supports the argument that teacher cognition is socio-cultural in nature (Johnson, 2006, 2009; Zheng, 2015), and that teachers' decision-making processes take place within 'complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts' (Johnson, 2006, p.239). As reported by Borg (2003, p.106), 'the study of cognition and practice without an awareness of the context in which these occur will inevitably provide partial, if not flawed, characterisations of teachers and teaching'.

2.4.5. The role of context in shaping beliefs and practice

This section sheds light on the role of socio-cultural context in impacting cognitions and practice as reflected in a number of studies. Borg (2003) refers to a considerable number of studies that examined the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practice (Almarza, 1996; Bailey, 1996; Burns, 1992; Johnson, 1992; Woods, 1991). The findings provide evidence that teachers' beliefs are influenced by the interaction within the nested social contexts within which the beliefs and practices are situated. Moreover, since teacher cognition is socially distributed among members within certain contexts (Putnam and Borko, 2000), attention should be given to communities of practice to which teachers belong (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Thus, as Johnson (2006, p.237) states, 'the knowledge of the individual is constructed through the knowledge of the communities of practice within which the individual participates'.

Some scholars studied the effect of both personal and institutional variables on teachers' beliefs. For example, Burns (1996) argues that one consideration in research into teachers' beliefs is the social and institutional context in which teaching is

practised. She develops a framework of three interconnecting and interacting contextual levels for studying teachers' beliefs. At the first level, which is the broadest level, is the 'institutional culture' with which teachers interpret the institutional ideologies and philosophies. This contextual level creates the cognitive frameworks for teachers' beliefs about specific teaching programmes and student groups. Teachers' beliefs about learning, learners, and language, which guide teacher decisions on what to teach and how to teach it, are at the second contextual level. And at the third and most specific contextual level are teachers' beliefs about specific instructional behaviours in the classroom. Teachers' beliefs at all these three levels are interdependent, creating 'the intercontextuality of teachers thinking and beliefs' (p.158). The idea that teachers' beliefs are intercontextualised is supported by other scholars (e.g. Feryok, 2010; Tudor, 2003), and it helps to explain why teachers sharing common experiences may also share common beliefs and practices as some studies appear to suggest (Breen et al., 2001). In this regard, as previously noted, beliefs are 'context-sensitive' (Borg, 2006; Feryok, 2010), and associated with a particular situation or circumstances. Consequently, it can be argued that various contextual factors, such as the social, institutional, instructional, and physical setting in which teachers work, may also account for the belief-practice disparity.

Overall, the research on teachers' beliefs highlights the contextual and situated nature of teachers' beliefs as factors that can influence both the development and enactment of teachers' beliefs (Levin, 2015). Li (2013) claims that beliefs should not be viewed from a single theoretical stance because a cognitive-based perspective disregards the contexts and interactive nature of teachers' daily work in classrooms. Given that beliefs are situated within the context of teaching, Li (2013) suggests that further research is needed to provide adequate insights into what happens at the micro-level, when teachers are engaged in specific practices. Therefore, highlighting the influence of both macro- and micro-contexts, this study aims to take into account the contextual factors influencing teachers' beliefs and the role they play in pedagogic practice and curriculum delivery.

2.5. Historical trend in teacher beliefs research

Research regarding teachers' beliefs took off in the 1980s as a result of the growing interest in examining teachers' cognition (Nespor, 1987). However, it was not until

the mid-1990s that the topic of teachers' beliefs and knowledge took central stage in L2 education research (Borg, 2012). Prior to the 1980s, research on teaching and learning emphasised teachers' behaviours rather than teachers' thinking and beliefs, which reflected the predominant process-product approach to the study of education (Dunkin and Biddle, 1974). Devries and Beijaard (1999) explained that such a paradigm was concerned with making associations between teachers' behaviours and students' learning outcomes. Accordingly, most of the research aimed at finding correlations between teachers' behaviours and students' learning and achievement (Devries and Beijaard, 1999). This approach to the study of teaching and learning assumed a causal relationship between teachers' behaviours and students' achievement and did not take into account teachers' underpinning mental processes and the context within which teaching and learning take place. Hence, second/foreign language teacher education regarded teachers as empty vessels waiting to be filled with language acquisition theories and pedagogical skills in order to be effective teachers who can enhance their students' language learning process.

However, by the end of the 1970s, researchers began to question the underlying assumptions of the process-product paradigm and whether looking at teachers' behaviours alone was sufficient to account for the complexity of teaching and learning. The focus had thus changed from regarding teachers' behaviours as a discrete unit of analysis to examining the factors that shape teachers' behaviours, some of which were teachers' beliefs and prior experiences. Johnson (2009, p.9) argued that 'teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in' and 'the context within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do'.

In this respect, examining teachers' beliefs and thinking processes was regarded as valuable as investigating their behaviours, which reflected a critical turning point in the conceptualisation of teaching as a complex cognitive skill. As a result of the expanding research that acknowledged the cognitive aspect of teaching, researchers began to view second/foreign language teaching as situated and interpretive in nature. It became clear that second language teachers develop their own theories of teaching according to their interpretation of the learning context and their assumptions and beliefs regarding what constitute good teaching.

In the next section, I look at several guiding studies that have attempted to explain the interaction between teacher beliefs and classroom practices in language teaching.

2.6. Interplay between teacher beliefs and practices

The study of teacher cognition has received considerable attention in recent years for the purpose of understanding complexities underlying the interplay between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice. The link connecting teacher beliefs and teaching practice has been established and elaborated on in previous studies in education and in the field of language teaching (Borg, 2003; Breen, 1991). Although a relationship between beliefs and classroom practice is well-established, it is not as straightforward as it might seem. The connection between teachers' beliefs and practices is complicated by the fact that teachers may sometimes not be able to adopt practices that reflect their beliefs. A number of studies imply the complexity of the relationship between beliefs and practice (e.g. Basturkmen et al., 2004; Feryok, 2008; Karavas-Dukas, 1996; Li and Walsh, 2011; Ng and Farrell, 2003; Orafi and Borg, 2009; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). For instance, Basturkmen et al., (2004) investigated the relationship between stated beliefs and practices in terms of 'focus on form' which are the instances during communicative lessons. The findings indicated that, among the three teachers, there was a 'tenuous relationship' (p.243) between the teachers' actual practices and stated beliefs. They found that teachers tend to resort to their own experiences and knowledge when faced with in-class dilemmas.

Hiep (2007) investigated three teachers' beliefs and the implementation of communicative language teaching in Vietnam. Findings revealed that although these teachers expressed beliefs which were in line with the principles of CLT, they were not able to implement activities such as pair work, group work, and role play. The inconsistency between teachers' expressed beliefs and their actual classroom practices was due to several contextual factors such as traditional examinations, large class sizes, beliefs about students and teacher role, students' low motivation, and teachers' limited expertise in creating communicative activities. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) also conducted a study with Japanese second language in-service teachers to investigate their views and practices regarding communicative language teaching

(CLT) and reported that there were tensions between the teachers' practices and theories.

Looking at tensions between beliefs and practices, Phipps and Borg (2009) observed and interviewed three experienced EFL teachers' over a period of 18 months in Turkey. The study aimed to examine the way they taught grammar and the beliefs that underpinned their classroom actions. They found that student expectations and preferences, as well as classroom management concerns, led teachers to take decisions and actions which were contrary to their stated beliefs. They reported that there were cases where a strong contrast between the teachers' professed beliefs about language learning and their observed practices existed. They concluded that this mismatch was because of the contextual factors such as student expectations and preferences, and classroom management concerns. Phipps and Borg (2009, p.388) also put forward the need to 'explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind such tensions'. In addition, they highlight the issue that core beliefs, often more grounded in their experience, are more stable and exert a more powerful influence on practice.

Tsui (2007) also conducted a study on the complex relationship between beliefs and practice. This study examined a Chinese EFL teacher who begins to employ a communicative-type approach in his English teaching in accord with the government's and his school's mandate to use CLT. He was required to teach using CLT approach even though he felt that hard study and grammar-based teaching was essential for students to pass the exam. He felt a conflict between his desires to do what he felt was best for his students and his allegiance to his institution. Despite his antipathy toward CLT, he won the award for his teaching and became recognised as an authority in CLT. When he went to the UK for further study in CLT, he realised that he had held basic misunderstandings of its philosophical underpinnings. Tsui (2007) concluded that this participant seemed to be able to successfully implement CLT without really believing in it.

Farrell and Bennis (2013), in their study of one novice and one experienced ESL teacher, concluded that the experienced teacher's classroom practices were more related to his beliefs; however, there were instances of where they diverged. They argue that these divergences may be normal since teachers react to the natural flow of

the development of the lesson, where the teacher adjusts to the realities of the classroom. Both teachers showed instances of convergence and divergence that were not always clear to distinguish, nevertheless, the study shows that language teachers need to be challenged to reflect on their existing beliefs and classroom teaching practices.

In her review of the research looking at tensions between beliefs and practices, Basturkmen (2012) reports that correspondence between beliefs and practices seems more common among experienced teachers than among novice teachers, although overall more studies show divergence than convergence, with constraints and contextual factors important reasons for this divergence. This is also confirmed by Li and Walsh's (2011) study on a novice and an experienced secondary school teacher in China. They concluded that beliefs and classroom actions were not always convergent since local context like large class size, shy students, and exam pressure, create a huge part in affecting the classroom practices. Hence, the belief systems which teachers develop over time often guide their instructional behaviours and classroom practices.

The tensions between beliefs and practices have been interpreted in different ways. To date, the contextual factor is the most widely recognised factor accounting for the discrepancy between teacher cognition and classroom practice. Teachers may believe that a certain approach is desirable, but the force of contextual demands may be stronger, inhibiting them from implementing the belief in their practice. As well as contextual limitations, the mismatch between teachers' beliefs and practices may be the result of the teachers' lack of awareness of their classroom practices. Sometimes teachers are simply unaware of what they do in class, so a discrepancy between what the teachers think they do and their actual classroom practices emerge. However, this does not mean that teachers' lack of awareness in their practice is always due to teachers' unawareness of his/her beliefs. This mismatch may also occur because of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of classroom teaching, in which teachers need to make immediate decisions during lessons. In many situations, teachers do not have the time for logical thought processes (Kagan, 1992).

Another possibility might be that teachers may have difficulty reflecting on and putting into words what their actual beliefs are. Borg (1999) claims that teachers are

not always clear about how to verbalise their own beliefs about certain issues and/or they may not have the skills to put their beliefs into practice. Moreover, teachers may express beliefs they think they ought to have and avoid expressing others which they think would not be approved of.

Additionally, sometimes teachers may be aware of the mismatch between their beliefs and classroom practices but unable to alter that situation due to lack of the competence which would provide them with alternatives (Johnson, 1992). Hence, reflecting on their beliefs about teaching and learning has the potential to help teachers realise what guides their classroom practice and enable them to construct a rich repertoire of strategies and skills for teaching.

Another possible reason for the inconsistencies between professed and enacted beliefs may be the result of a lack of shared understanding among teachers and researchers of the meaning of terms used to describe beliefs and practices (Speer, 2005). Speer (2005) argues that the discrepancy between beliefs and practices may actually be a consequence of the lack of coordination between data on beliefs and data on practices in most research designs. Thus, research designs should incorporate opportunities to assess and generate shared understanding in studies of beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, teachers' departure from their lesson plans may also become a source of dissonance. Borg (2006) argues that teachers' departure from their lesson plans is the result of constant interaction between teachers' pedagogical choices and their perceptions of the instructional context. This indicates that in probing the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice, more issues such as the interaction between teachers' pedagogical choices and their understanding of educational contexts are needed to be considered (Zhang, 2015). Moreover, Borg (2016) asserts that researchers should avoid the unnatural separation of teachers' beliefs and practices. He argues that through this separation, the complex, networked (i.e. beliefs as systems), situated and social nature of beliefs is grossly over-simplified. Therefore, he suggests an approach which sees beliefs as one way of making sense of what teachers do, and from this perspective situated professional practice would be the entry point, not belief.

Moving on to the context for this study, the number of research examining the relationship among practising language teachers' beliefs, practice, and context is

limited. Most existing studies have been almost conducted in ESL (English as a second language) contexts and there is still a lack of parallel research with non-native English speaker teachers in EFL (English as a foreign language) settings with some exceptions. Li (2013) suggests that research in EFL contexts will make a significant contribution to understanding language teachers and pedagogy in international contexts. Hence, this study is designed to examine the relationship between teachers' beliefs, practices, and contextual issues to reveal the mechanism underlying the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice within the context of curricular reform. The following section highlights the role of teachers and their beliefs in the implementation of curriculum reforms with regard to the five common features of CCOT.

2.7. Teachers' beliefs and educational reforms

Over the last decade, education reformers have stressed the role of teachers in translating policy reforms into classroom practice. Educational reforms frequently require teachers to change their behaviours and practices. There should be no doubt that any reform recommendation will challenge teachers' professed beliefs and practices. Accordingly, a number of researchers have recognised the integral role that teachers' beliefs play in educational reforms or curricular innovations and have claimed that teachers' beliefs act like a mediator between the curriculum's intended goals and actual instructional practices. The literature of educational reform highlights the influence of teachers' reaction towards the reforms and its relationship with their actual practices.

Extensive research on language teaching indicates that teachers are the most influential factor in implementing educational policy and/or determining the results of any implementation, and that policy implementation will not succeed without teachers' cooperation. Therefore, it has been suggested that teachers should be involved in the formation of educational policies, as otherwise, they will be more likely to change, refuse, or disregard curriculum mandates in their classrooms (Wang and Cheng, 2005). Hence, curricular innovations cannot be thought of in isolation from teachers.

Further, teachers need to be psychologically comfortable with the reform and should be able to work in a context in which colleagues can build mutual trust, share ideas,

and learn from each other. Teachers also need to understand the reform, give importance to it, and believe in it in order to put it into practice. The success of curriculum reform and its implementation depends on whether teachers willingly participate in and are valued and acknowledged in the process. Wedell (2009, p.147) argues that ‘there are substantial gaps between teachers’ current professional strengths and those that they will need to develop in order to implement the new curriculum effectively’. He further concludes that to bridge these gaps, teachers will need support both before and during the implementation.

Although several studies have examined the contextual factors influencing teachers’ beliefs, such as language policies, mandated curriculum, school culture, and resources, a few of these studies situated teachers’ beliefs in the context of curriculum innovation (Zhang and Liu, 2014). For example, in their study of the implementation of curriculum innovation in the Philippines, Waters and Vilches (2008) found that the English teachers continued to hold traditional beliefs and used methods not aligned with the principles of the new curriculum, such as authoritative and textbook-based instruction, and summative assessment. Even though the teachers were willing to apply the new constructivist approach, their efforts to do so were constrained by such factors as shortage of resources, lack of professional training, existing cultural norms and some historical-political factors.

Another factor found in the literature that may influence teachers’ beliefs about educational reforms is their long experience in teaching (Basturkmen, 2012; Sikes, 2013). For example, Sikes (2013) argues that experienced teachers tend to show a negative attitude towards change and often react towards it in a dismissive way. She argues that imposed reform cannot achieve its goals if the main implementers do not share positive attitudes towards it. In addition, Basturkmen (2012), from a review of the research on language education, concludes that beliefs of experienced teachers become more firmly embedded in their practices over time, which makes them resist towards new policies. Also, Hargreaves (2005) reports that more experienced teachers tend to be less active and less engaged in the implementation of change.

The inconsistency between teachers’ beliefs and the goals of curriculum innovation has also been reported by several studies carried out predominantly in Asian settings (Goh, Zhang, Ng, and Goh, 2005 in Singapore; Orafi and Borg, 2009 in Libya;

Underwood, 2012 in Japan; Zhang and Liu, 2014 in China). These studies seem to suggest that western-based reforms are often hindered when western theories of teaching and learning are incorporated into the local teaching context. Orafi and Borg (2009) claim that teachers may feel ill-equipped to implement change as it often proposes practices which challenge their beliefs, which threaten their authority, and which weaken their ability to cope effectively. Therefore, educational innovation may create conflict with teachers' beliefs and often be seen as a negative change. In another study in China, Yan (2012) identified an implementation gap despite the fact that teachers of English were positively disposed towards the new curricular principles; however, teachers felt that their ability to implement those principles was hindered by several adverse conditions, including student resistance, the lack of support from school administrators and the backwash effect of the examinations.

Altogether, these studies find some mismatches between teachers' beliefs and their actual practice and point to the difficulty and complexity of the process of curricular reform. They also relate the discrepancy between the teachers' stated beliefs about language learning and their practices to a hierarchy of beliefs, in that some beliefs are core and others are secondary (Phipps and Borg, 2009). 'Core beliefs are stable and exert a more powerful influence on behaviour' (Phipps and Borg, 2009, p.381) and appear to be more central and resistant to change, whereas, 'peripheral beliefs are more personal in nature and they are less resistant to change, therefore, they can be mediated' (Gabillon, 2012, p.198). In addition, these studies suggest that (ESL/EFL) teachers' perceptions of the feasibility of a particular reform are central to the success of that reform. Furthermore, regardless of the context and nature of a curricular innovation, in the long and arduous journey of implementation, the teacher is an influential figure and without their willingness to participate, there can be no change. In a top-down approach in curriculum reform, since teachers are not involved in the decision-making process and the decisions come from the authorities without liaising with the teachers about the current problems and their possible solutions, success is much less likely.

Furthermore, acceptance or rejection of any curriculum reform is very closely connected with the teaching culture of the society and the school. If this culture is based on traditional principles whereby knowledge is transmitted from the teacher to the students, it is not so easy to accept teaching based on constructivist principles

where knowledge is constructed by the students together with the teacher. As Wang and Cheng (2005, p.12) argue, 'No matter what the reform intends to achieve, if the cultures of teaching fail to provide the desirable context for teachers, eventually it is no surprise to expect discontinuation or failure in the implementation phase'.

Turning to the context of this study, constructivist /communicative oriented curricular reforms, replacing the predominant grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods, were introduced to the secondary education system in Iran to develop students' communicative competence. These reformed practices of EFL teaching and learning have been based on a constructivist perspective and also emphasise the 'communicative aspect of foreign language teaching' (Ministry of Education, 2011).

Research on teacher cognition in Iran is still a recent development. Hence, in the international research literature, little is known about the interplay between EFL teachers' beliefs, the school context and broader socio-cultural realities within which teacher beliefs are situated in Iran. Moreover, focus on various curricular features of language teaching is lacking from the studies on teachers. Thus, in this domain of inquiry, work still needs to be done. As already mentioned, teacher beliefs and practices with regards to the major components of the language teaching curriculum have remained unstudied. Thus, it is hoped that this study can shed light on the complex nature of Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to five major features of curriculum reform and suggest implications for language teachers working in similar contexts. The following section will focus on the curriculum change to constructivist language teaching.

2.8. The change to constructivist orientation in language teaching

Constructivism is believed to take its place among the most recent approaches to foreign language teaching. The basic and the most fundamental assumption of constructivism is that knowledge is not independent of the learner; it is constructed by the learner. Constructivist teaching suggests that teachers construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. Entirely different from traditional teaching, constructivism requires that teachers examine their teaching styles and change their beliefs about teaching and learning. Constructivist teachers should be able to listen attentively to how students construct models of their ways of thinking and build their

teaching activities on those models. These are fundamental changes in the ways teachers see their professional responsibility.

In the field of EFL teaching, the need to move from traditional teaching where knowledge is transmitted from the teacher to the students to constructivist teaching where knowledge and meaning are constructed together has been recognised. The traditional perspective refers to behaviourist approaches to teaching and learning, which stress subject matter knowledge, teacher-centred instruction, discipline, rote learning, and memorization. While, the constructivist perspective involves more student-centred, task-based approaches that focus on individual students' needs, interests and self-expression. A teaching approach known as 'communicative language teaching' (CLT) developed in response to the cognitive and constructivist views of learning and can be one way of implementing constructivist pedagogy.

The constructivist approach moves away from the traditional behaviourist approach to language teaching and learning to an inquiry-based constructivist approach that places that learner in the centre of the educational process. Accordingly, the form of the CCOT requires students to be active participants in the classroom as they are expected to create and produce, rather than just receive knowledge.

To assist in highlighting the differences that exist between the traditional approach and the constructivist approach, the following table (adapted from Brown, 1994, 2001; Cook, 1993, 2001; Nunan, 1999) serves to elucidate these differentiations. Table 2.1, below, illustrates how traditional teacher-centred and constructivist/communicative learner-centred paradigms are different from each other in various ways.

Table 2.1. Constructivist vs. Traditional approaches to teaching

	Traditional Teacher-centred Approach	Constructivist-Communicative Learner-centred Approach
Teaching/ Learning Process	Teacher explanations, demonstration, practice/drills, and memorisation of specific procedures.	Probing inquiries and/or discussions, investigate, explore, and/or discover; learning from peers and groups; real world applications; learning games; and using visual representations.
	Teacher-led instruction	The activities are learner-centred, and the learners focus on their own learning process.
	Learning is based on the repetition of presented knowledge.	Learning is interactive, building on what the student already knows.
	Teacher distributes information to learners and the learners are receivers of this knowledge.	The teacher creates dialogue with the learners, assisting learners to create their own knowledge.
Grammar teaching	Deductive study of grammar.	Inductive study of grammar.
Treatment of errors	Teacher supplies correct answer.	No error correction unless errors interfere with communication.
Role of L1	L1 in the classroom. Two-way translation.	The more exposure to the target language, the better students will learn it.
Role of teacher	Teacher's role is directive, rooted in authority.	Teacher's role is more 'facilitator', 'monitor' interactive, and rooted in negotiation.
	The teacher does most of the talking. Few students talk (Lecture)	Students and teacher share talking. Most students talk (Conversation)
	Encourage or support competitive/individualist learning	Encourage or support cooperative learning
Role of learner	Learners work primarily alone. Passive receiver and performer	Less individualistic and more cooperative More responsible for own learning Active participator, autonomous learners
Teacher-student interaction	Teacher to Students. All discourse is teacher-student.	Teacher arranges tasks for communication. Significant student-student discourse.

Given that in the reformed curriculum, there is a conflation of constructivism and CLT, I based my theorising on the key concepts and ideas about constructivism and CLT. The following section briefly highlights common views of constructivism and CLT as the key aspects of English curriculum reform in Iran and their definitions found in the literature. These aspects include: a) grammar teaching, b) error correction, c) use of L1, d) teachers' role, and e) learner-centred pedagogy (Figure 2.3).

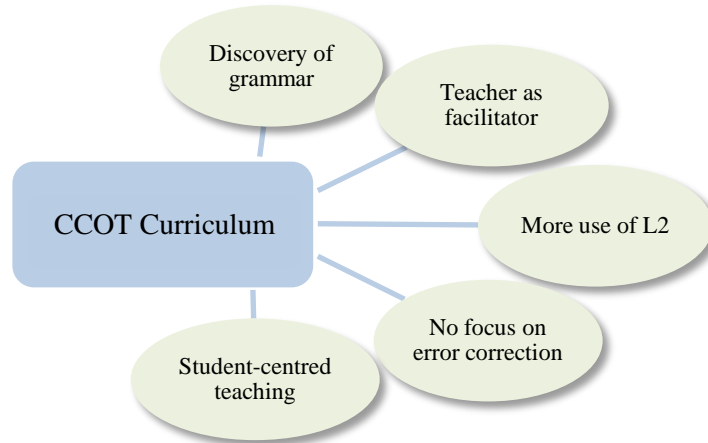


Figure 2.3 *CCOT curriculum aspects*

2.8.1. Place of grammar teaching in CCOT

The history of language teaching is basically the history of the claims and counterclaims for and against the teaching of grammar. The debate about grammar teaching has gone to an extent where researchers have argued whether grammar should be taught at all. It was believed that language is acquired through natural exposure and formal grammar lessons would not develop the ability to use the forms correctly but would only develop declarative knowledge. Language teaching professionals (e.g., Ellis, 2006; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004) have argued that grammar is too important to be ignored and that without a good knowledge of grammar, learners' language development will be severely constrained. Research on language teacher cognition has currently shown increasing interest in how L2 and FL teachers perceive formal instruction, that is, their attitudes toward or perspectives on the role of grammar in L2 teaching (Basturkmen et al., 2004; Burns, 2009; Ellis, 2006; Farrell and Bennis, 2013).

Although the role of grammar cannot be denied, there has been a long debate about whether grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly. Explicit teaching is defined as giving metalinguistic explanations for the grammatical rules, whereas implicit teaching is defined as exposing students to specific grammatical features without pointing out the rules (Cowan, 2014). In addition, explicit grammar teaching adopts a deductive approach where the structures and grammar rules are given to

students before using the target language (Doughty, 2003), while implicit grammar teaching is an inductive approach (also called rule-discovery learning) that requires students to understand rules from the examples given, then students understand these particular examples to form grammatical rules. Moreover, some of the teachers adopt using the teaching procedure of Presentation, Practice, and Produce (PPP) which is based on the 1960s onwards (Harmer, 2007). PPP has its limitations in various ways. Harmer (2007) admits it lacks humanistic learner-centred framework which favours teacher-centred learning. However, Swan (2005) defends PPP as a useful tool to present and practice the grammatical features in a structural way. It seems that no single approach is ideal in every situation, as the contexts of all teachers and learners are different (Hinkel and Fotos, 2002).

As a leading principle of CLT, communicative competence started as a reaction to previous methods that emphasised the explicit teaching of grammar in isolation from communication, such as grammar translation and the Audio-lingual method (Savignon, 1991). How to use language forms appropriately is an important part of communicative competence. Grammar is seen as a tool to achieve communication that needs to be related to the learner's communicative needs and experiences (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Moreover, in CLT, grammar and vocabulary should follow from functional and situational contexts, and the roles of the interlocutors, noting that attention should be given to meaning rather than accuracy (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). Savignon (2002) argues that grammar should have an implicit treatment in the curriculum to facilitate the understanding of messages.

Furthermore, there is a widespread belief that CLT eclipsed attention to grammar. However, Spada (2007, p.275) argues that the thought that 'Communicative language teaching means an exclusive focus on meaning is a myth or a misconception'. Although CLT syllabuses are organised according to categories of meaning or functions, they still have a strong grammar basis (Thornbury, 1999), that is to say, the functions into which CLT syllabuses are organised are connected with their corresponding grammatical points. Savignon (2007, p.213) asserts that 'CLT does not exclude a focus on metalinguistic awareness or knowledge of rules of syntax, discourse, and social appropriateness'. Horwitz (2012) also states that although grammar is de-emphasised in classes that use the communicative approach, it is not eliminated entirely. Hence, in communicative language teaching classes, grammar is

taught implicitly and spontaneously based on students' communicative needs. Consequently, it could be argued that CLT dresses up the grammatical structures into communicative functions; although they are not presented explicitly, they are still there.

Reviewing a number of classroom studies, Lightbown and Spada (1993) concluded that form focused instruction provided within the context of a communicative programme is more effective in promoting L2 learning than programmes which are limited to an exclusive emphasis on accuracy on the one hand or an exclusive emphasis on fluency on the other. There is also evidence that instruction that occurs in a meaning-focused context is more effective than instruction that focuses on grammatical forms in isolation (Doughty, 2003; Ellis, 2001, 2008; Lightbown and Spada, 1993, 2011; Nassaji and Fotos, 2004, 2011). Focus on forms is the traditional structure-based instruction in which language is segmented into discrete items and then presented to learners in an isolated and de-contextualised manner (Nassaji, 2017). On the other hand, focus on form involves drawing learners' attention to linguistic forms 'as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication' (Long, 1991, pp.45-46).

The study by Valeo and Spada (2016) shows that teachers and learners prefer instruction that demands switching between attention to form and attention to meaning. These findings are consistent with current theory and research in L2 learning and teaching. Savignon (2001, p.25) argues that 'for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience'. With strong advocacy focusing upon forms within communicative approaches in L2 curriculum, form-focused instruction activities are seen as the most effective teaching instruction because grammar lessons are embedded within communicative contexts (Ellis, 2002; Nassaji, 2017). With regard to ELT curriculum in Iran, one of the most significant changes made regarding grammar teaching was the recommendation that teaching should focus on meaning as well as form.

2.8.2. Practice of error correction in CCOT

Given the fact that one of the major classroom instructional responsibilities for second language teachers is to provide corrective feedback, teacher educators have been long concerned with error correction. The question as to how to deal with students' spoken errors is of vital importance to foreign language teachers and learners. Correcting learners or providing feedback on their errors has also been a long-debated issue among researchers (e.g. Brown, 2007). Despite the fact that correcting students' spoken errors is discouraged by scholars such as Harmer (2007) and Truscott (1999), a number of studies show that immediate oral error correction has positive and durable effects on students' ability to produce more accurate language (Li, 2010; Lyster and Saito, 2010; Lyster, Saito, and Sato, 2013; Russell and Spada, 2006).

However, there is the issue of the most effective type of error correction which is subject to some controversy. Most researchers argue that knowing when and how to address errors is a complex determination. If a learner's utterances are constantly corrected, there is the possibility that s/he will simply cease to answer. On the other hand, incorrect use of language structures may be reinforced if not corrected. Brown (2007) argues that one of the teacher's responsibilities is to provide responses to learners' produced utterances and to monitor and assess learners' performance to know the reasons why errors are committed and based on that s/he can provide the appropriate corrective feedback. It is the teacher who determines whether to correct or not, the best time for correction, and the most appropriate technique to use. In recent learner-centred educational settings where collaborative learning is exercised and learner autonomy is highlighted, 'self-correction' is recommended and there is evidence of its effectiveness (Sultana, 2009).

One of the characteristics of CLT is the focus on fluency rather than accuracy; this might lead students to make mistakes related to grammar and coherence (Lightbown and Spada, 1990). In constructivist/communicative approach, errors are seen as part of the natural process of learning a language. Errors are tolerated, and their treatment should be oriented to communicative competence, rather than language form. The teacher does not make note of the errors to work on immediately (Larsen-Freeman,

2014), but can postpone the clarification of errors for later moments in the class in order not to hinder the flow of communication.

2.8.3. The role of L1 in L2 class

English language teaching (ELT) history has witnessed many arguments for and against the use of L1 (first language) in L2 (target language) classroom discourse (Cook, 2001; Garcia, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Macaro, 2009). It has always been controversial because different theories of L2 acquisition afford different hypotheses about the value of L1 use in L2 classes. Some theorists have advocated a monolingual approach, arguing that maximum exposure to L2 and minimum exposure to L1 are essential because interference from L1 knowledge obstructs the L2 learning process (Cook, 2001, 2010; Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The supporters of TL-only instruction argue that students must be exposed to a significant amount of target language input if they want to develop better target language proficiency, so the use of students' first language or the language they already know in the classroom deprives students of that valuable input (Cook, 2010). Conversely, some scholars have argued against the complete elimination of L1 from L2 classes (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nation, 2003; Van Lier, 1995) and have reiterated that a judicious and well-planned use of L1 can yield positive results (Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2005, 2009; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002). Hall and Cook (2013, p.7) claim that the total ban of students' L1 is viewed as unfashionable in teaching English when students' first language is considered as a potential resource in any ELT classroom. Although the use of L1 in FL classrooms is justified, none of its supporters endorse its unlimited use.

Having said that, much of the debates regarding the use of L1 in the classroom, when teaching English, have been more theorizing, with little empirical evidence to support the argument. According to Cook's (2001) multi-competence theory, L2 learners are multi-competent because their minds house two grammars. Due to this multi-competent state, L2 learners have a right to use their L1 in the L2 learning process. Larsen-Freeman (2000, pp.101-102) claims that 'the native language of the students is used in the classroom in order to enhance the security of the students, to provide a bridge from the familiar to the unfamiliar, and to make the meanings of the target language words clear'. Nation (2003) argues that using L1 helps maintain class

discipline, build rapport, and reduce social distance with students. Harmer (2007) holds a similar view since he believes that L1 use encourages interaction between teacher and students at a basic level, allows learners to talk about learning, and enhances the social atmosphere in the classroom. Ellis (2008, p.801) pointed out that the use of L1 in L2 classes is dependent on the 'instructional context'. He contends that the situation is very different in foreign language contexts where learners' only source of exposure to the L2 may be the classroom. Further, he states that while using L1 in English lessons, negative transfer between L1 and L2 will result in learning difficulty.

The use of L1 is almost tantamount to the emergence times of GTM because 'sentences had to be translated from the target language (L2) back to the students' first language (L1) and vice versa' (Harmer, 2007, p.63). Hence, in GTM, L1 is used by both teachers and students for translating the reading passages and exercises, giving instructions, grammar explanation and communication. However, CLT approach urges students to respond and communicate in the target language (Horwitz, 2012). Learners in CLT engaged in communicative activities in the TL in order to be able to express themselves (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). Nevertheless, there are still many misconceptions about communicative curriculum principles, particularly those which are proposed to see first language use as a taboo in the English classroom (Thompson, 1996; Wu, 2008).

Given that CLT has many interpretations and possible versions and there is no agreement on its definition (Howatt, 2004; Brown 2007), the views about using L1 vary. Yet, it seems clear that L1 use should be minimised in the communicative classroom. One of the key principles of a communicative approach is the use of the target language as much as feasible to interact in class. The target language is seen as a tool for communication, not just an object to be studied. CLT approach has been cited as providing theoretical support for the 'English only' classroom, where the use of L1 is seen as a 'problem' to be avoided (Cole, 1998; Cook, 2001). The L2 should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining activities or assigning homework to students (Larsen-Freeman 2000, p.135). Although the main focus is to expose learners to the target language as much as possible (Richards, 2006), teachers are allowed to use the first language in order to improve communication or to keep up learners' motivation. However, the use of L1 should not

be overstressed because the more the students are exposed to the target language, the better they will learn it.

In Iran, at present, there is much informal debate among teachers about the appropriate proportion of L1 use with secondary school learners in language classrooms. As there have been many theoretical arguments both for and against the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, teachers, and students need to be aware of why, when and how much of the L1 should be used in the classroom.

2.8.4. Language teacher and learner roles in CCOT

Adopting a constructivist approach to teaching and learning entailed a shift in the roles teachers and students play in the classroom as teachers take up the role of becoming learning facilitators and thus acting as a ‘guide on the side’ instead of a ‘sage on the stage’ (Hackmann, 2004, p.698). Such a role allows learners to be active participants in the classroom and gives them a chance to construct and communicate meaning drawn from their own experiences. In this regard, the teacher is no longer seen as a transmitter of knowledge, but a co-communicator and guide (Larsen-Freeman, 2014; Richards, Gallo, and Renandya, 2001). The learner too is no longer viewed as a passive recipient, but one who is continually moving towards self-knowledge and self-direction.

Currently, education is being restructured in many ways that challenge teachers’ traditional roles (Beck, 2008); this holds true in the language-teaching field. In the traditional grammar-translation approach, the role of the teacher is to transmit the grammar rules of the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). However, according to communicative approach, one of the main roles of the teacher is that of a facilitator along with other roles such as acting as an independent participant, an organiser of resources, a guide, a researcher, a learner, needs analyst, and a counsellor (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.167). Moreover, the teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities. In this way, the teacher facilitates the learners’ participation in communicative exchanges. Richard and Rodgers (2014) asserted that a teacher can be an organiser, a counsellor, and a group process manager.

The central idea of constructivist instruction is that the learning and new knowledge are constructed by the learners themselves through the use of their own previous knowledge. The teacher in the constructivist and communicative approach is considered to be a facilitator who helps students find and generate conclusions that are valid and unique to the students themselves (Richardson, 2003). The teacher takes on the identity of a guide or facilitator, being student-centred, and fostering student autonomy. In addition, an extended view of teachers' roles would include their social and institutional roles, but teachers prioritise classroom roles. Beck (2008) proposed three dimensions of the teacher's role: cognitive scaffolding, related to the method and manner in which teachers facilitate students' cognitive learning; stimulation of different learning styles to develop students' competencies; and emotional containment, related to how teachers communicate with students and the emotional and motivational elements of teaching.

In order to help teachers gain the needed skills and competencies, knowledge of the complexities of teachers' roles and the beliefs they hold about their roles is essential.

2.8.5. Learner-centred teaching in CCOT

Learner-centred teaching is another prevailing concept in CCOT that forms part of the current education policy. From a constructivist perspective, the learner is at the centre of the learning process because the underlying assumption is that learners are actively involved in constructing personal meaning. In constructivism, it is the responsibility of the learner to monitor his/her own learning process. Hence, teachers should help and encourage learners in this process, rather than seeing them as passive receivers of the language (Williams and Burden, 1997). A constructivist student-centred approach places more emphasis on students learning than on teachers teaching. Learning is enhanced with 'more engaged and dynamic interactions in classrooms' where students are given more space for learning to take part and contribute to classes in terms of conversations and feedback (Walsh, 2012, p.6). Learners control their learning. This key idea lies at the heart of the constructivist approach to education.

CCOT approach also changes the view of teaching languages from a traditional teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach. 'Individual learners were also seen as possessing unique interests, styles, needs, and goals, which should be

reflected in the design of methods of instruction' (Richards and Rodgers, 2014, p.158). Adopting a social constructivist approach to language teaching, Williams and Burden (1997, p.46) emphasise that they see 'knowledge as essentially constructed by individuals rather than transmitted from one person to another, but which recognises also that such constructions always occur within specific contexts, mainly as a result of social interactions'. Since learners make sense of the language and tasks around them in a social context through social interaction, pair and group work activities are essential to provide a cooperative and collaborative environment. Thus, the reformed curriculum puts emphasis on interactive communicative tasks such as information-gap, decision making, problem solving and opinion exchange, all of which are activities designed to promote the development of cooperation between and among learners. Prior to the reform, English language teaching (ELT) in Iran had been portrayed in the literature as predominantly teacher-centred, textbook-directed and memorisation-based. The discussion on the characteristics of CCOT is summarised in Figure 2.4.

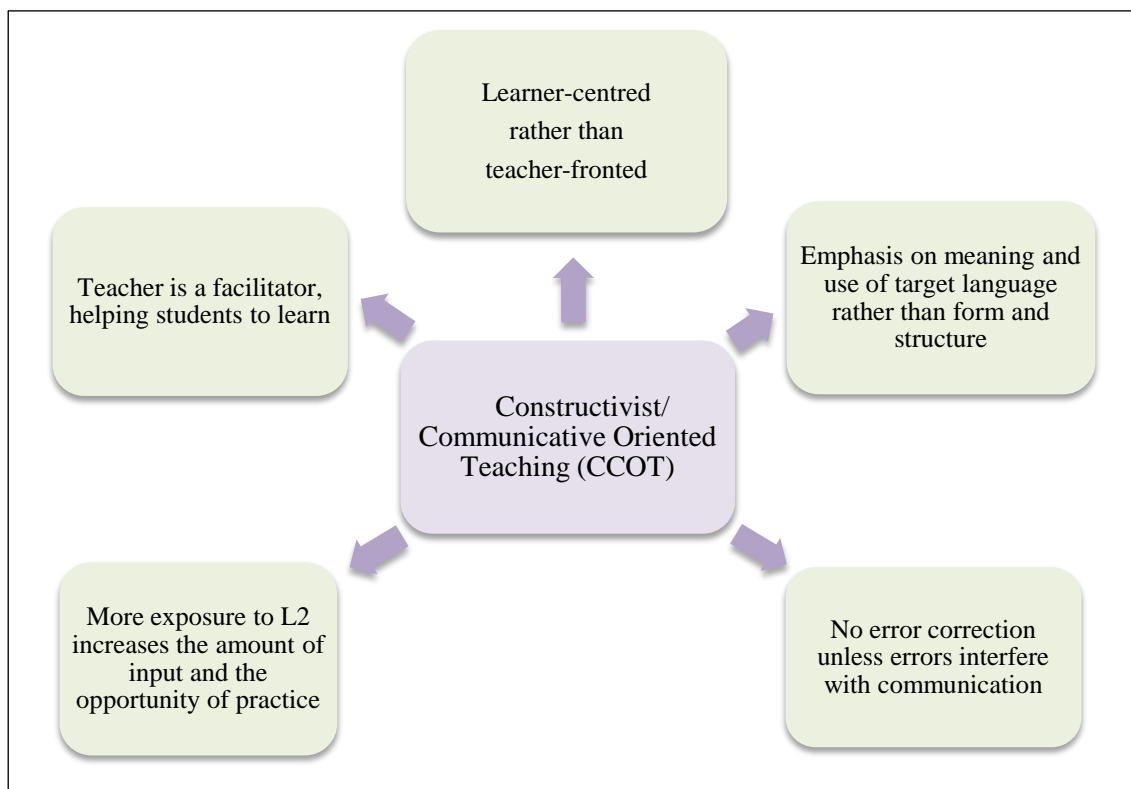


Figure 2.4 *Characteristics of CCOT approach*

2.9. Chapter summary

Foreign language teachers bring their beliefs, perceptions, and knowledge gained from life experiences to their understanding of the teaching of foreign languages and to their decision-making about instructional practices. This review of the literature on teacher cognition provides the conceptual framework that supports the present study. The studies reviewed in this chapter reveal that teachers' beliefs, which are complex, dynamic, contextualised, evolving, and changing, are likely to be the product of prior learning experience, prior teaching experience, teacher education, curriculum, and school context and culture. The interaction between these factors, as summarised in Figure 2.1 (Borg, 2006), constitutes a starting point for my exploration of teacher cognition in relation to the key features of CCOT curriculum and a conceptual lens through which this area will be further investigated in the chapters which follow.

As the reviewed literature indicates, teachers' pedagogical beliefs are vitally connected to classroom interaction. Given that teachers' beliefs influence their behaviours in the classroom, it is reasonable to expect that, in the context of Iran, implementing reform without considering EFL teachers' beliefs might not lead to the intended and desired outcomes such reform is seeking. Accordingly, there is a need to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs and find out whether these beliefs are in congruence with the principles of the curricular reforms and are reflected in the teachers' classroom practice or whether their beliefs were incompatible with the principles of reforms and were consequently not translated into their classroom practice.

The present study is an attempt to make a contribution to providing further insights into teacher cognition and curricular reform in an under-resourced EFL context. This is in alignment with Borg's concern that 'secondary schools in state sector education have been the focus of very little attention' (Borg, 2006, p.274). Moreover, since teachers' beliefs and teachers' learning to teach are situated and context-dependent, more research on teachers' beliefs and practices in a variety of different contexts, especially in the context where teachers are non-native and the curriculum is prescribed is an urgent need.

Furthermore, methodologically, most of the studies on beliefs employed self reported beliefs and practices through questionnaires and interviews, without any triangulation

with their classroom practices. This study seeks to address these gaps in the literature by providing insights into the beliefs held by a group of eight Iranian secondary school EFL teachers in the context of a curricular reform, and to find out whether or not their stated beliefs (articulated in interviews), were in congruence with what was observed while teaching in the classroom (their enacted beliefs manifested in classroom interaction). Accordingly, it sets out to make a contribution to the field by furthering our understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding CCOT approach.

The next chapter will present the research design, research methods, and methods of data analysis for the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

To investigate how teachers' beliefs about the features of the curriculum reform interact with practices and context, this study uses a case study approach as described by Merriam (1998; 2009). This chapter presents a detailed account of the methodological framework which underpins this investigation. It first discusses the rationale for the choice of a qualitative research design. A case study approach was chosen from among the many different techniques typically used in naturalistic inquiry. Following this, the chapter explains the principles behind this choice and details the process of selecting the eight cases. A detailed account of the research methods, the procedures for data collection and data analysis are then described and the strategies adopted to enhance the quality of this study are discussed. This is followed by comments on issues related to the ethical considerations.

3.2. A qualitative research design

All qualitative studies stem from a question, issue, concern, or phenomenon and are shaped by specific research questions (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). As demonstrated earlier, the existing literature has emphasised the crucial role of teachers' beliefs and contextual factors in determining the success or failure of educational reforms, and to the connection between beliefs and practices in teaching. Therefore, the existing literature was used as a background to inform and direct the research questions of this study.

Informed by the research questions (see 1.5), a qualitative, multiple-case study approach has been employed for this study. This section presents a rationale for choosing this methodological orientation by a) detailing the main characteristics of a 'qualitative design', and b) highlighting the relationship between this description and the specific area of this study.

3.2.1. Characteristics of qualitative design

Qualitative research design has a long, remarkable history that cuts across different fields such as sociology, anthropology, social psychology, and history. It also encompasses different philosophical traditions, and research approaches (Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers, according to Merriam (1998, p.6) are ‘interested in understanding the meanings people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world’. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state, qualitative research is naturalistic, descriptive, and inductive, and it is concerned with the process and the construction of meaning. Further, qualitative research attempts to ‘develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study’ (Creswell, 2009, p.176), that is, it aims to understand the surrounding context of the research. Apart many reasons for choosing qualitative research, the most important as Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.16) suggest, is ‘the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge’.

A significant body of literature has probed the main features of the qualitative paradigm as distinct from the quantitative one. The following is a synthesis of such characteristics.

- Qualitative research takes place in natural environments (Creswell, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006) within social contexts where people’s lived experiences are examined (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).
- Qualitative research attempts to understand situations from the perspective of the participants themselves and perceives the world through their lens (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2002).
- Qualitative research is concerned with capturing the qualities and attributes of the phenomena being investigated rather than with measuring or counting (Nunan and Bailey, 2009).
- It presents subjective understandings and is mainly interpretive (Creswell, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

- A Qualitative research design may be used because there is little information or theory on a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2002), or to acquire new perspectives and deeper understandings on issues already explored (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

In contrast to a quantitative inquiry that is obtrusive, controlled, objective, and product-oriented, qualitative research involves naturalistic, uncontrolled, subjective, and process-oriented observation. It typically produces a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases. To be more specific, although definitions vary, the aims of qualitative research are generally directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people's social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives, and histories (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

3.2.2. Qualitative research in relation to this study

This research investigates teachers' cognitions, a hidden yet central aspect of their professional lives, and looks into their individual experiences within a particular socio-cultural context. In order to investigate the beliefs and practice of foreign language teachers, a qualitative research methodology, specifically, a multiple case study design was a better fit for the research needs and questions.

Within the context of teacher beliefs research, Borg (2006, p.280) advises that the choice of research methods should be made with reference not only to methodological considerations but also to 'what is practically feasible, acceptable and permissible in the particular context under study'. There has been the growing recognition that qualitative research provides insights into the contextual conditions and influences that shape almost every aspect of second language learning and teaching (Dörnyei, 2007). Relating the characteristics of this study to those of qualitative inquiry justifies the choice of this research design. Moreover, investigating the literature on teacher cognition, in particular, demonstrates early support for qualitative designs. Pajares (1992) affirms that some researchers regard qualitative designs as particularly useful for the study of teachers' beliefs. Pajares highlighted that:

‘Understanding teacher beliefs requires making inferences about individuals’ underlying states, inferences fraught with difficulty because individuals are often unable or unwilling, for many reasons, to accurately represent their beliefs. For this reason, beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do.’ (p.314)

Burns’ (1996) framework of the intercontextuality of teacher thinking and beliefs also emphasises the social and institutional contexts of classrooms in the study of teachers’ beliefs and their instructional decisions. In the same vein, Zheng (2013) states that the relationship between language teachers’ beliefs and their practice is contextual, requiring a situational investigation of how the teachers cope with the teaching complexities in their workplace.

On the basis of the above discussion, adopting a qualitative research methodology contributed to my study in the following ways:

- It provided me with the opportunity to study the participants (teachers) while working in their natural setting (classrooms).
- It offered me the flexibility to use different strategies and methods to broaden the understandings of the phenomenon under study.
- It provided an in-depth understanding of the various factors that shaped teachers’ beliefs and impacted their practices.
- It enhanced my understanding of participants’ perspectives and the meanings behind their actions.

Accordingly, this study used a qualitative approach because it sought to create a description, interpretation, and substantive theory of the data collected rather than engage in hypothesis testing (Merriam, 1998). The choice of qualitative case study helped me unravel the way Iranian teachers made sense of their own experiences and how their beliefs and perspectives were embedded within the context of Iran.

3.3. A case study approach

After situating the study within a qualitative research paradigm, a multiple-case study design (Yin, 2009), where each of the eight participants formed an individual case,

was utilised for the research in order to focus on belief-practice relationships within the cases. Thus, eight separate but similar cases were explored within the same context, and subsequent cross-case analysis enabled me to examine similarities and differences among the eight individual cases. In the following section, I present a rationale for this decision by addressing: a) the main characteristics of a case study approach, and b) the relationship between this description and this study.

3.3.1. Characteristics of a case study

Case study has been widely used in various areas of human inquiry including psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, education, and applied linguistics (Merriam, 1988). The increasing popularity of case study as a research approach is credited to researchers' awareness of the limitations of quantitative research in understanding the complexities of many issues in the fields (Duff, 2008; Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003).

Discussing the value of case study research, Yin (2009) suggests that one strength of the case study method is its usefulness when phenomena and context are not readily separable, and another strength is that the method enables you to address how and why questions about real-life events. Researchers using a case study methodology cannot detach the phenomenon under study from the context within which it occurs.

In the same vein, Dörnyei (2007) asserts that:

‘The case study is an excellent method for obtaining a thick description of a complex social issue embedded within a cultural context. It offers rich and in-depth insights that no other method can yield, allowing researchers to examine how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us.’ (p.155)

Furthermore, Yin (2009, p.53) promotes the use of multiple case studies and argues ‘even if you can only do a ‘two-case’ case study, your chances of doing a good case will be better than using a single-case design’. According to Creswell (2013), the case study method explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases), through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.

The literature has identified a number of general characteristics associated with case study inquiry. They may be synthesised as follows:

- Case studies draw on multiple data collection methods (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009).
- Case studies allow researchers to conduct an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

3.3.2. Case study in relation to this study

Reflecting on the characteristics of case studies, I chose a multiple case study approach for this research. Conducting a multiple-case study allowed me to compare and contrast eight single cases (Stake, 1995) and to analyse the data both within each situation and across situations (Yin, 2009). It is consistent with the situated nature of this study, allows for in-depth understandings and rich descriptions of the issue in question, and emphasises contextual uniqueness. Thus, case study helps to uncover, describe, and explain the beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning individual teachers hold, the extent to which their beliefs are carried out in their actual teaching in the classroom, and the relationships revealed across the eight participating teachers between a commonly articulated belief and the practices that they identified with it.

The data were contextualised through preliminary interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall sessions. Therefore, it fits the characteristics and the purpose of a qualitative case study as described above.

3.4. Sampling and selection criteria

Determining what type of sampling to use is an important step in any research (Cohen, et al., 2007). Prior to starting the field work, a sampling strategy had to be considered very carefully. The first step in the sampling procedure was to identify the target population. Qualitative inquiry usually focuses in depth on relatively small samples, selected purposefully. Silverman (2010, p.143) affirms that ‘sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is, or should be, theoretically grounded’. The conceptual framework and research questions need to play a central role in the selection of cases. Hence, the guiding factor in our decision

making should be: which case(s) can we learn the most from? (Stake, 1995). Given the nature of this inquiry, the procedure commonly used in case selection is what Patton (2002) refers to as ‘purposeful sampling’ described as follows:

‘The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry.’ (p.230)

Purposive sampling enables researchers to select ‘individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation so as to maximise what we can learn’ (Dörnyei 2007, p.126).

Accordingly, in determining the participant individuals in this study, I followed purposeful sampling strategy in which ‘the researcher samples individuals because they can help the researcher generate or discover a theory or specific concepts’ (Creswell, 2012, p.208), based on some specific pre-determined criteria (Patton, 1990) such as being the graduate of an English language teaching department/ universities, having at least six years of language teaching experience, teaching full-time at state secondary school, and willing to participate eagerly and voluntarily. The decision to select experienced teachers was based on the assumption that more experienced teachers are more likely to hold well-established cognitions about teaching and learning. Moreover, given my former work experience as a secondary school teacher and supervisor, I had some insider knowledge about the community, schools, and teachers, which helped me screen for potential cases.

Accordingly, a total of eight teachers (all females) were chosen as the participants from four upper secondary schools in Tehran, the capital of Iran. Teaching experience varied from 6 to 28 years, and teachers’ age ranged from 27 to 48. They were all experienced teachers who had taught at more than two Iranian secondary schools. The teachers were of varied professional experience as English language teachers of secondary school students. One of the teachers was a head teacher at an in-service training institute for English language teachers with 23 years experience in ELT. All of them received their secondary schooling in Iranian public schools; that is, they had similar experiences of learning English which was mainly based on traditional methods like grammar translation and audio-lingual.

Once the main teacher participants were identified, I met them individually. I explained the purposes of the study and the activities they were expected to engage in. I asked them if they were willing to take part in the research. Finally, eight teachers from four different secondary schools showed interest in participating in the study. We agreed to set a timetable to start the fieldwork. The participants all signed informed consent forms (see Appendix 1) and official permission was also obtained from the school to conduct the study. All participants were assured that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, and any information they provided would be kept in strictest confidence, that they would have the opportunity to review the interview transcripts, and that their names would remain entirely confidential. To protect teachers' identity, pseudonyms were assigned to each teacher and the names of schools have been changed to schools A, B, C, and D. Table 3.1 represents a demographic profile of the eight teacher participants.

Table 3.1. Demographic profile of the participants

Teachers	Age	Degree	Years in ELT	Secondary Level Taught	School
Hoda	48	BA in English Education	28	3rd	School A
Bahar	43	BA in English Education	21	3rd	School B
Zoha	40	BA in English Literature	18	2nd-3rd	School C
Nasim	38	MA in TEFL	14	1st-2nd	School A
Leila	34	MA in TEFL	11	1st-2nd	School B
Matin	31	MA in TEFL	9	2nd-3rd	School D
Sarah	29	BA in English Literature	8	1st-3rd	School D
Atena	27	BA in English Education	6	1st-2nd	School C

3.5. Selecting schools

As far as my research study was concerned, in addition to the teachers, the main figures whose permission was needed in order to conduct this study were the principals of the schools where data collection took place. I chose to do my research in Tehran (District 1 and 3) because I had worked there as an English language teacher both at the secondary school level and at the university level. My work experience in Tehran has enabled me to establish relationships with most educational officials who agreed to provide me with access to the seven secondary schools in

Tehran in order to identify teachers who are willing to participate in the study. I also knew one school's principal who was my ex-colleague and agreed to help me with this. First, I called all of the schools to arrange appointments to talk to their principals and explained what I was going to do. Eventually, I could arrange to meet six secondary schools' principals. Upon visiting principals, I first introduced myself mentioning that I am doing a PhD research in the field of English language teaching and I needed to conduct the fieldwork in the secondary schools of Tehran. Then I explained the purpose of and the procedures of the study.

Four out of eight principals explained to me that the English language teachers in their schools are not used to being observed and being interviewed, hence they are reluctant to participate in the study. However, the principals of the other four schools welcomed the idea of the research and insisted on the potential of doing such a research. Finally, these four secondary schools, identified as A, B, C, and D were selected. Schools A and B were located in District 1 and School C and D were located in District 3 in Tehran. The principals of each school gave me the names of two teachers and their time schedule. The schools were similar in a number of ways. They were state schools under the administration of MOE. They all used the same teaching textbook. All were girls' state secondary schools and all the teachers were females.

Moreover, I explained to the principals that it is important for me to talk with the teachers and to establish good rapport with them before embarking on the field work, and also to explain the aim of the research to the teachers and make them understand that the purpose of the research is neither to evaluate their work nor to criticise it. All four principals also assured me that they would provide assistance in order for the field work of this study to be done effectively. The principals were also requested to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix 2).

3.6. The pilot study

The purposes of the pilot study were to trial and refine all research methods before the beginning of the data collection period. The pilot study was conducted with two secondary school teachers (ex-colleagues), who were not involved in the study. Both teachers had MA in English language teaching and were experienced EFL teachers. They had between 10 and 12 years experience of teaching English. Thus, they had

similar background and qualification to the participants of the study. I explained to them the purpose and the procedures of my research and why I needed to do a pilot study. I also asked them if they could participate in the pilot study. Both participants agreed to be involved in the piloting. Each of them was given a consent form and assured that the interviews and the observations would be confidential and any reporting of it would be anonymous. They were told that the interviews and the observations would be recorded. The meeting started with the pre-observation interviews which lasted for approximately one hour.

3.6.1. Piloting the interviews

Conducting a pilot test helped in determining any potential flaws, limitations or other weaknesses in the interview design in addition to giving me an opportunity to make any necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study (Kvale, 2007). Piloting interviews is useful in finding whether the questions generate the data required for the research. In this regard, ambiguous and confusing questions can then be avoided (Nunan, 1992). The aims of this pilot were to refine the interview questions, get the experience of interviewing, test the audio-recording device, practice transcribing and examine the use of English language in interviews.

The pilot interviews provided a rich experience on how to conduct interviews. Observations and implications from this experience can be summarised as follows:

- I did originally consider using English, because I felt that using English has a number of benefits such as saving time required for translation, avoiding inappropriate interpretation or mistranslation and providing direct quotes expressed by interviewees themselves. However, after the first interview, the participants said that they preferred to use Farsi to better express themselves. Therefore, the second interview was carried out in Farsi. I felt that using Farsi would make it easier for teachers to be critical about their practices as they said they usually do in post-lesson discussions during supervisory visits. The decision to use Farsi was also welcomed by the pilot participants themselves, who stated that they preferred to speak in Farsi, when (for the second interview) I suggested the alternative option of speaking in Farsi. Finally, I decided to use Farsi for the interviews in my main study.

- The pre-active interview questions were revised several times before piloting. Opinions from my supervisor were sought to strengthen it, adding to advice identified from the relevant literature. The interview questions were refined, with regard to the wording of the questions and two new questions were added. As for the former, the wording of some questions was changed because the participants did not understand them. Having done that, I had the opportunity to fix and edit my interview questions thoroughly before starting my actual interviews with the EFL teachers. Following this piloting stage, a number of redundant questions were removed while others were changed to avoid leading the participants.
- After transcribing the interviews, I realised that, for a few questions, pilot participants deviated from answering my question to talking about their situations in schools. I learned to consider this during the interviews by paying attention to it and directing participants to focus on answering the questions.
- Initially, I planned to do an interview after each classroom observation, but this proved to be difficult because I needed more time to transcribe and to read the transcriptions of the classroom observations. Therefore, I decided to conduct post-active interview within a week of the recorded events. I also found that it is better to reduce the gap between conducting interviews and transcribing them. The gap was shorter in the second interview which helped me recognise the recording more easily compared to the first interview.

3.6.2. Piloting the observations

I conducted two classroom observations with these two teachers. Each observation lasted about one hour. I used a voice recorder to record the lessons. I sat in a chair in front of the classroom and started taking some notes. During the observation, I realised that sitting in front of the class distracts some of the students' attention. Therefore, for the next observation, I decided to sit at the back of the class to take away any distractions.

Moreover, after the first classroom observation, I decided to design the observation sheet to write down notes about the teaching practices. The observation sheet was designed to be flexible by the researcher keeping field notes to note any unexpected

circumstances, allowing identification of codes emerging from what actually happens in the classroom. The observation sheet also included factual information about the lesson observed such as time and duration of the lesson, number of learners, and seating (see Appendix 14). I piloted the observation sheet in the two classroom observations to check its feasibility to be used for data collection. As a result of these observations, I realised that the examples suggested under the themes would restrict my observation attention. Therefore, I deleted the examples because I felt they distracted my attention as I kept expecting them to occur during the lessons. In addition, I increased the width of the columns to provide more space for comments and I added a blank space for more free notes. The observation sheet was helpful and I managed to collect information. As sometimes the pacing of the classes was to a certain extent slow, I managed to write notes and descriptions of each stage. The questions of the follow up interview emerged from the transcriptions of the observations.

The observed lessons were not videoed for fear of causing unnecessary stress to participants, so I mainly took notes in the observation sheet to capture a rich picture of events, and audio-recorded in order to maximise the accuracy of the data collected. I used a small digital voice recorder because I thought it would not cause much disturbance to both the teacher and learners and I kept it on the teacher's table.

3.7. Methods of data collection

Methods of data collection should match what the researcher wants to discover (Burns, 2010). This study aimed to examine teachers' cognition and practices in relation to CCOT. Since exploring teacher cognition implies dealing with hidden aspects of teachers' professional lives, a careful choice of data collection methods is necessary for such investigation (Borg, 2006). It is also recommended to use a blend of data collection methods to explore teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in order to produce triangulated information (Barnard and Burns, 2012). Through the use of multiple data sources, I hoped to be able to triangulate the data in such a way that would reduce the observer and interviewer bias and enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the information (Johnson, 1992). Specifically, data collection was based around three stages for the present study: the pre-active (pre-observation), the

interactive (classroom observation) and the post-active (reflection) stages (Morton, 2012).

- Semi-structured pre-observation interviews (pre-active)
- Audio-recorded classroom observations (inter-active)
- Post-observation stimulated-recall interviews (post-active)

Fieldwork took place in all four selected schools and lasted for four months with the data collected continuously moving from one teacher to the next. Figure 3.1 shows the process of data elicitation and collection methods.

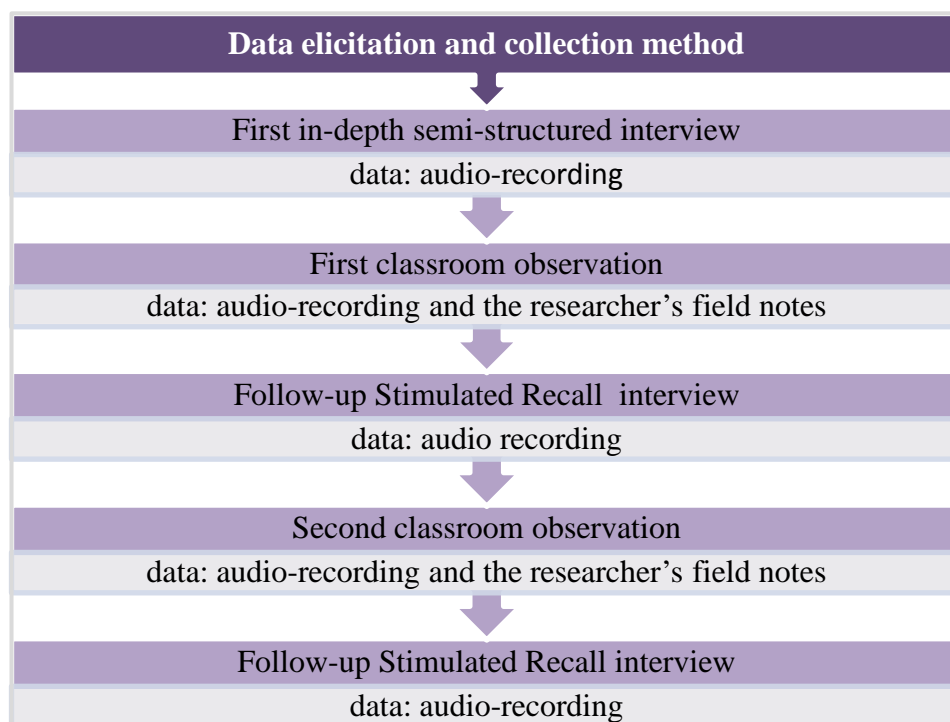


Figure 3.1 *Data elicitation and collection methods*

The following sections present a detailed account of the instruments with which data were collected, and the rationale for choosing them.

3.7.1. Pre-active semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is widely used in naturalistic research. In fact, it is described as 'the most often used method in qualitative inquiries' (Dörnyei, 2007, p.134). A semi-

structured interview uses pre-defined guiding questions and prompts (Dörnyei, 2007). Borg (2006) argues that semi-structured and stimulated recall interviews seem to be the most valued strategies used by researchers, because they allow the ‘tacit and unobservable’ aspects of language teachers’ mental lives to be made explicit. They allow the researcher to move beyond the observable, to visit inner worlds, and develop deeper understandings of reality as perceived by the respondents.

Semi-structured interviews are a well-established method in research on teacher cognition, and it has been shown to be effective in this area (Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, and Son, 2004). Semi-structured, in-depth interviewing seeks to report on the nuanced descriptive accounts of the research participants and the variant and diverse meanings they bring to their experiences. It provides teachers with an informal atmosphere to express thoughts and share experiences without being confined by a specific set of questions and also gives to interviewees the latitude to talk freely about their perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002). At the same time, within this flexible structure, researchers have the opportunity to cover themes relevant to their inquiry. According to Borg (2006), flexibility is one of the advantages of semi-structured interviews in researching teachers’ beliefs because respondents have the freedom to talk in an open-ended manner.

This research used semi-structured interviews as one of the primary methods to explore the teachers’ beliefs and views on CCOT. The pre-active semi-structured interview was divided into two main sections: I) teachers’ educational background, and II) their language learning experience, their teaching experience, their current EFL teaching, and their beliefs about EFL teaching and learning in relation to the key concepts of CCOT (see Appendix 3). Depending on the emerging issues, additional questions were asked. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on specific areas that teachers might have cognitions about. These were: the teacher, teaching, learning, material, activities, colleagues, assessment, and the language program (Borg, 2006). In the interviews, I asked ‘opinion and values questions’ which inform us about what people think about some experience or issue (Patton, 2002). I was careful not to ask leading questions that would reveal my own stance on language teaching and learning. Instead, I strove to preserve neutrality, i.e. not judging people for the content of what they say but giving importance to their emotions, their attitudes, experiences, and

beliefs (Patton 2002). Moreover, in the pre-active interview, I explained to the teachers that the purpose of my research was just to collect data for my PhD study because if they knew the true purpose of the study, it might have affected how they behaved or answered questions.

Nevertheless, semi-structured interviews have some limitations. The flexibility in this method can affect the way different respondents answer the same questions, and thus reduces comparability (Cohen et al., 2000). Such flexibility may also cause a problem if participants deviate from the topic being researched. In addition, semi-structured interviews require careful use by the researcher, such as asking probing questions or repeating the question when necessary and judging the answers.

Although interviews are widely used in teacher cognition research, they may be insufficient in themselves as a means of addressing research questions. Given the tacit nature of cognitions, the teachers themselves may not be aware of their own mental processes, or be able to articulate them (Calderhead, 1996). Hence, ‘a direct question such as [What is your philosophy of teaching?] is usually an ineffective or counterproductive way to elicit beliefs’ (Kagan, 1992, p.66). In fact, when teachers are asked abstract context-free questions about their beliefs, they are likely to provide general idealised responses (Woods, 1996). In this regard, interviews on their own, are insufficient in exploring teacher cognition (Borg, 2006), therefore, additional strategies for data collection such as observations and stimulated recall that pay close attention to the teachers’ contexts were used in this study (Fang, 1996).

A total of 12 hours of semi-structured pre-active interviews were conducted with the eight teachers. This enabled me to establish an appropriate level of rapport with the participants and this helped them to feel more secure when being observed later. The interviews were individual rather than group interviews, for the purpose of helping individual teachers to explore their personal thinking in depth without being influenced by their colleagues. To help ensure that all participants were able to express their ideas and feelings as fully as possible all interviews were conducted in Farsi, the mother tongue of both the participants and the researcher. I was also interested in the meaning that the teachers attached to their experiences and thought that the teachers would be in a better position to describe these experiences in their first language (Barnard and Burns, 2012). However, there were occasions when the

participants code-switched between Farsi and English. All the interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder, transcribed verbatim as soon as possible following each interview and then translated into English. The transcribed interviews formed the text for data analysis (see Appendix 4 for a sample of one pre-active interview).

To ensure that my translation was close to the original, I gave one Farsi interview transcription to one of my Iranian friends who has a PhD degree in TEFL from the UK and asked her to translate it into English. The majority of the transcript my friend translated was similar to my translation, and there were no significant differences in terms of meaning.

All digital recordings were transferred from the digital recorder onto my personal computer, where I stored them in files. To avoid misrepresenting my participants and their intended meanings, I offered participants the opportunity to read all transcripts of the audio recordings and to offer clarifications or additional perspectives.

In addition to the second interview which will be explained in section 3.7.3, some additional interviews were also conducted through casual encounters with teacher participants and with other teachers in all four schools for a broader understanding of the context. In terms of the scope of the interviews, although the vast majority focused on the specific area of investigation, at the end of the study the teachers were also interviewed about the impact of their participation in the study on them, positively and negatively.

3.7.2. Classroom observation

Observation is ‘a process of gathering information by observing and watching the behavioural patterns of people in certain situations or at a research site, to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest’ (Creswell, 2005, p.211). Observation is an integral aspect of qualitative research (Cohen, et al., 2007; Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002). In qualitative studies, observation tends to be combined with interviews ‘to ascertain selected participants’ perspectives on their actions or behaviours’ (Duff, 2008, p.141). Observation also provides authentic data and direct information rather than self-report accounts (Dörnyei, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Supplementing interviews

with classroom observations is critical in qualitative research as they ‘provide a check on what is reported in interviews’ (Patton, 2002, p.306).

As for the use of observation in teacher cognition research, in particular, Borg (2006, p.231) affirms the key role this method plays in exploring beliefs ‘by providing a concrete descriptive basis in relation to what teachers know, think, and believe can be examined’. Given the close relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practice, classroom observation is especially helpful in identifying congruence and lack of congruence between the two.

Thus, observation is a means of triangulation in research on teachers’ beliefs. As I was interested in understanding teachers’ professional actions, not ‘what or how they think in isolation from what they do’ (Borg, 2003. p.105), I used observations in combination with interviews. In this study, classroom observations provided a context for discussions about teachers’ practices, the extent to which they were consistent and/or inconsistent with their stated beliefs, and how the context impacted their practices. In other words, the audio-recorded observation provided the teachers with a reminder of what had happened in the classroom in their follow-up reflections.

Following the semi-structured pre-observation interview, observational data were collected from eight teachers’ regular EFL classes to ascertain the extent to which the teachers’ classroom practice reflected their beliefs. Each of the participating teachers was observed three times teaching 90-minute lessons to different groups of students. A total of 24 lessons (36 hours of instructional time) were observed and audio recorded. However, I chose to transcribe and analyse only two classes that best reflected the teachers’ instructional practices. The reason for selecting two class observations out of three for transcription was that some of the sessions were for assessment, or watching English movies, or just reading the exercises in the workbook which could not provide sufficient information about the teachers’ practices of CCOT in these classroom observations. Therefore, they were not transcribed. Moreover, the classes observed were chosen randomly according to teachers’ timetables in order to avoid teachers’ deliberate selection of best classes with their best/most responsive learners.

As previously mentioned (see 3.6.2), I designed the observation sheet to write down notes about the teaching practice: what was done, the roles that teachers play, the level of engagement of the students, interactions between teachers and students, classroom settings, teaching styles, class atmosphere, classroom activities, and the materials that they use (see Appendix 14). During classroom observations, I also took field notes to document events not captured by the recording. Bogdan and Bilden (1998, p.108) define field notes as ‘the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in qualitative study’. The field notes included a description of the classroom setting, what the teacher was writing on the board, teaching styles, class atmosphere, interactions between teachers and students, and my own feelings and ideas about what was observed. In addition, field notes from my observations helped me develop follow up and clarification questions for the interviews on issues that could have gone unnoticed otherwise. In this way, the data gathered with the help of observation sheet and the field notes helped me to describe the nature of teaching and learning process, in short, whether the teaching and learning process displayed constructivist and/or traditional characteristics.

Furthermore, before classroom observations, I explained to each teacher about the purpose to observe the classroom so as not for her to misunderstand or try to show outstanding teaching performances different from the usual teaching. No special preparation was required on their part and I informed them that they should teach as normally and naturally as possible and that I would not be judging their behaviours or performances in any way. I made every effort to reduce the fear and intrusion inevitably caused by any observation.

3.7.2.1. My role as an observer

While in the field, observers might assume different roles depending on the objective of their investigation. A key dimension of observational research is the degree to which the researcher immerses themselves in the setting. With respect to the role of the observer, Borg (2006, p.231) asserts that ‘there is very clear preference in language teacher cognition research for non-participant observation - i.e. where the

researcher in the classroom typically sits at the back, makes notes and avoids interacting with teacher or students during the event being observed’.

My role in this study was as a non-participant observer, who sat at the back of the classroom, observing the teachers teaching. Having extensive experience in observing classrooms as a teacher and teacher educator in Iran, I was confident that my familiarity with the educational context put me in a good position to make accurate emic interpretations as a cultural insider. Although I had explained carefully in the introductory meetings that the purpose of my research was just to collect data for my PhD study, I felt that on the first days of my data collection period, the teachers were concerned about possible negative feedback from me on their pedagogical knowledge and classroom teaching. These concerns could have impacted on the way the teachers talked and the information they provided. Therefore, I tried to narrow the gap between myself and the participants by not allowing the potential misunderstanding among the participants that I was going to evaluate them and their teaching performance. I socialised with them and other teachers in the school during the lesson intervals. I also tried to avoid using professional research discourse to give any evaluative comments on the school, the students, the teachers, and their teaching. This helped the participants and other teachers in the school to see me as an impartial insider rather than an outsider to their own culture.

3.7.3. Post-active stimulated recall interviews

Another form of verbal commentaries used in this study was stimulated recall. As stated by Gass and Mackey (2010):

Stimulated recall methodology is one of the introspective methods which can be used to prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event because it is assumed that some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself. (p.17)

Since it is impossible for teachers to talk about their thought processes while teaching, this retrospective method is used in explicating cognitions underlying what happened during practice (Borg, 2006; Dörnyei, 2007, Meijer, Zanting, and Verloop, 2002) by allowing the teacher to ‘relive’ past teaching situations (Calderhead, 1981,

p.212). Phipps and Borg (2009, p.382) argued that ‘a more realistic understanding of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and practices can emerge when the analysis of what teachers do is the basis of eliciting and understanding their beliefs’. The strength of stimulated recall in capturing teacher cognition, particularly when used with audio/video prompts, is that it not only attempts to uncover teachers’ thought-processes in the moment but also to use that moment as a springboard for glimpses into the teacher’s general beliefs, knowledge, and expertise that may not have been noted in other data sources, e.g., interview data (Borg, 2006).

Before conducting the post-active stimulated recall interviews, I carefully listened to the teachers’ pre-active interviews and the recorded observations, together with my notes. As with any research tool, stimulated recall must be done carefully. One of the challenges of using stimulated recall as a research method is the question of the accuracy of recalls because the inherent problem with the *ex post facto data* is the ‘lapse between the actual teaching and the data collection’ (Freeman, 1996, p.370). There is the possibility that teachers might present descriptions or post hoc rationalisations for their practice rather than recall their actual thinking at the time. As such, one must be certain, as far as possible, that the thought processes that are being verbalised truly reflect the thought processes at the time of the original task.

A critical issue when using stimulated recall is how much time elapses between the activity and the interview, as the greater the delay, the greater is the potential for memory decay (Gass and Mackey, 2010). This is especially important if the stimulus is to trigger teacher thinking at the time of the recorded event. Therefore, following the guidelines set out by Gass and Mackey (2010), in order to stimulate more accurate memory from the teachers of their performance and thinking in a lesson, the post-observation stimulated-recall interviews were conducted within a week of the recorded events.

Initially, I planned to do an interview after each classroom observation, but this proved to be difficult in pilot study because I needed more time to transcribe and to read the transcriptions of the classroom observations. For this study, I conducted 16 stimulated recall sessions (two follow up interviews for each teacher), over a total of 22 hours. The purpose of these interviews (which were also semi-structured and audio-recorded) was to discuss with the teachers the pedagogical options they used

during the observed lessons and to examine the factors influencing their instructional decisions. These interviews also helped teachers to describe possible obstacles or limitations, if any, that they faced when practicing in the classroom.

As mentioned earlier, the selections of excerpts (see 3.5.3), as well as the choice of questions, are all shaped by the researcher's particular theoretical perspective (Speer, 2005). The episodes provided with stimulated recalls were based on what actually happened in the classroom (Kagan, 1992; Gass and Mackey, 2010). The recordings and the field notes helped me to detect the significant lesson episodes that were representative of the teachers' practices with regards to the five areas of CCOT curriculum: approaches to grammar teaching; error correction; use of L1; teachers'/students' role; and teacher-centred/learner-centred teaching. Specifically, the episodes were selected that were representative of the instructional interactions typical of teachers' classes. (see Appendix 7 for an excerpt from lesson observation transcript).

Once the session started, I presented the teachers with key episodes from their lessons as prompts during the interview. I asked the teacher to explain what she was doing during the excerpt and why. Then, I fast forwarded the voice-recording and stopped at another episode which I had chosen. During the questioning of each excerpt, the teachers could refer back to the excerpt as often as she needed (this happened a few times for each case). This process was reiterated for every excerpt presented. Additional questions were asked based on what the teacher said. They were asked to describe particular decisions as well as their reasons for their choices.

The use of audio-recording could help build shared understanding by providing a meaningful context for the discussion (Speer, 2005). Thus, participants had opportunities during interviews to share their meanings of particular descriptive terms and to connect them with examples from their practice as captured on the audio recorder. Thus, words came from the teachers. I tried not to introduce words into the discussion. When the teachers' definition did not match my definitions, I then adopted the participant's definition of term to be certain that the terms mean the same thing to the participants.

3.7.3.1. The researcher's role in the interview situation

The researcher's role contributes significantly to interaction in the interview and also affects the nature and interpretation of data. Calderhead (1981, p.214) states that the factors which may influence the nature of the data generated by the stimulated recall method are the way in which the interviewee is prepared for the interview and how he/she is instructed to comment. On the other hand, the questions that the researcher asks during the interview can also influence the nature of the data. According to Mayer and Marland (1997, p.21), the interviewee is seen as the expert, and the researcher has to help and assist him/her to recall the events. They state that the researcher is an active listener and reflector who asks and clarifies, but avoids asking leading questions, making evaluative questions or doing anything that implies disinterest or disapproval.

Accordingly, throughout the interview, I strove to preserve neutrality, i.e. not to sound judgemental so that the teachers do not need to feel threatened or to feel they need to defend their actions. As a researcher, I was an active listener and asked questions, but was still open to the participants' own understanding and impressions. I asked the teachers to describe in detail about their own thoughts and to give reasons for actions. The audio-recording was an important stimulant in the interview, but I had to keep in mind the main idea of my research and ask relevant, planned and spontaneous questions.

The post-active stimulated recall interview questions which revolved around what the teacher was doing and why, why she chose this teaching method, whether she has any particular objectives in mind in this segment, why a particular strategy was/was not used, although the participant believed/did not believe that it should be used, and whether she remembers any aspects that affected her pedagogical decisions. It also addressed reasons behind the teachers' behaviours, preferences, and choices in particular situations.

My questioning strategies also involved asking teachers to add more details on issues which I felt needed more elaboration. In order to minimise my influence on what teachers had to say, I tried to use statements or expressions teachers had already said.

The following example illustrates how probing was used during the interviews. My probing question is written in *italic*.

H: There are some difficulties in learner-centred teaching for me. We haven't had any training or instructions for that. I try to use my knowledge and my efforts in order to deal with these difficulties. (HSR1: 47)

R: What kind of difficulties are you talking about?

H: For example, when I want them to work on their own, they do not know how to work independently. In our culture, the students have difficulty adjusting to a less teacher-centred classroom. As a teacher what shall I do in this case? (HSR1: 49)

In addition, given that stimulated recall has been criticised for not getting at the participant's actual thought processes during events but rather basing their answers on what they perceive the researcher wants to hear (Lyle, 2003), the questioning criteria proposed by Gass and Mackey (2000) were utilised, where questions are participant-fronted, i.e., allowing participants to decide how long for discussion, and objective so as not to impose researcher subjectivity on the topic of discussion.

An overview of the data collection at each stage is presented in Table 3.2. As shown in this table, data from the semi-structured interviews were assigned to the category of 'explicit/professed beliefs'; data from the stimulated interviews were assigned to the category of 'implicit beliefs/beliefs in practice'; data from the observation and field notes were assigned to the category of 'practices', and data from other documents such as the curriculum and national policies were assigned to the category of 'contexts'. Organising my findings helped draw a picture of the lived experiences and the common challenges that the participants faced in the context of English curriculum reform in Iran.

Table 3.2. Data collection stages

		Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
		Pre-active Semi- Structured Interview	Observation & Document review	Post-active Stimulated Recall Interview
			Classroom instructions Lesson plans Worksheets Textbooks MOE policy documents	
		The kind of information the researcher intends to elicit from each type of data collection		
Beliefs	<p>The key features of CCOT curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grammar teaching -Error correction -L1 use in L2 class - teacher/student roles -learner-centred teaching <p>Educational background Experience as student Classroom climates Instructional styles Standards and textbooks</p>	Explicit Beliefs/ Professed Beliefs	Enacted Beliefs	Belief in Practice/ Implicit Beliefs
Practice	<p>Practices of curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grammar teaching -Error correction -L1 use in L2 class -Teacher/student roles -Learner-centred teaching <p>Classroom climates Instructional styles Teacher-student relationship</p>		Practice	
Context	<p>Classroom context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Student characteristics -Classroom size -Classroom environment <p>School context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Principal's expectation -Assessment procedure 	Context	Context	Context

3.8. Analytical framework of the study

The analysis of the data is organised around the four research questions, and thus according to the pre-, inter-, and post-active stages of teaching (Morton, 2012). As stated above, the three data collection methods elicited three sets of data: the teachers' stated/professed beliefs obtained from their semi-structured interviews (RQ1), the teachers' classroom teaching episodes derived from classroom observation (RQ2), and the teachers' retrospective accounts of their practice elicited from stimulated recall interviews (RQ3 & RQ4). Figure 3.1 below demonstrates the research questions and data sources.

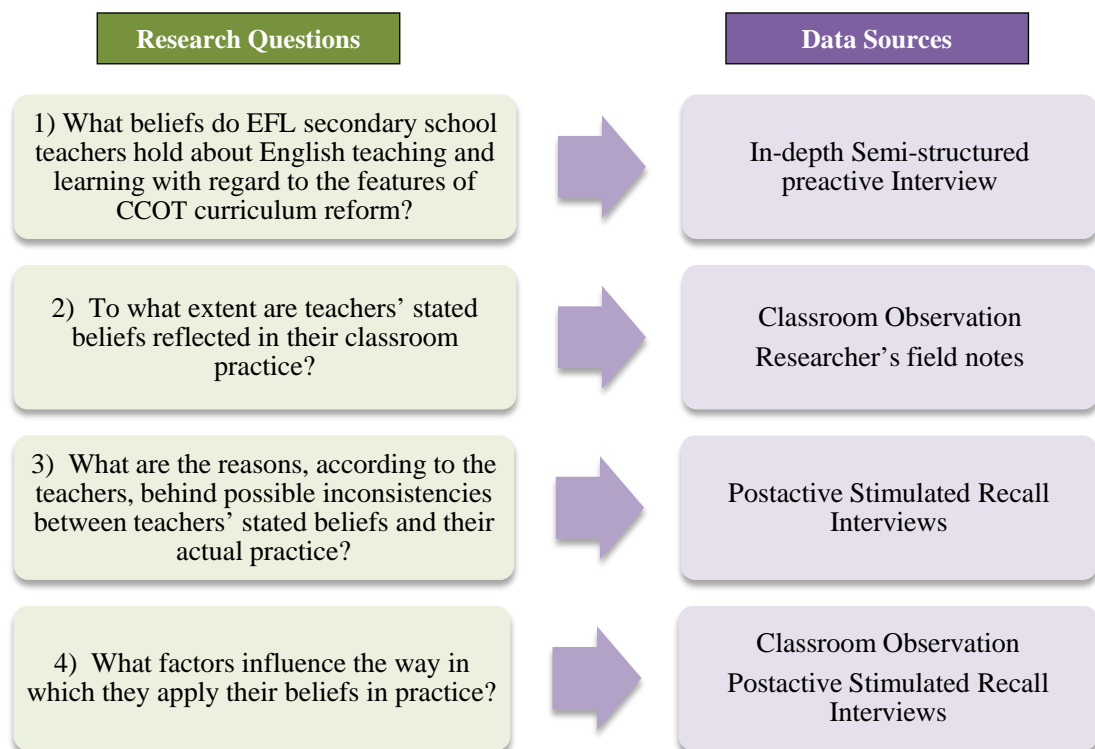


Figure 3.2 *Research questions and data sources*

Stake (1995, p.71) states that 'There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations'. In qualitative research, data analysis starts from the moment the researcher listens to, reads, and transcribes the interviews (Creswell, 2005); that is why qualitative data analysis is an iterative procedure. In this study, analysis started in the field, immediately after the initial pieces of information were gathered. Hence, division between data collection and analysis is mainly organisational here.

Creswell (2005, p.258) asserts that, ‘there is not one single way to analyse qualitative data- it is an eclectic process in which you try to make sense of the information’. In the current study, I used the constant comparative analysis method. Constant comparative analysis is considered one of the most extensively employed analytical tools in qualitative educational research (Merriam, 1998), which makes ‘connections between data and the researcher’s conceptualisation of the object of the study, so that theoretical explanations about the study can emerge’ (Riazi, 2016, p.53). However, it is widely used by researchers as a tool of analysis in qualitative research whether or not they are seeking to build substantive theory (Merriam, 1998). The analysis starts with coding of the data that helps the researcher to form categories, which are more general and inclusive concept, using the similarity principle. Through similarity and contrast principles, the researcher codes the data, forms categories, and merges categories to develop a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon. In other words,

‘The researcher moves back and forth between the conceptual framework of the research and the data, trying to make connections between the two using a comparative method which can lead to more abstract or theoretical ideas’. (Riazi, 2016, p.53)

By using the constant comparative approach, the researcher is able to saturate the categories, searching for instances that represent the category until the data does not provide additional insight to the category (Creswell, 2007).

The coding was conducted both deductively by using priori categories derived from the research questions and conceptual framework, and inductively by identifying the concepts that formed these categories as they emerged from the data. Then, an inductive process continued to expand, modify, define, and redefine the initial broad categories after new readings of the data.

The data collected from the pre-active interviews, post-active interviews and observations passed through similar stages of data transcribing, coding, categorisation, thematisation, and interpretation. Despite the fact that all data went through the same process, the coding procedures of each method differed as will be illustrated in the following sections which describe the process of the coding of interviews and of the classroom observations.

3.9. Data analysis procedures

Data were analysed in two stages. First, each case was analysed separately. Then, the eight cases were contrasted and compared through a cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009). Within-case analysis (Merriam, 2009) started with the examination of individual cases to have a fuller understanding of the participants' professed beliefs and actual practices of CCOT. This process began soon after data collection had started. The within-case analysis was followed by a thematic analysis across the eight cases, referred to as cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). Cross-case analysis enriched my interpretation of the data as it helped me make sense of the difference and similarities among the cases, identify the common beliefs and discrepancies among teachers, and explore the relationship that existed among them. Thus, the results of the current study are reported in terms of themes that were developed as a result of a combination of within and across case analysis of participants.

3.9.1. Pre- and Post active interviews

The qualitative data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, in which the researcher attempts to move from codes to the development of categories and themes, ultimately putting themes together to develop conceptual/theoretical models that fit the data. Thematic analysis is a commonly used method in social sciences for analysing qualitative data that involves identifying, coding, analysing, and reporting themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process of coding, categorisation, and thematisation entails a procedure of moving from particular to general and from concrete to abstract concepts. Figure 3.3 represents a snapshot of the process of developing themes and performing thematic analysis in qualitative research.

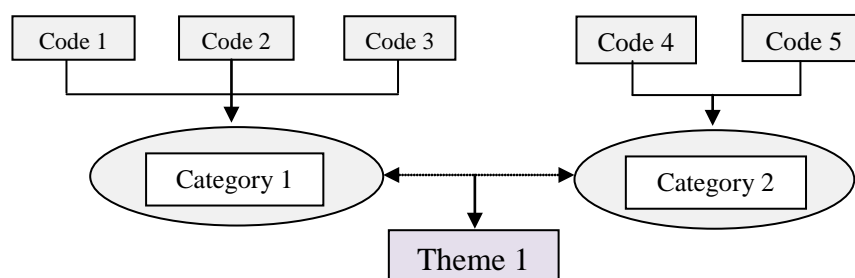


Figure 3.3 *Thematic analysis*

All interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder, transcribed, and then translated into English. The translated version was then sent to all participants for member checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) with further revision conducted based on their comments. Going through the process of coding and categorisation, a copy of my research concern, conceptual framework, research questions and the aims of the study on one page was in front of me to focus my coding decisions (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

The analytical procedures were as follows. First, the semi-structured interview transcripts of each participant were reviewed several times to search for key words and phrases used by individual teachers (within-case analysis). Then I reflected on the data, and kept the reflection. In order to get more nuanced understandings of the data and avoid missing any unexpected themes and patterns, I decided to code all data manually and not to resort to any computer software to help me with the analysis.

In the present study, the coding was conducted both deductively by using a priori categories derived from the research questions and conceptual framework, and inductively by identifying the concepts that formed these categories as they emerged from the data. Then, an inductive process continued to expand, modify, define, and redefine the initial broad categories after new readings of the data. Thus, I employed a deductive strategy as the initial approach to data categorisation. I started the analysis using predefined categories: beliefs about grammar teaching, beliefs about error correction, beliefs about the use of L1, beliefs about teachers' roles, and beliefs about learner-centred pedagogy. For the purpose of coding, I read and reread the interview transcripts employing 'colour coding' and 'marginal note taking' techniques (Patton, 2002, p.463) as a means of identifying patterns across teachers' beliefs. The codes were given key words and/or phrases which were closest to the meaning they described. For example, the codes 'Teacher collaboration' and 'Importance of fluency' emerged out of data, respectively, as in the following:

N: Yes, I am willing to attend sessions where other experienced teachers share some information, experience, and tips. As teachers, we need to sit and discuss things together, but usually there is no time for us. (NPI: 22)

S: When the students are trying to express their ideas, it would be better not to stop them from making themselves clear. In this situation, the teacher should put emphasis on fluency over accuracy.’
(SPI: 36)

Then the initial codes went through refining stages in which some of the codes were renamed, combined and removed. Some codes were combined under one main code. For example, the codes: ‘short training course’, ‘lack of teacher training’, and ‘poor training program’ were combined as ‘inadequate teacher training program’. This initial coding aims to examine and compare the data for similarities and differences (Strauss and Corbin, 2008) and served as a clue for the data analysis. A sample of coding semi-structured interview is presented in Appendix 8.

Having coded all my data in this way, I went through all the teachers’ interview transcripts (cross-case analysis) that shared common characteristics together under a more general category. I read through my codes, compared them with each other to and constructed tentative categories ‘that are then compared to each other and to other instances’ (Merriam, 1998, p.159). As I was going through the process of coding and categorisation, I was also alert to emerging patterns to work on them later. The data were grouped under five major themes: grammar teaching, error correction, the use of L1, teachers’ roles, learner-centred teaching. The codes from the transcribed interview were put on a table to show how they cluster into categories and how the categories became the final themes. A sample of one sub-theme, ‘The need to prioritise fluency over accuracy’, is presented in Appendix 9. The main categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis at this stage answered the first research question ‘What beliefs do EFL secondary school teachers hold about English teaching and learning with regard to the features of CCOT curriculum reform?’.

Second, I analysed the stimulated recall interviews to unpack teachers’ underlying reasons for their classroom behaviours. This was achieved by, again, identifying patterns of thinking or behaviour, key words and/or phrases used by individual teachers, and events that appeared with regularity for some reason. I, then, compared the key words/phrases from the stimulated recall interview and observational data to identify patterns in teachers’ classroom behaviours as well as to interpret their reasoning for their behaviours with reference to their stated beliefs. An example of a stimulated-recall interview coding is presented in Appendix 13.

The post-active interview data analysis also showed that teachers made reference to contextual factors which had an influence on how they interpreted and implemented the curriculum. For example, teachers made comments about the influence of school and examination system, about the paucity of experience with curriculum reform, and the impact of cultural context. All these comments were coded and categorised under contextual factors. Appendix 10 shows an example of themes and sub-themes regarding 'contextual factors'. Moreover, when reading through the interview transcripts, I realised that I needed to add another category to group the coded statements where teachers talked about their past experience as learners or as teachers. All the statements which refer to teachers' background experience as learners or as teachers were categorised under experiential factors. The main categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis at this stage answered the third and fourth research questions. The next chapter will have a full discussion of these categories and themes.

3.9.2. Classroom observations

To enhance my interpretation of the interview data, teachers' commentaries on their practices were checked against key instructional episodes from the observational data to find evidence of congruence and possibly incongruence between practices and beliefs. In this study, observations constituted a tool to examine the relationship between the stated beliefs in the pre-active interviews, and their possible pedagogical translation in practice (i.e. RQ2). Classroom observations also helped to identify the different factors which influenced the way in which the teachers applied their beliefs in practice (i.e. RQ4).

I first transcribed the selected parts of observation data (see 3.7.2). While the field notes helped me keep the additional contextual information available such as the classroom settings, teaching styles, class atmosphere, and interactions between teachers and students that cannot be recorded, the transcribed data gave a more detailed description of how the teachers implemented CCOT reform. As explained in section 3.7.3, the recordings, the observation sheet and the field-notes helped me to detect the lesson episodes for stimulated recall interviews which further helped to elicit data regarding the teachers' practices of CCOT, the teacher and learner roles,

the nature of interaction, whether the lesson was done in a traditional manner or it contained any constructivist elements, and whether it had any learner-centred characteristics. Moreover, it helped me to find out about the reasons lie behind the choice of their pedagogical practices. In this regard, representative episodes from the lesson transcriptions were selected for analysis and discussion. (see Appendix 11 for an excerpt from lesson observation transcript).

The next stage was coding and analysing observation data. I used the same pre-defined themes for interviews (i.e. grammar teaching, error correction, use of L1, teacher roles, and learner-centred teaching) in order to compare the data. As with the interview analysis, these predefined categories were used for analysing teachers' practices. Thus, I first colour coded the key episodes to fit them into these categories. Other themes were added as they emerged from the data analysis (see Appendix 12 for an example of coding lesson observation transcript).

The next step was comparing the episodes that were selected from the classroom observations, against the quotes that emerged from both the pre-active interviews and post-active stimulated recalls, in order to triangulate findings. This was to look for individual and group patterns of classroom behaviours (Marshall and Rossman, 2011), and how they related to teachers' stated beliefs. All categories and patterns were reviewed and their relationships were examined across the eight cases (cross-case analysis). I triangulated all the findings (across the eight cases) in order to establish the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs, actual practices, and factors influencing their beliefs and practices (Gates, 2006). Then, I interrogated all the data again for additional or contradictory findings in order to refine the content of all categories of teachers' beliefs, practices, and influencing factors. An overview of the data analysis procedure is described in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Overview of the data analysis procedure

Steps	Focus	Pre-analysis	Steps in analysis	Outcomes
1. Analysing the pre-active semi-structured interviews	Teachers' stated beliefs regarding CCOT	Transcription and translation of data Preliminary definition and development of sub-categories within the thematic categories.	1a. Identifying key words, phrases used by individual participants and coding them. 1b. Organizing data into relevant thematic categories, emerging from the data 1c. Grouping key words/ phrases into sub-categories	Descriptions of each category of teachers' beliefs regarding CCOT. Identification of patterns across teachers' beliefs regarding CCOT.
2. Analysing the classroom observations	Teachers' actual classroom behaviours regarding CCOT	Transcription and translation of data Identification of key episodes of CCOT related to teachers' stated beliefs	2a. Colour coding of key episodes and fitting into the above sub-categories. 2b. Comparison and contrast of observational and interview data 2c. Tabulation of comparative data of individual teachers	Description of each teacher's classroom behaviours regarding CCOT. Individual and group patterns of classroom behaviours and how they relate to their stated beliefs
3. Analysing the stimulated recall interviews	Teachers' reasons for classroom behaviours	Transcription and translation of data Identifying and connecting sources of teachers' beliefs/practices	3a. Identifying key words/phrases used by individual teachers. Colour coding 3b. Comparing the key words/phrases from SR interviews and observed data	Description of each category of teachers' classroom practices. Patterns in teachers' classroom practices in relation to their stated beliefs.
4. Triangulating findings	Establishing the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs, actual practices, and influencing factors	Reviewing all the data previously identified	4a. Interrogating all data again for additional or contradictory findings 4b. Refining the content of all categories of teachers' beliefs, practices, and influencing factors.	A thick description of each category of teachers' beliefs and practices. Interpretation of the relationship between individual and group beliefs and practices of CCOT Relating the above to the sources/factors affecting them

3.10. Ensuring trustworthiness of the study

In order to enhance the trustworthiness, authenticity, or credibility of the study (Creswell and Miller, 2000), as frequently presented in the literature (Creswell, 2005; Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the researcher strove to implement triangulation, rich and thick description, member checking, peer debriefing, and translation verification. Given that the concept of ‘validity’, ‘reliability’, ‘objectivity’ and ‘generalisability’ borrowed from quantitative approach have been challenged as inappropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), these studies put emphasis on qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Hence, in this qualitative research, internal validity refers to ‘how research findings match reality’ (Merriam, 1998, p.201) and external validity deals with the applicability of the findings of this study to other contexts or with other subjects, which is referred to as the generalisability of a study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Consequently, the following steps were taken to establish the trustworthiness of the current study.

3.10.1. Triangulation

Triangulation is used as a validation technique. Data from different sources, such as interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were collected and compared. This convergence of findings from different sources then is taken as a sign of validation of findings. Thus, by juxtaposing different perspectives and data sources, triangulation allows qualitative researchers to cross-validate findings from one data source, or method, or perspective with findings from other data sources, methods, and perspectives (Dornyei, 2007; Riazi, 2016). The rationale for such cross-validation is that any weaknesses in a data source, method, or perspective may be compensated by another so that more reliable and valid conclusions could be made about the phenomenon under study.

3.10.2. Member checking

Member checking is one way of ensuring the accuracy and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. In this study, participants were asked to check the data they have produced and the researcher’s interpretations of the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Throughout the data gathering process, all interview transcripts,

observation transcripts, and stimulated recall transcripts were sent to the teachers to review the original transcripts in order to delete/change any parts they believed did not reflect the intended meaning of what they want to convey. The researcher discussed her interpretations of the classroom data with the participants during the interviews.

Furthermore, while this study did not rely solely on teacher self-report data, as much education research does, the inclusion of interviews does raise the question of accurate information. The teachers may have been inclined to overstate their actual practices or utilise practices in order to please the researcher. To minimise this threat to validity, the true purpose of the study (i.e., studying constructivist beliefs and practices) was withheld from the participants until after the study was complete.

3.10.3. Peer debriefing

I used peer debriefing to improve the validity of the coding process, the emerging themes, and the interpretations of the data. A peer debriefer who was trained as a researcher in applied linguistics and understands the context of the current study was selected. Thematic coding can be highly subjective, so I triangulated codes with another, more experienced researcher by discussing the codes for one transcript and coming to a consensus on the themes presented in the data. As a PhD degree, focusing on ELT with several years of teaching experience, the debriefer reread, evaluated, gave feedback concerning my data analysis and asked probing questions about the study.

3.10.4. Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability or applicability is an equivalent term for external validity or generalisability in quantitative research and implies the degree to which the findings of a qualitative study could be transferred to other similar contexts beyond the scope of the study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Transferability is seen as one of the quality criteria in qualitative research against which the trustworthiness of the findings could be checked. Case studies are considered as common research practices in language classroom research which could provide valuable findings to different stakeholders, including language learners, teachers, researchers, and administrators. These different stakeholders may find the transferability of the

reported findings to their own or other similar cases and thus the applicability of these findings may render (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In addition, to ensure the external validity of the current study, I provided a rich description of the different beliefs EFL teachers held regarding English teaching and learning, and how their beliefs impact their CCOT practices and the various ways in which the educational context shaped their beliefs and practices.

3.10.5. Dependability

In qualitative research, the concept of reliability is approximated through concepts of dependability or consistency (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Both refer to the consistency of the data collection procedures, as well as detailed description of the research process. In other words, the extent to which the researchers carefully and accurately explain the decisions made at different stages in the process of research is called dependability. Moreover, to ensure the dependability of the study, the researcher should keep a complete record of all the phases of the research process such as selection of the participants, interview transcripts, field notes, data analysis, and so on, in an accessible manner (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Accordingly, all the written forms and electronic forms, with more than one copy of each, were kept in a safe place.

3.11. Ethical considerations

Ethics is an important consideration in any type of educational research. It is important to inform research participants about the overall aims of the research and the possible benefits and risks of taking part in the research project (Silverman, 2011). As a researcher, I carefully considered the ethical issues related to this study with the standard advised by Birkbeck University of London. An introductory talk about the aims and procedures of the research study was done with the principals and the teacher participants. The principals were requested to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix 2). The teachers were all informed about their right of access to any data that were collected from them. From the outset, I decided to provide detailed information about myself and my study to gain the trust of teachers. I assured participants that the purpose of the research was not to evaluate their teaching practices and any information gathered would be only used for research purposes. The teachers were reassured that I was ready to answer any questions concerning the

procedures of data collection. The teachers were aware that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time and whatever they said or did would not be used unless they gave their permission. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to make sure that individual teachers were not negatively affected by the research in any way. Then, they were requested to read and sign a consent form (see Appendix 1). The teacher participants showed their interest by their cooperation and their desire to know the final results and recommendations of the study. They also expressed their satisfaction of the opportunity of sharing their views with me.

3.12. Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed in detail the research design, rationale for choice of methods, data collection strategies, and data analysis procedures which were employed in the present study. The research questions were linked carefully to the most appropriate research design, and the most suitable methods to achieve the objectives of this study. Given the fact that beliefs are context-bound and situated (Burns, 1996), it is argued in this chapter that the choice of a case study strategy is appropriate. Such a research strategy helps to investigate the beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning individual teachers hold, the extent to which their beliefs are carried out in their actual teaching in the classroom, and the relationships revealed across the eight participating teachers between a commonly articulated belief and the practices that they identified with it.

Further, the various stages of the research process, the selection of data gathering tools, and the research sample were described and analysed. The process of planning and carrying out the interviews and systematic classroom observations were explained. Also, approaches to coding and data analysis process aimed at making the study trustworthy and transparent were also described.

The next chapter presents the findings of my study in order to answer the research questions and provides the basis for a detailed discussion of the findings. It identifies the characteristics of participating teachers' work during the observed lessons, and the extent to which these characteristics reflect those recommended in the curriculum. It also examines factors and rationales which underlie their practices.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the data gathered through the semi-structured pre-active interviews, the classroom observations, and the stimulated recall post-active interviews, as described in detail in Chapter 3, in order to answer the research questions of the study. It focuses on the tensions between the teachers' beliefs and the classroom practices of the eight participants in the observation study and provides an overview of the main similarities and differences between the eight cases. In addition, the post-active interviews highlighted different experiential and contextual factors which appeared to have an impact on participant's work during the observed lessons. These results are filtered through the perspectives of the researcher and the participants in the study. While none of these measures can claim to answer the research questions fully, together they may provide valuable insights into the cognitions and beliefs of foreign language teachers and the way they interpret and implement the curriculum.

This chapter first presents how two groups of teacher participants have been identified (sections 4.2, and 4.3). It then presents the findings about the teachers' beliefs and practices of CCOT (RQ1 & RQ2) based on the data analysis of teachers' pre-active interviews and classroom observations, and also presents the findings about reasons and factors underpinning their practices (RQ3 & RQ4) based on the data analysis of stimulated recall interviews (sections 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7). In this regards, each section presents the analysis of the three sets of data altogether. In addition, the presentation of data has been arranged according to the two groups of teachers (C1 and C2), which are discussed later in this chapter.

It is worth noting that regarding the relationship between the teachers' stated beliefs and observed practices, the purpose of the study was not to simply confirm or disconfirm whether the stated beliefs were evident in their practice. Given that no one would expect a teacher's practice to either always or never match his or her stated beliefs (Basturkmen et al., 2004), this study aims to examine the extent to which the

teachers' stated beliefs were reflected in their practice and to explore, acknowledge and understand the underlying reasons behind possible tensions (Phipps and Borg, 2009).

The findings based on the analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews data revealed discrepancies between the teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices. The findings also revealed that these EFL teachers had a number of commonalities in their pedagogical belief systems and the teaching routines and approaches they employed. In addition, the data from the participants' stimulated recall interviews revealed that the teachers' beliefs and classroom practices were influenced by their previous learning and teaching experiences and that they were also contextualised in their particular teaching situations.

The findings of the analysis led to a classification of the eight teachers into two dominant categories of the teachers' beliefs: 1) CCOT beliefs (Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila), and 2) mixed (traditional-CCOT) beliefs (Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda). These categories were along a continuum, from traditional to constructivist with some teachers showing a mix of traditional and constructivist beliefs. The following sections briefly explain features of each category.

4.2. Individual teachers' belief patterns

4.2.1. CCOT beliefs in FL teaching/learning

According to the pre-active interview data, Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila in the first category (C1), tended to view teaching/learning as a sharing process between the students and their teachers. According to Reiss (1993), a constructivist teacher is one who starts from the assumption that all students have their own ways of thinking, which they bring to lesson and which they apply during their discussions in the classroom. In this situation, the role of a teacher is to encourage students to use their thinking and to help them to develop it.

4.2.2. Mixed beliefs (traditional-CCOT) in FL teaching/learning

The pre-active interview revealed that three teachers in the second category (C2), Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda held mixed beliefs which included both traditional and

communicative/constructivist (CCOT) perspectives. This type of belief system includes various theories about FL learning and teaching. However, there appeared to be one teacher in this category, Hoda, who believed that a teacher had all the responsibility with regard to teaching and learning – a view consistent with a teacher-centred orientation.

4.3. Individual teachers' practices system

The findings of the analysis of the observations of teachers' practices indicated that the eight teachers could be classified into two groups – traditional practices (Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda) and mixed practices (Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila) – and that none of the participants followed purely CCOT practice.

4.3.1. Traditional transmission practices in FL teaching/learning

The practices of three teachers (C2) reflected behaviourist principles, conducting classes in a teacher-centred pedagogy. They did most of the talking and they decided how class time would be spent. In all observations, the teachers were dominant, controller, and all were textbook-oriented. One of them, Hoda, held more traditional belief while the other, Bahar and Zoha, held combined (traditional– CCOT) beliefs.

4.3.2. Mixed practices (traditional–CCOT) in FL teaching/learning

Five teacher participants (C1) were observed to practise combined features from both behaviourist activities (including transmission of knowledge from teacher to students) and communicative activities (including active interaction between teacher and students). However, all of them held a mainly CCOT belief.

4.4. Analysis of the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practice

By comparing the eight cases, two major types of relationships between beliefs and practices emerged from the data analyses (Figure 4.1).

Category 1 (C1): Participants with CCOT beliefs who applied mixed practices in this category. (Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila)

Category 2 (C2): Participants with mixed beliefs (traditional– CCOT) who applied traditional practices in this category. (Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda)

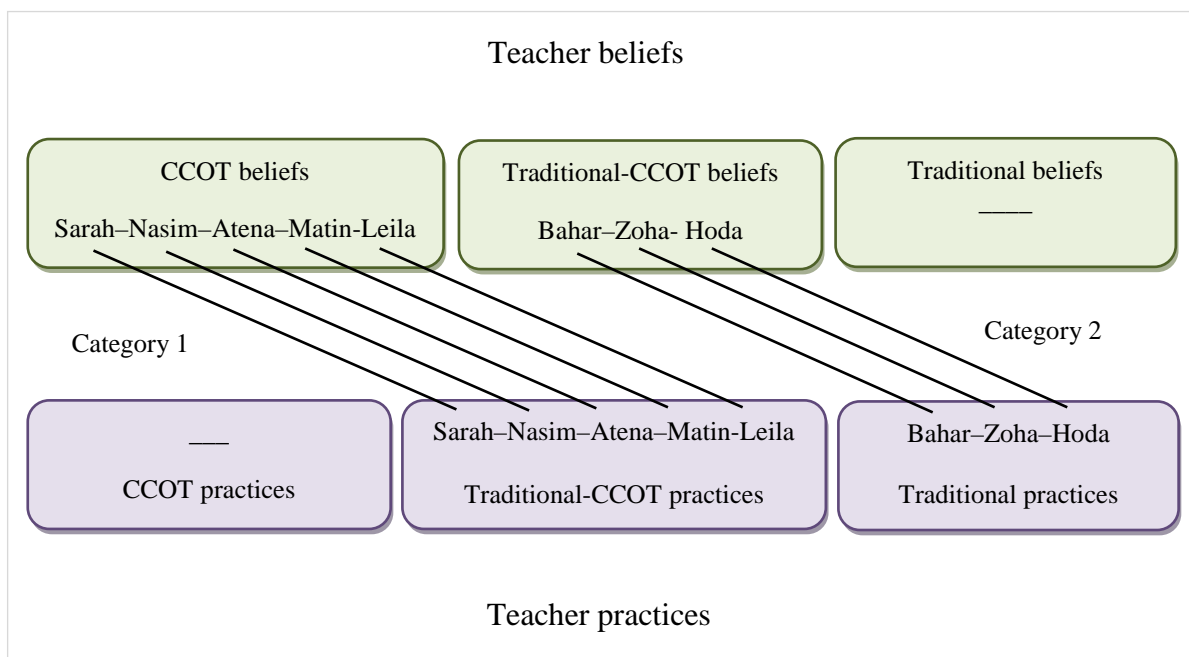


Figure 4.1 *Relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices*

The findings will be presented according to these two groups of teachers who clearly portrayed the characteristics of the relationship between beliefs and practices about EFL teaching and learning with regard to the key principles of the CCOT-based curriculum. Teacher beliefs and practices were analysed with regard to the five features of CCOT:

1. Practice of grammar teaching; (Implicit grammar teaching)
2. The role of error correction; (Errors should be tolerated)
3. The role of L1 use; (Generally not used; more use of L2)
4. Teachers' roles; (Teacher's role is interactive, rooted in negotiation)
5. Learner-centred pedagogy; (Encourage cooperative learning)

These five premises also function as concepts which have been investigated in theory and research in the field of L2 teaching and learning and the Ministry of Education expects teachers to understand and implement in their instructional practices.

In the presentation of data analysis, excerpts from interviews, and observations are provided to exemplify how general findings were manifested among the eight participants. Also, efforts were made to ensure that their diverse voices are presented. However, in instances where a high degree of consensus existed among the participants, data from the one or two that were the most vivid description are presented. This study adopts the term 'professed' or 'stated' to characterise the beliefs

articulated by the participants in the pre-active interview and the term ‘beliefs in practice’ to the beliefs articulated by the participants in the post-active interviews. Moreover, pseudonyms are used for the teacher participants. The letters in the parentheses after the extracts show the first letter of each participant’s pseudonym, the source of data, and the lines of the extracts taken from the interview transcripts. For example, (HSI: 34) means Hoda, the pre-active interview, speaker turn 34 in the transcript; (SO1) means Sarah, first observation, and (ZSR1) means Zoha, first post-active stimulated recall interview. The coding system used in this study and the transcription conventions for observations are shown in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 respectively.

Table 4.1. Teachers’ code for interviews and observations

	Teachers’ Code							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Hoda	Leila	Atena	Matin	Bahar	Nasim	Zoha	Sarah
Pre-active Semi-structured Interview	HPI	LPI	API	MPI	BPI	NPI	ZPI	SPI
Observation 1	HO1	LO1	AO1	MO1	BO1	NO1	ZO1	SO1
Post-active Stimulated Recall Interview 1	HSR1	LSR1	ASR1	MSR1	BSR1	NSR1	ZSR1	SSR1
Observation 2	HO2	LO2	AO2	MO2	BO2	NO2	ZO2	SO2
Post-active Stimulated Recall Interview 2	HSR2	LSR2	ASR2	MSR2	BSR2	NSR2	ZSR2	SSR2

Table 4.2. Transcription conventions

R	Researcher
T	Teacher
S(s)	More than one students
S1, S2, S3	Individual students
[]	Researcher’s descriptions of events
...	Inaudible or omitted words
<Italic >	Researcher’s translation to English when the teacher or students speak Farsi

The following section (4.5) presents the findings about C1 teachers’ beliefs and practices of CCOT based on the data analysis of teachers’ pre-active interviews and classroom observations, and also the findings about reasons and factors underpinning their practices based on the analysis of stimulated recall interviews, altogether.

4.5. Category 1: CCOT Beliefs/ Mixed (Traditional-CCOT) practices

Category 1: (Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila)

As mentioned earlier, the pre-active interview revealed that five teachers, Nasim, Atena, Matin, Sarah, and Leila (C1), held a mainly CCOT belief. However, the practices of these five teachers reflected both traditional practices (conducting classes in a teacher-centred pedagogy) and communicative activities (including active interaction between teacher and students).

4.5.1. Beliefs and Practice in relation to grammar teaching/learning (C1)

Contrary to previous traditional methods that emphasised the explicit teaching of grammar in isolation from communication, the CCOT curriculum considers grammar as a tool to achieve communication with an implicit treatment in the classroom. The teachers' pre-active interviews, their actual behaviours in the two audio-recorded lessons and the post-active stimulated recall interviews are analysed to examine to what extent teachers' beliefs and practices with respect to grammar teaching and learning were consistent as well as the rationales underlying their practices, especially the practices that were incongruent with their stated beliefs. Three themes are identified from data analysis: 1) Primary focus on form and implicit approach, and 3) Sentence-based grammar presentation.

4.5.1.1. Primary focus on form and implicit grammar instruction

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two subcategories to form-focused instruction: focus-on-form (FonF) that exposes the learners to linguistic elements which are integrated into communicative activities and focus-on-forms (FonFs) which is rather traditional as the linguistic elements are taught separately following a pre-ordained sequence of its importance (Doughty, 2001, Nassaji, 2017). Further, explicit instruction as defined by Ellis (2005, p.717) is 'instruction that requires students to pay deliberate attention to the targeted form with a view to understanding it', whereas implicit instruction is 'instruction that requires learners to infer how a form works without awareness'.

Data analysis from the pre-active interviews revealed that the teachers in this study fall along a continuum, ranging from those who emphasise grammar over

communication in their teaching to those who stress communication with a little focus on form. Although the teachers expressed a variety of beliefs in this area, overall, most of them expressed a preference for an implicit approach to teaching grammar that requires students to induce the grammar rules through communicative use of the language Ellis (2005). For example, in the pre-active interview, Sarah strongly contended that:

‘Grammar should be taught in context; otherwise, ‘explaining grammar without any context is a kind of inorganic learning, and such learning is fragmented and incomplete.’ (SPI: 29)

She further argued that in teaching grammar, ‘more attention should be paid to how grammar is used and how it functions in different contexts’ (SPI: 29). Like Sarah, Matin articulated that language points should be presented in contextual situations so that students can better internalise and retain the structures. In a typical response, Matin stated that:

‘In my experience, when the students are given grammar rules directly in the class, they forget the rules right after the class. But when the rules are learned by reasoning and internalisation, they stay longer. This was usually the way we learned language usage and meanings in the real world.’ (MPI: 28)

Here, Matin specifies that students should learn grammar rules through reasoning and internalisation. She pointed out that she prefers not to teach grammar in a traditional way that focuses on theory and repetitive practice, like the way she was taught in secondary school. Matin added that,

‘I think students learn the grammar and vocabulary items easier thorough a context or story. If they learn the language without a context, they wouldn’t get to know how those grammar and vocabulary items could be used.’ (MPI: 30)

Matin’s comment here about contextualised grammar teaching indicates that she wants her students to take the initiative to discover grammar rules for their own use.

Generally, it was found that C1 teachers shared similar beliefs regarding the grammar presentation. They all emphasised that grammar was best taught through natural exposure and practice should be in a communicative context. Therefore, they would conduct an implicit and inductive teaching approach so that students can learn to

understand the grammatical rules which are aligned with the curriculum reform. They argued that in teaching grammar, more attention should be paid to how grammar is used and how it functions in different contexts.

The findings relating to teachers' actual practices revealed that C1 teachers' beliefs tended to converge with her classroom practices with regard to grammar teaching; however, there were instances where they diverged. For example, in line with what Sarah stated in the pre-active interview, in the first observed lesson, she integrated grammar items with contextualisation. The following lesson extract provides an example of her style:

Episode 1

- 1 T: Mina's friend took her story book without her permission...
- 2 S1: Is it correct if I say secretly?
- 3 T: That's correct. It means the book is taken without Mina's permission.
- 4 Can you make an example?
- 5 S1: My brother took my bicycle without my permission?
- 6 T: That's right. Permission is a noun and the verb is permit. For example, I
- 7 am not permitted to drive without having a driving licence.
- 8 Ss: [Students repeat the words.] Permit, permission.

(SO1)

This extract shows that Sarah introduced a verb 'permit' and its noun form 'permission' within a meaningful context (lines 1-7). She also tries to engage students in this activity through prompts (Line 4). In both lesson observed, she typically followed this approach when teaching the grammar points from the prescribed textbook. On being asked if she always used this type of grammar presentation, Sarah, in the stimulated recall interview, clearly identified her idea:

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; S= Sarah)*

R: Do you always teach grammar teaching the way you did here in this lesson?

S: I try to start off with a text, then work on the grammar, sometimes, for example comparatives and superlatives which I did last week, I started by telling them 'this is how it's used' then to do some practice without any context. So, sometimes I start with the rule, sometimes with the context. It depends on the grammar point.

R: Is that what you tend to do now?

S: Yeah. You know my teachers in secondary school used to teach grammar explicitly...I didn't see any benefits in it. At first, I was started teaching grammar implicitly. I didn't really believe in it when I started before, but now I see the benefits...I want them to learn grammar in context. But sometimes it is really difficult.

R: Why do you think it's difficult? What are the challenges for you?

S: The students are at different level. Some of them have difficulty to understand what I say... I mean understanding vocabularies. I want to provide opportunities for them to use the language. But some of them cannot do activities which require them to use English. So, sometimes I have to change my approach in a way they expect from me. (SSR1)

Sarah here recalls her previous traditional grammar learning experiences that were not useful for her. She also explained why she felt that sometimes contextual constraints such as students' different proficiency level and their expectations were preventing her to teach grammar in context. In her second lesson observation, Sarah used stand-alone or isolated grammar presentation. In the stimulated recall interview, when asked why she changed her approach, she expressed her reasons as follows:

S: Yes, today I just went right to the grammar. I did it for two reasons. First I was running out of time, second I did it to grab students' attention after working on a reading passage.

R: I see. Do you think if they will pay attention more if move away from contextualised grammar presentation?

S: Yes. Sometimes I have to teach grammar stand-alone, otherwise they will ask, 'why aren't we doing any grammar today?' Actually, they didn't see the grammar work we were doing with the reading because it was in context... When we did grammar stand-alone, completely out of context, for example giving the rules, filling in the gaps, everybody paid attention then. (SSR1)

It is significant here, that in spite of her belief about implicit presentation of grammar, students' expectations seemed to be overriding Sarah's perception of their language learning needs. She seemed to be aware of a tension between her beliefs and current practices.

This pattern was observed not only in Sarah's work but throughout that of the other C1 teachers, Extract 2 is further evidence of this from the work of Matin. Like Sarah, Matin's beliefs tended to converge with her classroom practices; however, there were instances where they diverged. One of two lessons that I observed with Matin, did not involve grammar in a contextualised theme, despite the fact that she expressed its importance for her. The following episodes show how Matin dealt with this part of the lesson.

Episode 2

- 1 [The teacher writes on the board and reads what she writes.]
- 2 T: fascinating, fascinating, what is fascinating?
- 3 Ss: (In Farsi) < *The students say the equivalent of fascinating.* >
- 4 T: Can you say it in English what the meaning is?
- 5 S1: (In Farsi) < *The students say the equivalent of beautiful.* >
- 6 [The teacher says the equivalent of fascinating.]
- 7 T: Anxious, what is anxious?
- 8 [The teacher waits for an answer from the students.]
- 9 T: (In Farsi) < *anxious.* >
- 10 [The teacher continues with some more adjectives.]

As seen in the above episode, Matin wrote some adjectives on the board and asked students about the meaning of these adjectives (line 2&5). There were some attempts here by the teacher to encourage the students to speak English (line 2), but the only English spoken was by the teacher (and even she finally says the meaning of the word in Farsi) (line 6). Then she wrote some words on the board and asked students to describe these words using adjectives, as the following extract shows:

Episode 3

- 1 [The teacher writes the word 'movie' on the board.]
- 2 T: How can we describe this noun using two adjectives?
- 3 [The teacher repeats the previous question in Farsi.]
- 4 T: Remember to put the adjectives in order. It comes before noun.
- 5 S1: Movie fascinating.
- 6 T: No, fascinating movie.
- 7 [The teacher explains the position on the adjective.]
- 8 T: (In Farsi) <*The adjective comes before the noun. Always the adjective*
- 9 *comes before the noun. It is not like Farsi.*>
- 10 T: A fascinating movie. (In Farsi) <*The indefinite article should come*
- 11 *before the noun.*> We should say it before the adjective.

(MO2)

Here, Matin starts introducing the usage of adjectives in English (line 4) and switches into Farsi while explaining the position of it in more detail without a prompt from the students (lines 8-11). As the above extract shows the explicit grammar teaching, the use of examples and the use of Farsi in explaining grammar were key characteristics of Matin's work during teaching grammar in this lesson. Upon being asked why she tended to teach grammar explicitly in the stimulated recall interview, she pointed out that:

'I know it is important to develop students' critical mind. But sometimes I have reservations about a rule-search approach, as I don't think students are able to uncover grammar rules on their own.' (MSR2)

She further justified that students want her to focus on what is important for them to pass the final exam. Thus, she has decided to teach between 'the two extremes': the traditional rule-based approach and context-based approach to grammar teaching. It appears that the interactive dynamics between Matin's beliefs about the implicit teaching approach and her beliefs about the students' incapability of discovering grammar rules by themselves led to inconsistency in her teaching practice.

To sum up, the data analysis reveals that C2 teacher participants value more natural exposure than formal instruction. They viewed implicit learning as learning through meaningful communication in order eventually to be conscious of how language is used. They prefer to utilise the tasks which are based on context-driven focus-on-

form in which the focus of the lessons is on meaning rather than working on rules and structures. They were also keen to give students time to discover target features on their own, a process they believe is crucial to improving their understanding and developing their critical mind. However, despite adopting an implicit approach to grammar teaching in some occasions, C1 participants were not confident that merely using implicit approach would help students pass examinations.

4.5.1.2. Sentence-based grammar presentation

As mentioned earlier, in the pre-active interviews, C1 participants stated the belief that grammar should be taught in context with the help of real-life examples and communicative activities. However, in the observed lessons, they followed sentence-based grammar presentation, then eliciting rules from the students, and then doing the grammar exercises in the textbook as controlled practice. The teachers' adoption of a sentence-based approach to grammar presentation is exemplified in the following observation extract.

Episode 4

- 1 [The teacher writes on the board Jack is 180 cm. Sam is 190 cm. Jeff is 170
- 2 cm. She reads what she writes]
- 3 T: Ok, look at these sentences.
- 4 [The teacher first explains what 'compare' means in Farsi.]
- 5 T: Now, we are going to compare these three peoples' height. Who can
- 6 compare Sam and Jack?
- 7 S1: Sam is taller than Jack.
- 8 T: Yes. Parmis, can you compare Jeff and Jack?
- 9 S2: Jeff is shorter than Jack.
- 10 [The teacher asks some of the students to compare each others' heights.]
- 11 S3: Samin is shorter than me or I. Can I say 'I'?
- 12 T: (in Farsi) < *If we want to use 'pronoun' we should use 'objective*
- 13 *pronoun'. If we want to use 'subjective pronoun' we should say 'Sam is*
- 14 *shorter than I am'.> Now, we are going to do the exercises.*

(AO2)

The above episode illustrates how Atena used de-contextualised single sentences to present grammar (line 1). The teacher attempted to extract rules from them. In explaining the rules, the teacher commonly used grammatical terminology as well as

L1 (lines12-13). As shown in this extract, the explicit grammar teaching, the use of examples, and the use of Farsi in explaining grammar were key characteristics of Atena's work during teaching grammar in this lesson.

Although, as stated earlier, Atena believed that the teacher should expose the students to grammar in meaningful contexts, her class observation do not suggest that she adopted her teaching according to this approach. When asked Atena about this, in the stimulated recall interview, she mentioned that:

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; A= Atena)

R: Here, I noticed that you used decontextualise sentences to teach grammar. Can you tell me why?

A: An objective pronoun is a new term for them, so I think I have to keep mentioning it. From my previous teaching experience, this is where the students usually make mistakes. It is always tested in the exam.' (ASR2)

It appears that Atena's belief overwhelmingly influenced her teaching. Such conviction was strongly grounded in her previous teaching experience and her concern about the examination. I asked whether she was doing so only for the purpose of exam. She elaborated more on why it is not possible for her to use a meaningful approach to grammar within the fixed lesson period.

'I think the main problem is that there is not enough time to cover the whole lesson and to teach grammar in a meaningful context which is time-consuming... For me, I didn't like teachers to explain grammar, and I still don't. Sometimes, if explicit explanations are the only access to understanding a certain piece of material, I have to accept it reluctantly. But, most of the students expect teachers to present grammar points explicitly. Students' levels are different and some of them are really weak.' (ASR2)

Atena's comment here indicates her awareness of the process of grammar teaching through communicative activities and implicit approach. This awareness seemed to be aligned with her views on grammar teaching in the pre-active interview. However, in practice, it seems that she toggles between explicit and implicit strategies at times as necessary. It appears that whether or not Atena utilises an implicit or explicit grammar explanations depends on contextual factors like the amount of lesson time

available, student ability level, etc. In the stimulated recall interview, she said that better lesson planning might help her to achieve her objectives within the tight schedule.

This seeming inconsistency between professed beliefs and instructional practice was also seen to some extent in the data relating to another teacher, Matin. Her explicit focus on grammar presentation and the nature of the activities she used in class were not consistent with her view that students learn rules by using them in meaningful contexts. Matin's classroom observation revealed her explicit presentation of grammar when teaching adjectives as the extract below shows:

Episode 5

- 1 [The teacher writes on the board: Hamid is a fast driver. This classroom is
 - 2 big. Then she explains the grammar point in Farsi.]
 - 3 T: (In Farsi) <Adjectives come before the noun and after the verb to be>.
 - 4 T: Ok, now where is the adjective here?
 - 5 S1: Fast.
 - 6 T: Yes, Fast. That's right.
 - 7 S2: (In Farsi) 'big' is an adjective too.
 - 8 T: Yes.
 - 9 [The teacher underlines 'fast' and 'big' on the board.]
 - 10 T: Ok, Tell me an adjective comes before or after the noun?
 - 11 Ss: Before the noun.
 - 12 T: Yes, Adjectives come before the noun and after the verb to be. Now, look
 - 13 at your class. You can see different things here. For example, a big table, a
 - 14 nice curtain. 'Big' and 'nice' are adjectives. What else can you tell me?
- (MO1)

As the above episode illustrates, Matin started writing the example sentences on the board (line 1). She then explained what an adjective means in Farsi (line 3). She asked students to find the adjectives in the sentences (lines 1-2). Upon receiving the right answer she provided confirmation (lines 5-6) and then started asking question to make sure the students understand the grammar point (line 10). She then provided explanation in English (lines 11-12) and engaged students with an activity to speak about different adjectives (lines 13-14).

Overall, this excerpt shows that Matin followed a deductive approach and used Farsi when explaining grammar point. Although she tried to engage students in the activity, there was little evidence of interaction among the students in her class. There was thus a clear tension between her practices in this lesson and what she believed (students learn the grammar and vocabulary items easier through a context).

Later, in the stimulated recall interview, Matin explained that students have different learning styles with some learning best when they analyse, and others learning more by interacting and communicating with their peers. She went on to say:

‘Here for example when I want to teach adjectives, the classroom provides an environment that is rich in adjectives, so I’ll use it. Thinking back on my years in the classroom, there are a few easy-to-use activities I employ to actively encourage the more creative use of adjectives.’ (MSR1)

In her second classroom observation, however, Matin conducted practice with an inductive-based learning and discovery-based approach. She started her lessons with meaningful context and activities; she concluded them with form-focused discussion to help students improve their grammar performance. In addition to this, Matin admitted that the six years she had spent learning English at school had made little impact on her English proficiency. Instead, she believed that it was mainly her own efforts that helped her achieve the level of proficiency she currently enjoyed. Therefore, she claimed that she did not tend to resort to using the traditional approach her teachers had used.

Similarly, Leila’s classroom practices were not aligned with her beliefs. Although she believed that teachers should expose the students to grammar in meaningful contexts, in her observed lesson, she wrote de-contextualised ‘passive’ and ‘active’ sentences and explicitly focused on grammar analysis. The following extract, from the work of Leila, evinces this incongruity:

Episode 6

- 1 [The teacher writes on the board two sentences and underlines the verbs.]
 2 Hamed washed the car yesterday. The car was washed yesterday
- 3 T: Ok, look at these two sentences. Pay attention everybody.
 4 In the first sentence Hamed is the 'subject', we know who did the action
 5 which is washing. And 'the car' is an object. In the second sentence, it is not
 6 important to know who did the action. We are most interested in the things
 7 that happen.
- 8 T: (In Farsi) <It's not important who washed the car, the important thing is that
 9 the car is washed. Did you understand?>
- 10 Ss: Yes.
- 11 T: Ok, who knows which one is 'active' and which one is 'passive'?
- 12 S1: The first sentence is 'active' and the second one is 'passive'.
- 13 T: Good. In the first sentence 'the car' is an object; in the second sentence the
 14 passive verb follows the object of the active sentence which is 'the car'.
- 15 [The teacher underlines all the elements 'subject, object, verb, and adverb' of
 16 the two sentences and writes them on the board and asks students to write
 17 them in their notebooks.] (LO1)

As seen above, Leila wrote de-contextualised sentences containing 'active' and 'passive' and underlined the grammar points (lines 1-2). She explained what 'active' and 'passive' means in English (lines 3-7) and then switched to Farsi to clarify the grammar point one more time (lines 8-9). It is clear from the above extract that this part of Leila's lesson focused mostly on explanation of grammar rules and she used L1 for her explanation, which is a characteristic of traditional practice in this context. The students were also expected to write down the rules in their notebooks for reference at home when they needed to consult a particular grammar rule while doing grammar exercises.

In our discussion afterward, on being asked why she used explicit grammar presentation, she explained the rationale for this apparent tension between her stated beliefs and her actual practices:

R: Why did you teach the grammar point, I mean 'active and passive' here, explicitly using sentence example?

L: Well, I know that the best way to teach grammar is through natural exposure, but there is no such opportunity for the students here. This kind of grammar teaching is really against my will and I don't like it. But adopting a new approach is almost difficult. They don't work for a context like Iran which is exam-based.' (LSR1)

Here, Leila's justification for her explicit grammar instruction was that the teachers were controlled by an assessment system which was imposed on them. Further discussion of this issue revealed that students' learning was Leila's main responsibility and she had to thoroughly explain the grammar lesson to the students. She was also very textbook-oriented in all of the observed lessons. This may have been due to her being exam-oriented and guided by the textbook.

In sum, the above analyses indicate that with regards to C1 teachers' grammar presentation and approach, in the pre-active interviews, these five teachers expressed a preference for a focus-on-form approach in which the learning of rules and structures are already embedded in the meaningful and communicative lessons. They also believed that too much explicit explanation of grammar with technical metalanguage should be avoided. However, observational data reflected that C1 teachers' beliefs tended to diverge from their classroom practices but there were instances where they converged as well. Although they valued text-based presentation of the grammar point, lesson observation showed that at times they preferred sentence-based grammar presentation, thinking that this presentation strategy was easier for both the teachers and the students, since they have to prepare students for the accuracy-based examinations. Moreover, despite adopting an implicit approach to grammar teaching in some occasions, C1 participants were not confident that merely using implicit approach would help learners pass examinations.

4.5.2. Beliefs and Practice in relation to error correction

This section presents data regarding teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to error correction as one of the premises of CCOT. In a learner-centred educational setting where collaborative learning is exercised and learner autonomy is highlighted, 'self-correction' is required and has been claimed to be essential (Edwards, 2000; Sultana, 2009). The teachers elaborated on their beliefs about error correction, the techniques they employed, and the underlying reasons for what they did, drawing upon the

results indicated in the qualitative data sets. Two themes emerged from the data analysis: a) the view of errors as natural outcomes of language learning, and b) the need to prioritise fluency over accuracy.

4.5.2.1. The view of errors as natural outcomes of language learning

Data analysis from the pre-active interview showed that C1 participants considered errors as natural outcomes during the process of language learning. They claimed that they would not interrupt students while they were talking. Moreover, these teachers indicated that correcting students' errors while they were talking might destroy their confidence. They shared a belief that language is learned through trial and error, so learners' errors are expected during the development of language skills. Such a belief was reflected in the following extract:

'We all make errors when we are learning a language. It is not reasonable to require the students to produce perfect English. Even native speakers of English make mistakes some times. So I can tolerate the students' errors while they are developing their communicative skills in English.' (API: 34)

Atena's comment here shows her preference in tolerating students' errors to let them improve their communicative skills. She stressed the point that peer-correction would be an effective technique as students take it better if their mistakes are corrected by their friends rather than the teacher and it minimises the gap between the weak and strong students. However, the other teachers did not seem to value peer-correction very much.

In the pre-active interview, Nasim also conveyed that she used to correct student's grammatical errors directly earlier in her career, but later she decided to correct their errors by repeating the correct responses without telling them explicitly what was wrong. She believed that the idea of letting the conversation flow without error correction is designed to pull the students out of their shell and let them communicate. In the pre-active interview, Nasim explained:

'When I feel that error correction is going to hinder them, it's going to make them feel less confident, or it's going to make them worry about making mistakes, then I hold back.' (NPI: 36)

Nasim's comment shows her concern about students' affect and her preference in considering the students' confidence level. She further claimed that she always tries to avoid explicit correction because she wants her students to feel 'relaxed, free and confident' in their speaking. Also, she believed that the students' personalities and level of communicative ability are the most important factors when providing error correction.

Similarly, Matin in the pre-active interview, Matin expressed her preference to avoid giving error correction or treated it carefully when students were trying out using English. In the pre-active interview, she said:

'During the phase of input, I will require more accuracy. But when students are involved in the conversation in the situation of communication, the property is to let the meaning across. Correcting their errors will hinder their willingness to try out new things.' (MPI: 32)

Whether or not and how to correct students' errors, in Matin's view, depends on the timing and the purposes of the teaching activities, as is further detailed in her post-observation interview.

Overall, from the above comments, it can be argued that the most crucial goal for these teachers, when correcting errors or opting not to correct them, was to foster their students' confidence, independence, and willingness to communicate. They also believed that if the activities involved communicative interaction among students, they would give more space, letting the errors pass as long as they can express the meaning or attain the purpose of communication.

4.5.2.2. The need to prioritise fluency over accuracy

C1 teachers, in the pre-active interview, expressed the belief that fluency was more important than accuracy, and they did not view students' errors as failures. They indicated that to achieve communicative purposes, fluency should be considered first. For example, Matin stated that over-correction and too much stress on accuracy downgrade the students' motivation to speak English. She shared her experience:

'To over-correct inhibits students and they lose fluency. Based on my experience, I think too much stress on accuracy affects the students' speaking because they are afraid of making mistakes. I usually pay less

attention to accuracy and I focus fluency on developing speaking skills.’ (MPI: 34)

It appears that in Matin’s mind the issue of the affective factor and the importance of promoting fluency are related, thus she prefers to pay less attention to accuracy. Matin believed that the teacher should make sure that students are able to express their ideas and then correct their errors as the following extract demonstrates:

‘The teacher should pay attention to the meaning the students try to convey. For example, when they are talking about their favourable food, I focus on their discussion of food, not the linguistic forms of the sentence they produced.’ (MPI: 36)

As the above quote shows, it seems that for Matin the students’ engagement in the activity and the flow of conversation are more important than the accuracy in the linguistic form.

Although most teacher participants acknowledged that the communicative approach stresses language fluency, these five participants indicated that it is the purposes of activities that determined their focus on fluency or accuracy. As Nasim stated:

‘Based on my personal experience, if I want to conduct an activity to liven up the classroom atmosphere or to motivate the students to speak, I would focus on fluency. But I can say that the proportion of fluency and accuracy is determined by the purpose of the activity.’ (NPI: 40)

Nasim’s comment here reveals her strong beliefs to focus on fluency to promote students’ motivation. She believes that to motivate the students, implicit error correction is crucial when the students are engaged with communicative activities.

Overall, as has been seen in the analyses of the pre-active interview data, C1 participants believed that the students need fluency to achieve communicative purposes. Hence, ignoring error correction for the purpose of communicative activities is highly valuable to these teachers. However, this does not mean that accuracy is not important for them. They believe that when the objective is ‘accuracy’, immediate correction is appropriate; however, when the focus is on ‘fluency’, they can do correction later.

However, the observational data revealed that C1 participants’ actual practice of error correction did not accord closely with their stated beliefs. For example, they regularly

interrupted the flow of activity to focus on error correction on the spot, whereas they had expressed in the pre-active interviews the belief that error correction was best done after the task was finished. In most respects teachers' stated beliefs were not congruent with their practices. In a few cases, however, there was congruence. For example, Nasim was found to correct students' error as the following episode shows:

Episode 7

- 1 S: It rains but I always go to school.
- 2 T: 'It was raining'.
- 3 S: It was raining...
- 4 T: It was raining but I...
- 5 S: It was raining but I go to school.
- 6 T: You should use 'went' which is the past tense of 'go'.
- 7 S: It was raining but I went to school.
- 8 T: That's right. (NO1)

In line with her stated belief, Nasim first attempts to encourage self-correction (line 2). When she makes mistake for the second time (line 5), she uses the explicit correction and explains the rule (line 6) to help the student correct herself.

Later in the stimulated recall interview, upon being asked why she used two types of corrections in this episode, Nasim explained the rationale which underpinned this approach:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; N= Nasim)

R: Why did you use two types of strategies for error correction here?

N: Most of the time like here I let them to self correct. I think such self-correction techniques will enhance students' awareness of their own mistakes. I really don't want to spoon-feed my students. But at times I have to do it.

R: Ok. So why do you think you have to do it?

N: I know that the best way is to let my students think and find it themselves, rather than provide them with the correct form. I believe that the more the teachers offer the correct answer, the more they spoon-feed the learners. But when there is no time, I have to correct them straight away.' (NSR1)

Although Nasim seemed to be aware of the benefits of self-correction for the students, she corrected the student's error explicitly due to the lack of time. However, in the second lesson observation, Nasim corrected the students implicitly with recasts, when the teacher repeats learners' ill-formed utterance with a minute change in form (Brown, 2007). Here is an example from the work of Nasim.

Episode 8

- 1 T: Ok. When do we use as....as?
- 2 S: When they same.
- 3 T: Ok. When they are the same, we use as...as.

(NO2)

This extract shows, Nasim used a recast providing the correct form, not by itself, but as a part of her grammar explanation (line 3), without emphasising the corrected part. It seems from this short stretch of interaction that Nasim's claim in the pre-active interview about error correction is justified.

Sarah's classroom observation revealed that her practices were to some extent congruent with her professed belief. She tended not to correct learners' errors and not interrupt them while speaking, as the following episode shows:

Episode 9

- 1 [The teacher asks one of the students to tell the summary of the story she had
- 2 read recently. The student tells the story about Bill Gates.]
- 3 S: ... He had 2000 dollars in his pocket, fall on the floor. If he take it, he will ...
- 4 (thinking about the correct word). (In Farsi) < *What does it mean to lose*
- 5 *money?*>
- 6 T: Lose money.
- 7 S: He will lose money because that part of second he has to put time to collect
- 8 his money, he can earn more. So he leaves the money.
- 9 [The student continues telling the story.]
- 10 T: Ok, thank you, good story. Well done!

(SO1)

Throughout this episode, it is apparent that Sarah ignores correcting the student's errors (line 3&7) and let her continue to finish the story without any interruption.

However, through the telling of the story, she could not remember an English word (line 4). Then, she asked Sarah using the L1, what that word is in English (lines 4-5). This helped her to continue to tell the story to the end as easily and confidently as she could. Finally, Sarah praised the student for her effort trying to tell the whole story in English (line 10).

In the stimulated recall, on being asked why she did not correct the student's errors, Sarah stated that she planned to focus on meaning and ignore the errors in conducting this task because she believed that by focusing on meaning the students can experience a real context.

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; S= Sarah)

R: I noticed that here you didn't correct the student's errors. Why?

S: I think that they need to get the confidence to speak before they can speak. I want them to talk freely. Lack of confidence is a big problem, particularly in Iran. Just let go and experience English in a real context. So for me, to be very strict with error correction would only impede their English. I want them to feel that they can make mistakes. (SSR1)

This comment reveals that as long as the student was able to convey her message to the class, Sarah seemed not to be concerned about correcting errors and tried to create a comfortable environment for students. In all observed lessons, Sarah addressed errors after students finished speaking, rather than interrupting them. She believed that correcting student errors explicitly makes them over reliant on the teacher.

To sum up, the analysis of the pre-active interviews shows that there are two major findings regarding C1 teachers' professed beliefs about error correction. First, they considered errors as 'natural occurrences in EFL learning' and 'inevitable', thus, they preferred to ignore errors. Second, they expressed the belief that the purpose should be building fluency, with the consequence that there is quite a high tolerance of error. They also pointed out that error correction should be done carefully and selectively, with a concern that if it was not handled appropriately it might destroy students' confidence in speaking English. These five teachers, therefore, indicated that an implicit approach is better for correcting students' errors.

However, examining the relationship between their stated beliefs and actual practices in this area of language teaching, it was found that they were not consistent with each other to some extent (except for Sarah and Nasim). As mentioned above, most of them followed explicit error correction. However, three of them used correction minimally in their actual classroom practices, and when they used it, it was either recasts, clarification requests and/or explicit correction. C1 participants were also discovered to have adopted selective corrections according to their teaching focus. In the post-active interview, when teacher participants were asked about the way they dealt with error correction, some of them did not have much to say, claiming that they did not think about error correction as much as they used to. This will be further discussed in the discussion chapter.

A summary of C1 participants' professed beliefs regarding error correction and their observed classroom practices is given in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Stated beliefs and observed practices of error correction (C1)

C1	Stated beliefs	Observed practice	Beliefs/Practices
Nasim	Neglecting of students' errors in oral practice; implicit correction; focus on fluency over accuracy (CCOT)	Repeating to them the correct responses (recast); implicit teacher correction (CCOT)	Consistency
Atena	Tolerate the students' errors Peer-correction (CCOT)	Self-correction (with the teacher's help); recast (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Matin	Avoiding explicit error correction Self-correction (CCOT)	Repeat error with questioning intonation/facial expression; (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Sarah	Avoiding an explicit error correction in front of the class (CCOT)	Avoiding an explicit error correction; recast (CCOT)	Consistency
Leila	Implicit correction; repeating to students the correct responses (CCOT)	Explicit teacher correction; corrects student errors immediately; recast (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency

4.5.3. Beliefs and Practice in relation to the use of L1

This section presents the common themes emerging from the data analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews of the teachers with regard to the first language (L1) use. One of the principles of the ELT curriculum is to expose learners to the target language (TL) as much as possible. Thus, teacher beliefs and practices regarding the use of L1 and the factors that affected their beliefs and practices were examined. Three themes emerged from data

analysis: 1) The need to emphasise students' L2 use, 2) The use of L1 for consolidation, and 3) The use of L1 for affective functions.

4.5.3.1. The need to emphasise students' L2 use

Teachers, in the pre-active interview, were asked what they think about the role of L1 in language teaching and learning and if they should apply L1 in their teaching or not. Data analysis indicated that C1 teachers believed that extensive use of the TL in the classroom was crucial for the students' development of their communication skills and stated that this contributed to their students' overall understanding and appreciation of the language. For example, in the pre-active interview, Matin expressed her belief that as a language teacher she should create an effective learning environment for students to communicate in the target language. She said that:

‘Although the ‘English-only’ rule puts pressure on students, teachers need to try to maintain an English environment to stimulate their interest. I always ask my students to use English as much as possible.’
(MPI: 41)

This excerpt shows Matin's arguments about the importance of encouraging her students to use English. The pre-active interview segment below also indicates Sarah's view of creating a comfortable environment for the students to use English as critical:

‘I think it is important to create an environment for students to speak English because they are sort of afraid to express their ideas in class. They need more confidence to speak English without being stressed. So the classroom culture seems very important to encourage them to practice speaking English and let them make mistakes.’ (SPI: 38)

This comment reveals that Sarah understood her students' resistance to speaking English and participating in classroom communication. Thus, she felt the importance of providing a safe environment by allowing students to make mistakes. She claimed that as a teacher she always encourages them to express their opinions in English and think in English. Sarah further highlighted the importance of the use of English:

‘Students should always use, or make the effort to use English only. The class needs to be in English as much as possible. However,

sometimes dipping into the L1 resource is beneficial, but it should be done infrequently.’ (SPI: 40)

This sentiment was shared by other C1 teachers who pointed out that L1 use should be minimised and students should always use, or make the effort to use English only.

The above quotes all show that C1 teachers unanimously believed in the exclusive or maximal use of TL recommended by the CCOT guidelines. They believed that as the students became used to hearing the TL, it would become natural to use it themselves to communicate in the classroom. Some of them also felt that the use of the TL in the classroom made lessons more enjoyable for the students and also for themselves.

The findings relating to teachers’ actual practices revealed that C1 teachers’ beliefs tended to converge with their classroom practices with regard to the use of L1; however, there were instances where they diverged. For example, in line with what Atena stated in the pre-active interview, in the first observed lesson she asks her students to use English as much as possible. Episode 10 below, from the work of Atena, introduces this theme:

Episode 10

- 1 T: First of all, I want to tell you that no Farsi is allowed in my class.
- 2 [students burst into laughter]
- 3 S1: (In Farsi) < *Farsi is forbidden. I don't understand it. Why?*>
- 4 T: Because this is an English class.
- 5 S2: (In Farsi) < *She said Farsi is forbidden.*>
- 6 S3: (In Farsi) < *How can we ask our questions then?*>
- 7 T: OK, listen please. Open page 21 please. Today we are going to read
- 8 the reading passage first.
- 9 S4: (In Farsi) < *Teacher, may I sit next to my friend Mina?*>
- 10 T: Please, please. In English please.
- 11 S4: Ok. Teacher can I ask you a question?
- 12 T: Yes.
- 13 S4: Can I sit near Mina?
- 14 T: Yes, you can seat next to Mina. It's all right.

(AO1)

As seen in the above extract, Atena clearly states that she will not tolerate Farsi in her lessons (line 1). The first response she receives is, however, in Farsi (line 3). The immediate reaction coming from the student is that she does not ‘understand it’. The

next prompt comes from another student, again in Farsi (line 5). It is the direct translation of what Atena says and the conversation between the students continue in Farsi. This question remains without a response from Atena and she tries to make a transition to the subject matter that she is going to teach in textbook (line 7). However, she is interrupted by another question in Farsi (line 9). This time she responds this. As much as Atena insists on ignoring questions or requests in Farsi, the students behave the same in terms of asking questions in Farsi. Atena finally feels the need to repeat her attitude to encourage students to use English by clearly saying ‘please in English’ (line 10). Following this, the student asks her request in English (line 13). Atena discusses this event in the stimulated recall interview:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; A= Atena)

R: Here the first thing you say is ‘No Farsi in the class’. Do you always start your class with this?

A: Yes, that’s a bit funny. I think I tried to show my attitude about using English in the classroom.

R: For what purpose do you think?

A: I think my attitude affects my students’ behaviour in time. I believe persistence to use English should always be a priority. This has been worked for me. Here you see how they give up and finally speak English. (ASR1)

Atena reacts to this event as ‘funny’ and clearly states that her aim to put it that way is to show her attitude to the students. For her, this is the way to make her attitude clear. She also thinks that persistence to use English should always be a priority. She claims that her persistence in using English worked for her and her students started responding her in English.

Afterwards, in this lesson observe, Atena introduced the learning objectives and the exercises in the target language. When instruction started, Atena kept speaking in English, attempting to communicate the meaning of vocabulary relating to weather (the lesson). Atena helped individual students in English and translated the most difficult vocabulary. She used very simple language, cognates, and any gestures that would have helped. She elaborates on this issue as follows:

R: What about explaining the meaning of a word?

A: I would keep doing it in English even if they respond me in Farsi. I would use facial expressions or body language as well.

(ASR1)

As seen in the extract above, Atena expresses her insistence on not to use Farsi. She clearly states that she would rather make use of body language and facial expressions instead of responding to students in Farsi.

However, in her second class, she was observed sporadically translating single words when helping individual students. In the post-active interview, the justification given for the use of L1 in her second observation was that she does sporadically include L1 in her teaching practice to ensure understanding and explaining new words.

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; A= Atena)

R: You said before that you don't use Farsi even for explaining difficult words. So why did you use L1 here?

A: I remember I faced many difficulties in understanding the vocabulary because my teacher spoke English all the time in class. I try not to make this same problem for my students, I use Farsi when necessary. I use English as much as I can, but when it's hard, let's not make it harder. (ASR1)

It could be argued that Atena's own learning experience impacted her use of L1 in such a way that she did not want to emulate her own teacher's practice of not using Farsi in the classroom. Although other C1 teachers, like Atena, believed that the persistence to use English should be their priority and preferred to stick with L2 to explain a difficult concept, they chose to employ L1 in this function.

4.5.3.2. The use of L1 for consolidation

Almost all teacher participants, in the post-active interview, stated that their students preferred to use Farsi when having grammar explained and believed that the students' L1 could make a contribution to learning English grammar. C1 participants used L1

on several occasions, such as for explaining grammar rules and checking answers. In the post-active lesson discussion, they expressed the reason that using L1 while teaching would have a facilitative role in monolingual classes as it serves to clarify the linguistically based confusion and to ensure learners' understanding by consolidating it in L1. The extract below illustrates a typical example of L1 use in Matin's work.

Episode 11

[The teacher was checking whether students learned to use the countable and uncountable nouns that they had been taught earlier.]

- 1 T: Najmeh, please read No. 4. 'Water in the glass'
 2 S1: Is there any water in the glass?
 3 T: After 'any' and 'no', if we have countable noun we have to use the
 4 plural. For example, we say, are there any books on the table? I have
 5 to use plural form after any because the book is countable.
 6 (In Farsi) <Look, after 'any' if there is a countable noun, to make it
 7 plural 's' should be added to it. If it is uncountable we should use 'Is
 8 there'.>
 9 S2: Teacher, (In Farsi) <I didn't understand this.>
 10 T: Is there any money on the table? (In Farsi) <Look, what is money?>
 11 Money is uncountable, <and I don't add any 's' to it. Here there should
 12 be is there' because it is uncountable.>
 13 S3: (In Farsi) <If there is one book, should we use 'any'?>
 14 T: (In Farsi) <Then we should change the sentence and say> 'Is there a
 15 book on the table?'

(MO2)

The above episode shows that Matin frequently used Farsi to explain grammar. She first starts teaching the grammar point in English (lines 3-5) and then explains it in Farsi (lines 6-8). Despite her explanation in Farsi, the student does not understand the grammar point (line 9). Then, Matin explains in detail what 'countable and uncountable noun' means in Farsi (lines 10-14). Contrary to what she said in the pre-active interview, in practice, she explained most of the grammar points in Farsi. The lack of interaction in English and regular use of translation are clearly at odds with the curricular principle of maximising the use of English in the classroom. This pattern of interaction in episode 11 was typical of the work of almost all C1 teachers.

In commenting on this episode, Matin discusses why she includes L1 for grammar explanation:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; M= Matin)

R: I noticed that you frequently used Farsi to explain this grammar point. Why?

M: To teach grammar I start by explaining in English, but if it causes a problem, I explain in Farsi. Sometimes the students get very confused when I am explaining grammar in English, so I switch to Farsi to make sure that they understand. It kind of facilitates it.

R: You mean you use L1 to be assured all students have understood?

M: Yes. If you want to teach grammar in English there are many things that the students will not comprehend. I use Farsi so the students can understand the details. (MSR1)

This reveals Matin's preferences to use L1 for complex definitions or instructions and also to be assured all students have understood. It seems that Matin used L1 whenever she thought there was a need for consolidation. Further discussion of this issue revealed that basically, Matin prefers to use English when talking about simpler concepts or ideas and use Farsi for more difficult or abstract ones.

R: Tell me about when you decide to use Farsi and why?

M: Actually for me when to use Farsi or English is not predetermined. Since my decisions are impromptu, the frequent use of Farsi is often unavoidable even though I keep reminding myself and my students to use English as much as possible.

R: I see. So, you mean your decision depends on the situation?

M: Yes, exactly. As you see here I had to explain grammar in Farsi to make sure that they all understand.

R: Well, can you figure out if they got your point?

M: I think it's the looks. Sometimes they look very confused, surprised. Sometimes they don't react. But this is not always the case. Sometimes time limitation is also the reason to use L1. At those occasions, I feel like they are not following me. (MSR1)

Matin's explanation of her practice here indicates that she used L1 for the purpose of checking students' understanding of what has been taught. It also reveals the

importance of the reactions of the students in her class along with the possibility of time constraints. It is important for Matin to make herself clear to the students and if she suspects that students look ‘surprised’ or ‘confused’ she feels uncomfortable. She noted the importance of receiving a reaction from the students and yet added that her awareness was not always enough to make clear judgments on this all the time.

Likewise, in the pre-active interview, Nasim stated that English should dominate classroom interaction when teaching English and that she always encourages groups to discuss, using as much English as possible. Here is an example from the work of Nasim:

Episode 12

- 1 T: The grammatical point we’re going to study today is what we had
- 2 reviewed at the beginning of the year. ‘He has made’. Do you remember?
- 3 S1: (in Farsi) <Present Perfect>
- 4 T: Yes, present perfect. I have eaten my lunch. She has eaten her lunch
- 5this man has made a table. It is 100 centimetres wide....look...Valley
- 6 -Asr Street... it’s a wide street.
- 7 S2: (in Farsi) <long?>
- 8 T: wide.
- 9 S3: (in Farsi) <wide>
- 10 T: Yes, it’s a wide street. For example, Gheytarieh Street is a narrow
- 11 street. Did you understand ‘wide’ and ‘narrow’?
- 12 S2: (in Farsi) <narrow and wide.>
- 13 T: Yes, the opposite of wide is narrow. So how long is that table?
- 14 S4: (in Farsi) <it means its width>. It is 100 centimetres long.
- 15 T: (in Farsi) <How wide is it? >. How wide is it?
- 16 S3: It is 100 centimetres wide.

(NO1)

The extract above shows that Nasim attempted to explain the meaning of vocabularies in English (lines 8). Since the student did not understand the exact meaning of the word, she tried to use related words, opposites, and gestures to help them understand its meaning (lines 10-13). Finally, she uses Farsi to ask her question (line 15). Although Nasim tries to encourage students to speak English, most of the students interact in Farsi throughout this activity.

In the stimulated recall interview, Nasim was requested to explain her reasons for the use of L1:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; N= Nasim)

R: You tried in different ways to explain this in English. Can you tell me why you finally used L1 here?

N: I always try to explain the words in English, draw pictures, or act out, however, if the students still don't understand, then I use Farsi.

R: So, you mean it's not your preference to use L1?

N: I prefer not to use Farsi and I want the students to get used to using English in the class... if I find it difficult for the students to understand, I am then forced to use Farsi. It's actually for the sake of the students. (NSR1)

This extract shows that Nasim wanted to teach English through English. However, the students' proficiency levels and reactions to her use of English made her flexibly use both English and Farsi as the medium of instruction. In our post-observation discussion, she further expressed that her use of Farsi had been increased due to contextual constraints. She stated:

For Iranian students who have little contact with English on a daily basis, if we use English only, I feel they will resist learning English. If we cannot offer them a little more support, they will surely be afraid of learning English. That's why I use a bit of Farsi in my instruction, especially in the process of explaining difficult words or grammar. (NSR1)

This quotation shows Nasim's interpretation of students' expectation. She indicates that her decision is based on feedback she receives from her students who are having a difficult time understanding her when she speaks in the target language. Aware of the cognitive demands required by listening comprehension in a foreign language, she decides that she must reduce the cognitive load by switching to Farsi if she is discussing a complex topic (i.e., grammar) with which they are already struggling.

Overall, data analysis revealed that although C1 participants' professed belief was that the L1 should be used as little as possible, in their observed lessons, they often shifted to L1 in explaining new words, grammar rules or procedures for specific activities

because they believed that learners understanding is their first priority and L1 could help achieve this. In other words, they regarded L1 as a means of consolidation and used it whenever they thought there was a need for consolidation.

4.5.3.3. The use of L1 for affective functions

Observed lessons showed that in situations where teacher participants had to encourage hesitant, anxious or nervous students to answer, they switched to Farsi. In this way teachers tried to put students at ease by conveying their sympathy, thereby creating a less threatening atmosphere. As such, they used Farsi to convey special compliments to students as compliments in Farsi have strong illocutionary force. In some cases, using L1 revealed teacher participants' intention to give commands or admonitions. Moreover, the use of L1 also arouses attention from inattentive students.

Data analysis from the post-active interview revealed that C1 teachers believe the use of L1 makes a contribution to creating a supportive language environment in the classroom. C1 participants reflected that they switched from English to Farsi in their instruction to reduce anxiety levels among lower level students and maintain a smooth flow of classroom interaction. For example, Sarah claimed that, because of her own experience, she understands students' resistance to speaking English and the anxiety that is often provoked by being required to speak English. She recalls:

‘I remember in my English class I was so nervous to be called on to speak. So I definitely understand the anxiety about speaking in a foreign language class, and I respect that because I have been there.’ (SSR2: 19)

Notwithstanding that Sarah empathises with students and understands how difficult it is, she requires her students to speak only in the target language. Moreover, she uses careful scaffolding in order to set students up for success and reduce their anxiety. For example, she tried to implement a jigsaw reading activity in her first observed lesson. The students were grouped according to their abilities in order to provide intellectual scaffolding necessary for the learning. Sarah tried to ensure that the students were working and speaking English within their groups.

Nasim highlighted the role of the L1 in bringing humour into the classroom.

‘Sometimes the topic of the class makes it possible to bring humour and I think sometimes when the class is boring, talking about different things in Farsi is a way to catch their [students] attention.’ (NSR1:21)

Similarly, Matin, in giving reasons for her use of L1 in the classroom, mentioned humour as an important tool for keeping things light-hearted and gaining the respect of the students. She commented:

‘I think having a sense of humour makes the class more attractive and it builds rapport between the students and teacher. I believe sometimes speaking in Farsi is good for this.’ (MSR2:23)

Matin remembers her experience learning English at secondary school when the L1 was more widely employed by teachers:

‘When I learned English, we were allowed to speak Farsi in class. I remember my teacher used to make motivational remarks in Farsi. I really enjoyed this and felt good because I could understand.’ (MSR2:23)

Matin’s comment shows how her teacher’s use of L1 helped her motivationally. It seems that Matin’s prior experience in language class and her fear of speaking in class influenced her belief that teachers must incorporate strategies to ease students’ apprehension and make speaking in the target language easier and more comfortable. Although she does not advocate widespread L1 use, she struggles with balancing her own learning experiences with an approach that does not favour L1 use except when absolutely necessary.

Overall, although C1 participants believed in using English-only in teaching, in the post-active interviews, they pointed out that a total exclusion of L1 was not possible and that L1 could be used on some special occasions. Data analysis showed that a range of factors such as students’ interest and students’ different language level appeared to have an impact on why C1 teachers used L1 in their instruction. The teachers’ rationalisation of their use of L1 also revealed that they attached different roles to the use of L1 in L2 learning, such as the roles of consolidating learning, ensuring understanding, and meeting the needs of the students. The data also suggest that these participants find the L1 a useful tool for bringing humour into the classroom, thus strengthening the relationship between student and teacher, reducing stress, and making language learning more enjoyable.

4.5.4. Beliefs and Practice in relation to teachers' roles

This section presents the analysis of the pre-active interviews, observations, and post-active interviews of the teachers with regard to the teacher's roles. One of the main premises of curriculum reform is that teachers take up the role of becoming learning facilitators. This characteristic reflects a constructivist approach to language teaching and learning in which the teacher's role changes from a lecturer to a facilitator of learning. The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities and as an advisor during the activities. The learner too is no longer viewed as a passive recipient, but one who is continually moving towards self-knowledge and self-direction.

With regard to the teacher's role, three main themes emerged from the data analysis: a) the view of the teachers' role as a facilitating one, b) the importance of fostering relationships with students, and c) the need to motivate students. These themes are presented in details in the following sections.

4.5.4.1. The view of the teachers' role as a facilitating one

According to the analysis of the pre-active interview, the pre-dominant role cited by C1 participants was that of a learning facilitator who guides the students and facilitates the learning process. As shown in Table 4.3, the majority of the terms C1 teachers used to label their roles revealed a facilitative rather than didactic role. Some metaphors teachers used in describing their role include 'helper', 'guide', 'coach', and 'advisor'. However, being a facilitator was interpreted in different ways. For example, Sarah expressed her strong belief in teachers' role as facilitators of learning because it gave her students a sense of ownership of their learning process.

'As you know, we all used to the traditional teaching methods that required the teacher to do all the work and students just sit, listen, and make notes. I think they don't learn like that, they have to get involved in what they are learning and my role is to facilitate this. I like to give students opportunities to do pair work and group work.' (SPI: 44)

This quote shows that Sarah favours activities such as pair and group work in which they can learn from each other and get more involved, and she can act as facilitator during this activity.

Sarah's first lesson observation revealed that her stated belief expressed in the pre-active interview was in line with what she did in her class. In her first lesson observed, she tried to use a Pictionary game in order to engage all students as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Sarah put students into two groups and showed a picture only to one group and asked them to describe to the other group what they could see. This second group then had to try to report what the other students had seen, as accurately as they could. (SO1)

In this excerpt, Sarah's beliefs in action can be seen. She asks students to describe the picture to each other, enacting her belief that students should get involved in what they are learning. It is apparent that throughout this activity Sarah attempted to encourage students to interact and help each other. When asked to recall the intended learning outcomes pursued in this lesson, Sarah reported as follows:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R = Researcher; S = Sarah)

R: What was your objective doing this kind of activity here?

S: I usually use this game or other mingling games with pictures, which are fun activities that can be used to review the vocabulary or the grammar they have learnt. I believe in this way everyone can see something slightly different from the others, and the activity will strengthen their rapport.

R: So, you think these types of activities are interesting and facilitate students' learning.

S: Yes, of course. I use different activities to facilitate my students learning.

R: I see. Can you tell me what other activities do you use?

S: Sometimes I want them to tell a story by using a sequence of pictures, or when I want to really fire their imagination, they can create a story based on just a single picture. This exercise can be particularly interesting and productive, especially when I encourage them to use specific tenses. (SSR1)

This extract shows Sarah's preference for having a facilitating role by engaging students in different types of activities and encouraging them to interact and help each other.

Like other C1 participants, for Nasim, having facilitating role meant involving students and participating in their learning activities through learner-centred approaches. She viewed herself as a facilitator of students' learning, giving them the tools that help them learn. She also clarified her role as that of an advisor and a coach in a community atmosphere:

'I think putting students in groups makes them work together in a community with the social interaction roles. Then in case of any problem, as an advisor, I can help them. I have also the role of a teacher-coach giving directions to whatever they have to achieve. In my class, it is learning by doing.' (NPI: 46)

In line with what Nasim stated in the pre-active interview, she took on the role of a teacher-coach in her first observed lesson as shown in the excerpt below:

In her class, the walls were covered with colourful posters and pictures. These were illustrations of different concepts with definitions carried out by students. She said that before teaching every new lesson she designs a project and asks students to bring colourful pictures which are somehow related to the concept of the new lesson. In the previous session, she had explained what the students needed to bring and pasted a sheet on the wall where students wrote the materials needed for the project. At the beginning of her class, she used the lecture method, writing on the board, explaining and pausing regularly for students to take notes. Then she assigned tasks to groups of students. (NO1)

This excerpt shows that even though Nasim's practice is consistent with what she said earlier concerning her role as a teacher-coach, the activities that she used at the beginning of her lesson differed somewhat and did not seem to reflect her facilitating role thoroughly. While she played the role of instructor at the beginning of the class, she switched to that of facilitator later during communicative activities.

In the stimulated recall session, when asked why she wrote everything on the board and did not use handouts, she said that listening and writing were important skills for her students who had a short span of attention and that the lessons would be available for revision in their notebooks, whereas all handouts would be lost. She further illustrated her view on being a facilitator:

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; N= Nasim)*

R: I noticed that here you acted as an instructor first and then you decided to act as a facilitator during the communicative activity. Can you tell me why?

N: I acted as an instructor at the beginning of the class to make sure the students knew what they should do later. Based on my experience, this could avoid wasting time to explain what to do during the communicative activities. It kind of facilitates my teaching. (NSR1)

In this quote Nasim talks about acting as an instructor to save time and then as a facilitator to help student in the activities. However, her second observed lesson showed that in some occasions her class was completely teacher-centred and she had an authoritative role. In the post-active interview, Nasim stressed that:

‘Here, students expect everything from the teacher. I attended many seminars organised by the Ministry of Education regarding the new curriculum reform. They have taught us nice things but they are very difficult to implement in the class. Realities are not as they are given in the books.’ (NSR2)

In this comment, Nasim talks about the gap between the student’s role in Iranian context and the curriculum reform. Nasim seems aware of what students expect from the teachers as the only ones who know the answers. This is also linked to the teachers’ understanding of their role as a transmitter of knowledge who should explain all the information their students need. For these Iranian teachers, certain cultural assumptions seem to play a role in their approaches to teaching, although this can vary from one teacher to another.

As seen above, in the pre-active interviews, C1 participants used a variety of terms to describe their facilitating role. However, observational data revealed that despite their professed beliefs about holding a facilitative role, C1 participants’ classroom instruction featured both the constructivist and traditional roles for the teacher. Accordingly, in some cases, teachers’ beliefs regarding their role as facilitators of learning were consistent with their classroom behaviours and in other instances, their professed beliefs contradicted how they acted in their classrooms. In the stimulated recall interviews, they gave reasons for the tensions between their stated beliefs and

their actual practice, and, in so doing they expressed their dissatisfaction with current learner roles. They believed that it is difficult to be learner-centred and act as a guide and facilitator at least for their schools and the education system. Furthermore, contrasting beliefs coexisted in the teachers' beliefs system when they emphasised taking control and their facilitating role simultaneously.

4.5.4.2. The importance of fostering relationships with students

C1 participants acknowledged their significant role in creating a positive and appropriate level of relationship with students. In the pre-active interview, they defined the role of a teacher and their responsibilities in relation to students by using various metaphors as nurturer, friend, and mother. For example in the pre-active interview, Sarah stressed that 'teachers should be like a friend, the one who encourages the students rather than being an authority' (SPI: 46). She emphasised that good teaching is not all about techniques; it's about being a friend and a helper. She linked this to a sense of empathy, pointing out that:

'I believe the empathy of a teacher helps her connect to students and connect students to what they are learning. I meet students individually and I talk to them one-to-one. I know all my students, I call them by their first name, I treat them with respect and they trust me. Actually, I don't consider them only as 'students', I respect them as 'persons'.' (SPI: 46)

Sarah's comment shows that she sees herself as students' friend, caring and showing empathy and emotional support to students. She further said that her students love 'being recognised as brilliant by peers and being praised by the teacher (SPI: 48), consequently, she has developed the habit of acknowledging all noticeable efforts of her learners. She thought this helped in strengthening teacher-learners relationships. In her practice, she was trying to foster a good relationship based on understanding and tolerance, although at the same time she kept her professional distance from students.

Similarly, in the pre-active interview, reflecting on her role as a teacher, Leila expressed her belief that she would like to be viewed as a friend who respects and cares for students as individuals. Atena tried to enact this belief in practice as she

used an activity in class to build rapport with students. Below is what Leila did in her first lesson observed:

In the middle of the lesson, she started telling a story about her childhood and then let students to ask her questions about it. Following this, she prompted students to tell a story about anything they liked. One student started telling a story about her younger brother who was very clever at the age of three. Although she did not have enough vocabularies, she tried to tell the whole story in English. Leila then continued the lesson and worked on the reading section. (LO1)

In this excerpt, we can see Leila's belief in action. By telling her story first, she tries to make connection between herself and her students and acts as a friend. In the stimulated recall session, on being asked about this event, Leila explained:

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; L= Leila)

R: Why did you start telling a story in the middle of your teaching?

L: You have to be prepared to change anything that might happen during the lessons. There are some changes during teaching, for example they do not have the same mood at different hours. Here, they already seemed to be tired and I tried to make a little change so that they could still feel good.

R: Why did you start telling a story about yourself?

L: It places me in an environment they're unfamiliar picturing me in, but one in which they can closely identify with. It makes me become not so different than them, making connections easier, like a friend.

R: So, you think this type of activity works for you to make a better connection with them?

L: Yes. I think telling a story is a good place to start building rapport. As I have tried it many times I have no doubt that students love it. When I tell a short story, it will completely change my teaching and will affect the connection I have with my students. (LSR1)

This extract illustrates not only Leila's beliefs about what teachers should do, but also her awareness of how to cultivate a good relationship with students and change the mood of the class during the lesson. Leila's belief about teacher role was enacted by engaging students with storytelling and acting as a friend sharing her story with them.

Atena also draws on her experience as a mother to inform her relationship with students. In the pre-active interview, she expressed that:

‘Well, I think the relationship with students is like a relationship between a mother and a child. Sometimes you think you are the person with more experience and you know what is best for them. But, there are times you need to listen to them and care about their emotions. I have the exact experience when I was a student, so I know how it feels.’ (API: 42)

It appears that grounding her beliefs in her experiences as a student and a mother, Atena clearly values fostering relationships which demonstrate respect and trust. In line with her professed beliefs, in her second lesson observation, Atena used an activity in class to build a positive relationship with students:

In the previous session, she asked students to bring an item which was special to them in some way and share with the class. She modelled this by first describing what her special item meant to her. She showed a photograph of her father and herself taken in her graduation and described why it is important for her. She then let the students ask their questions from her for a few minutes. Afterwards, Atena asked students to share their items in pairs, taking turns to ask each other questions like ‘why did they pick this item?’ or ‘why is it special for them?’ (AO2)

In the post-active interview, Atena reflected on her own practices and concluded that the teacher should not only care about the academic performance but should also pay attention to students’ emotions and personal lives.

In sum, C1 participants acknowledged that the key to being friends is respecting and caring for students as individuals. They expressed the belief that building a rapport with students would help create an atmosphere that fosters a safe classroom so that students can feel comfortable forming relationships. However, they also agreed on the need to balance their wish for a friendly relationship with a need for a professional distance from students. The findings from classroom observation showed that to a great extent the teachers’ beliefs regarding their roles were in line with their practices, however, in some instances, their professed beliefs contradicted how they acted in their classrooms.

4.5.4.3. The need to prioritise students' interest and motivation

In the pre-active interview, C1 participants constantly compared their language learning experience at their schools, characterised by a teacher-centred approach of teaching, to a learner-centred way of teaching. They expressed their willingness to apply student-centred teaching style and adopt facilitative roles when faced with students who expect interaction and communication in class. They were also in favour of giving attention to students' needs and interest. For example, the following statement made by Sarah was typical:

‘I personally think as a teacher my role is to motivate my students and to make them interested in learning English. So, the way I teach depends on my students' interest. I believe when students are motivated, the teacher is able to accomplish her goal.’ (SPI: 48)

Sarah's comment reveals that for her the teacher's primary role is to motivate students to learn English by prioritising students' needs and interest. She further expressed a belief that ‘students have to enjoy the lesson first; the academic benefits will follow’. In Sarah's lessons, confirming what she said in the pre-active interview, she tried to use interesting activities and create a stress-free environment to motivate the students and to focus on the students' needs and interest. In the stimulated recall, when asked why she would use this kind of activity, she explained:

‘It's just because they will follow the class for 10 minutes and then their minds will wander elsewhere out of the class... you have systematically to retain their attention, look for things that would make them interested in the topic. I think you should be an actor... at any time play a role, just put yourself in another person's skin and show them.’ (SSR1)

It is apparent that there was a will on the part of Sarah to seek ways to make lessons enjoyable so that learners were motivated to come to and remain in class. In the post-active interview, she also explained the significance of her negative EFL learning environment. The following recollections exemplify the negative descriptions of her English learning experience:

‘I think my experience as a student in school influenced how I teach. I didn't like the atmosphere of my teacher-centred class. I strongly believe that learning doesn't happen in negative emotions and will eventually make learners demotivate and dislike the subject. So, I try

to do the opposite way and teach in a way that makes my students like their English class.’ (SSR1: 21)

In this comment, Sarah explicitly specifies that she wanted to provide the opposite class atmosphere than she experienced. Her prior experience as a student appeared to shape her perceptions about her role as a teacher. She further stressed that ‘the teacher’s role is to cultivate the students’ autonomous learning by offering the students useful tool to learn English and helping them to set up their own objectives’ (SSR1: 23). This was something I had never experienced in many years of my learning English at school.

Like other C1 participants, Nasim pointed out that she studied her English in a boring and inefficient way and she did not enjoy learning English at all. She stated that:

‘I think teachers should have a sense of humour and let students have some fun in order to make them like English. So, they have to enjoy the lesson first. In addition, negotiating and deciding on teaching activities together with the students make them enjoy learning English.’ (NPI: 26).

This quote shows Nasim’s preference for having a sense of humour to make an enjoyable classroom for students. She further explained that ‘when the class is against the students’ interest, they will not follow the lesson after a while and then their minds go elsewhere out of the class’ (NPI: 52). Over her years of experience, she has developed a kind of ‘less severe- more kindly’ approach in managing the classroom and giving responsibility to students.

However, the classroom observations of Nasim showed somewhat a disparity between her stated beliefs and practices. Despite Nasim’s beliefs about holding a facilitating role with a focus on giving attention to students’ needs and interest, her lessons featured somewhat teacher controlled. Below is what Nasim did in second lesson observed:

Nasim asked students to think about one of the textbook’s pictures for three minutes and then discuss about it in pairs. The students barely interacted with each other. She then moved to one-way interaction with individual students and helped them to explain what they see in the picture. (NO2)

This excerpt shows that although Nasim designed a pair work activity, she could not facilitate students to interact with each other. In the stimulated recall interview, when I asked her about the purpose of the activity and why it failed, she explained:

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; N= Nasim)

R: What was your purpose of doing this activity?

N: I wanted to motivate them to interact with each other. They seemed to be tired and I wanted to motivate them and liven up the class. But they were reluctant to do it, so I started to help them individually.

R: What do you think? Why this activity did not motivate them?

N: It seems that they were reluctant to do this activity; but I think it motivates them in a way to learn how to interact in a pair work. I think my direct instructions and explanations helped them efficiently. The problem is that they always rely on teachers to help them, so it is very difficult to find useful ways to motivate them. (NSR2)

This extract shows Nasim's preference to motivate students by engaging them in a pair or group work activity. She believes that the reason for the students' lack of engagement in the activity was their reliance on the teacher. Therefore, for her to find an efficient way to motivate students was challenging. Further discussion of this issue revealed that over her years of experience, she has attempted to develop a kind of 'less severe- more kindly' approach in managing the classroom and giving responsibility to students in order to increase their motivation.

Overall, as has been seen in the analyses of the pre-active interview data, C1 participants highlighted the importance of giving attention to the students' needs and interest by suggesting specific ways such as having a sense of humour, building empathetic interactions with students, and having the ability to make connections with them in order to create motivation. However, classroom observation showed that although there was a will on the part of the teachers to seek ways to make lessons enjoyable so that learners were motivated, they all seemed to struggle, to different degrees, in their role as a teacher facilitator to motivate students to learn English. In the post-active interviews, C1 teachers expressed the belief that motivating students to learn was the most challenging aspect since they had difficulty to find effective methods of increasing and sustaining students' motivation.

In summary, C1 participants held a strong belief that the teacher's role in the classroom is that of a facilitator who helps students' learning. According to their professed beliefs, the teacher should play a facilitating role in order to build rapport, trust, and respect, and motivate the students. They also believed in the importance of prioritising the students' needs and interest. To some extent, this was reflected in classroom practices in that, although these participants played the roles of 'instructor' or 'lecturer' to give directions or impart knowledge in some situations, they also acted as 'consultant' and 'facilitators' to support the students during the teaching process and some of them were able to establish a more friendly and flexible atmosphere than others. Inconsistent or even contrasting beliefs coexist in teachers' belief systems when they emphasise taking control and their facilitating role at the same time. This finding is revisited in the discussion.

A summary of C1 teachers' stated beliefs regarding the role of teachers in foreign language learning and how this relates to what they typically performed in their observed classrooms is given in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Stated beliefs and observed practices of the teachers' role (C1)

C1	Stated beliefs	Observed practice	Beliefs/Practices
Nasim	'facilitator', 'advisor', 'guide', 'helper' (CCOT)	Authoritative role, controller, helper and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Atena	'guide', 'friend', 'helper', 'mother' (CCOT)	Teacher played the main role of an instructor first, then as a facilitator, and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Matin	'facilitator', 'advisor', 'nurturer' (CCOT)	All students express their views freely (CCOT) facilitator, provider of knowledge, and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Sarah	'advisor', 'coach', 'mother', 'consultant' (CCOT)	Instructor, facilitator, and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency
Leila	'Facilitator', 'guide', 'helper', 'leader' (CCOT)	Facilitator, helper, organiser, and instructor (mix)	Inconsistency/consistency

4.5.5. Beliefs and Practice in relation to learner-centred teaching

This section presents the common themes emerging from the data analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews of the teachers with regard to learner-centred instruction. Student-centred learning is another

prevailing concept in the revised English curriculum that forms part of the current education policy and can be viewed as a concept that allows students to take more control over their own learning. As previously mentioned, the CCOT curriculum changed the view of teaching languages from a traditional teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach in which the students construct knowledge by integrating new learning into what they already know. Two themes emerged from data analysis: a) Promoting collaboration and group work, and b) Empowering students through learner autonomy.

4.5.5.1. Promoting collaboration and group work

C1 teachers attached their importance to collaboration as a key factor in student learning. In the pre-active-interviews, they admitted that interactive and group activities are essential for arousing students' interest as well as for developing the ability to communicate in English. Moreover, they described their own ideal teaching roles as facilitators of collaborative learning activity. For example, in the pre-active interview, Sarah said that:

‘In the teacher-centred classrooms, the students can never become independent learners, because they only gain what the teacher feeds them. The students should not rely on the teacher’s instruction; they need to cooperate with each other.’ (SPI: 50)

This quote shows not only Sarah’s beliefs about what learners should do, but also her awareness that learners will not be independent in a teacher-centred classroom. In practice, Sarah used cooperative learning as a strategy to help students to work together and help each other to construct the knowledge together. In her classes, Sarah tried to make students more involved in learning and motivate them to take responsibility for their own learning.

In the post-active interviews, during a discussion with Sarah about her use of cooperative learning, she said, ‘cooperative learning develops social skills in the students by giving them the chance to discuss with each other and with the teacher’ (SSR1: 26). She explained that by doing this, the students get to know each other and form a community of learners. For example, in Sarah’s observed lesson, she showed students a certain picture of a place and told them to pair-up with another classmate. Next, she asked students what they see in the picture and encouraged them to describe

the scenes amongst themselves. Students were allowed to move around from one group to another to discuss their ideas with other students.

In line with what Sarah said, Matin stated the belief that interactive teaching allows more opportunities for more practical use of the English among the students and the teachers. She further explained that group work is primarily a way to force student participation in classroom activities and to motivate students to engage with the content. This resulted in the environment changing for some students in a more positive way. In the pre-active interview, she explained that ‘the students feel more comfortable exposing their thoughts and ideas to each other.’ (MPI: 51).

However, in practice, no sign of cooperative group learning was observed in Matin’s classes, and in only a few occasions pair work activities were employed. Her lesson observations showed that although she tried to practise learner-centred teaching, her students were positioned as passive recipients of knowledge. Episode 13 shows how Matin dealt with this part of the lesson:

Episode 13

- 1 [The teacher refers to the two pictures in the textbook.]
- 2 T: First write notes with your partner, the person who is sitting next
- 3 to you. Write two or three short notes for each picture, just two or
- 4 three short notes and then make a story.
- 5 T: The first picture shows a family who wants to go hiking. Now
- 6 you tell me about the picture.
- 7 [The teacher selects two students to talk about the first picture.]
- 8 T: Mina and Hadis? Mina you talk first.
- 9 Mina: This family want to go hiking and they, they are packing.
- 10 T: Ok, Hadis, you.
- 11 Hadis: This family are going hiking and they help each other to get
- 12 ready.
- 13 [The teacher gives instructions in Farsi on how to make a story
- 14 about the two pictures she already explained.]
- 15 T: Practice the story with your friend.
- 16 T: (In Farsi) <Practice the story with your friend.>Prepare the
- 17 story, and next class I will ask you to read the story in front of
- 18 the class.

(MO2)

As the above episode shows, Matin asks students to write notes about the pictures and do the activity in pairs (lines 2-4). She selects two students to tell their story (line 8)

and there was no student to student interaction during this activity. The type of interaction during this activity was teacher-student interaction. Asking two students to stand up and interacting with them on an individual basis was a common practice during this activity and the interaction was between the student and the teacher. Students should have been given a chance to work together, but as the above episode illustrates students did not have an active role in this activity.

Later, in the stimulated recall interview, Matin justified the logic behind the way she taught her lessons and stated that in the context of Iran, the students were accustomed to learning English through lectures and memorisation rather than through interaction. She expressed the reason that:

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; M= Matin)

R: What do you think about the pair work activity you did here? Why was it more teacher-controlled?

M: Because the students are not used to working together. In our culture, they have difficulty adjusting to a less teacher-centred classroom. They just rely on the teacher's direction, because they don't feel that their classmates are acceptable teachers. (MSR2)

Matin's comment reveals that her students were less accepting of the collaborative model and are not used to such an approach because they rely on the teachers' instruction. This sentiment was shared by many of the other teachers who pointed out that though they may wish to use this form of approach, their students were incapable of adapting to this system. She further explained that according to her experiences, the teachers need support, such as adequate teacher training and sufficient teaching resources, to practice this approach. She also noted that the exam affects the way one teaches to a great extent.

In line with other C1 teachers, Nasim also believed that learner-centred teaching could enhance students' confidence which is essential in the development of students' communicative competence. She expressed her belief that 'the students can learn better when the teacher encourages them to speak and engage with the activities' (NPI: 54).

Although in the pre-active interview, Nasim values instruction in which students solve problems together, complete tasks, learn from each other and collaborate, in her practice, she is puzzled as to how to transfer her experiences to her own teaching situation. In her first lesson observation, Nasim was struggling to attempt to encourage students to express their opinions in English:

Nasim asked her students to speak English while interacting with her and others in the group, though the result showed that not much was accomplished. For example, she asked each group to talk about what they want to be in the future. Even those students who were working on the task used Farsi rather than English in their discussions. As a result, not all the students in each group collaborated to complete the task, and the task was completed by almost one or two students of each group. (NO1)

In the stimulated recall interview, explaining why this activity failed, Nasim stated:

Stimulated recall Extract

(R= Researcher; N= Nasim)

R: What do you think about this activity in which you could not achieve your purpose? What were the challenges?

N: I wanted to encourage the students to speak and engage with the activities. But some students are always resistant to participate in classroom communication, even when using Farsi and even more reluctant to do so when using English. So, I have to move around and monitor them all the time. It is difficult to applying group work because sometimes students do not take it seriously and they have to get used to it. (NSR1)

As the above extract shows, Nasim refers to the students' unwillingness to participate in the group work activities as the reason for her unsuccessful attempt in this activity. She further expressed that based on her experience, teachers must deal with the fact that many students prefer to sit silently on the sidelines. This incompatibility between the students' expectations and the curriculum requirements appears to be an obstacle to the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Overall, as can be seen from the interviews and observation data, the five C1 participants held a strong belief that it is of paramount importance to promote

collaboration and group work. They believed that students should help one another complete tasks and be actively engaged in an activity. However, in all of their classrooms observations, although collaboration was believed to be an essential component of classroom learning activity, collaboration was never the object or goal of the activity itself. C1 participants noted that it was very difficult to accomplish group work activity probably because of the low motivation, habit, or low English proficiency of some students. Another important point to be raised is the participants' complaints about lack of sufficient training on implementing group work and learner-centred activities. This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

4.5.5.2. Empowering students through learner autonomy

Another emerging theme from data analysis was promoting autonomous learners to empower students. The five teachers in C1 expressed their belief that learner-centeredness enhances students' English ability by developing learners' autonomy. In the pre-active interview, they stated that they expect their learners to be in lessons and to participate. For example, Atena said that:

‘I think learner-centred approach enhances the students’ learning because it provides the students opportunities to become independent learners and to play an active role in language classrooms. I believe that giving students the power to make decision creates a sense of ownership’ (API: 46)

In spite of Atena's acknowledgment of the importance of students assuming responsibility in their own learning, and her strong belief about giving power to students, her observed lessons were neither completely teacher-centred nor learner-centred. For example, in her first lesson observation:

Atena asked students to read and figure out the main idea of the story in which they had picked themselves and share it with the class. Having students picked a story of their own and giving them power to choose, created a sense of ownership over the learning, although the objective of the task was not accomplished. (AO1)

Upon being asked about this part of her lesson in the post-active interview, Atena stated that this kind of tasks takes too much time in terms of preparation and students needs time to get used to this strategy.

R: So, you think the problem is that students are not used to working on their own?

A: Yes, from my own experience, I think we need to train our students from the beginning, when they start their education from primary school, to get used to it. They should discover their own way, reflect upon their learning and use their preferred learning style. (ASR1)

As seen in the above quote, Atena raised the issue of training the students in the early years of their education to get used to the roles of new teaching approaches. Atena further said that a language teacher should know what each individual needs to learn and provide the environment and opportunities for this.

R: What do you think would help you to apply this approach?

A: It's also difficult for the teacher to adapt to the new strategies such as learner-centredness. The school also doesn't help the teachers to adapt to it. We need preparation to be able to reorganise the curriculum in the light of learner-centredness. (ASR1)

The above quote suggests that the lack of teacher training was an impediment to the implementation of learner-centred teaching. She also explained that the in-service training programs provided by the Ministry of Education did not respond to the teachers' needs. It appeared that the in-service training programs did not take into account the contextual constraints the teachers faced.

R: You mentioned that you attended training about how to apply learner-centred approach?

A: Just attending few training workshops are largely insufficient to provide the support the teachers need. What you see is only theoretical explanation of the principles of the approach and nothing is practical. The teachers are left to their own devices to implement reform ideas in the classroom. I think we need to have more training about it. (ASR2)

As the quote suggests, Atena did not seem satisfied with the amount of training provided and did not feel it met her expectations. This quote also illustrates that collaboration between the teachers and the Ministry of education is needed to encourage learner-centred teaching in the schools.

Leila shared the same beliefs as Atena. In the pre-active interview, she expressed her belief that she was in favour of learner-centred teaching to promote learners

autonomy as she stated, ‘I believe teaching and learning should be towards promoting independent learner, although sometimes it is difficult in our education system’ (LPI: 39). On being asked what the obstacles are for her when applying learner-centred approach, she explained:

R: What are the challenges you face to implement learner-centred approach?

L: Based on my experience, it’s very difficult to put into practice how I believe it should be. Actually, it is difficult to promote learner-centeredness in a classroom where the students’ levels are different and some of the students don’t participate because of their weaknesses.

R: How do you deal with students who don’t like to engage in the learning activity?

L: There are many of these students in my classroom. Such students never like to talk or participate, but they are good and know a lot of things. The problem is that they are just slow learners.

R: Slow learners. How could it be a challenge for you?

L: It takes from your time which you can use effectively in your normal good students. With good students you can achieve many things but you find yourself work slowly and do slowly in order not to ignore slow learners. (LSR2)

Leila’s comments here show that even though she believed in the importance of actively engaging students in the learning process, she expressed her struggle of maintaining an exclusively student-centred classroom due to a massive gap between the students’ level of English and dealing with slow learners in her class which is time consuming. Perhaps, then, Atena’s concern was due to the burden of learner-centred approach with slow learners.

Moreover, like other participants in this study who helped and trained the students to pass the exams, Leila often reminded students of the exams and how to answer questions. Asked in the stimulated recall interview about this, Leila stated that the exam affects the way one teaches to a great extent.

As noted by this teacher in the post-active interview, the realities of today’s language classrooms provide both opportunities and challenges for implementing learner-centred instruction. However, in practice, she has been trying to find a balance between creating a teacher-centred and a student-centred learning environment. In

addition to her constructivist belief, Leila also drew attention to the importance of the exam-based culture of education in her context. She stated that she always had to tell the students to be prepared for the exam. Furthermore, she expressed the belief that both learner-centred and teacher-centred instruction should be followed depending on the context and teacher's decision.

In sum, the results presented above indicate that even though all five teachers (C1) had strong beliefs about the learner-centred approach and the need for student autonomy in language learning, their beliefs were not consistently reflected in their practices. According to their views expressed in the pre-active interviews, teachers needed to foster their students' development by encouraging independent learning. They also believed that learner-centred learning could enhance students' confidence, which is fundamental in the development of students' communicative competence. However, observation of C1 teachers' classroom teaching exhibited a blend of teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching. Thus, maintaining an exclusively student-centred environment in the classroom was not feasible. Data from post-active discussion also revealed that they faced various challenges in attempting to promote a learner-centred approach. These can be categorised as follows: classroom management, students' expectations, students' resistance to class participation, exam-oriented teaching, limited teaching hours, and different levels of the students. This will be examined further in the discussion chapter.

A summary of the C1 teachers' belief statements and their observed classroom practices with regard to CCOT curriculum can be seen in Appendix 5.

The next section presents the findings from the second group of teacher participants with mixed (traditional-CCOT) beliefs and traditional practices.

4.6. Category 2: Mixed (traditional-CCOT) beliefs/ Traditional practices

C2: Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda

As previously mentioned, the pre-active interview revealed that the three participants in the second category (C2), Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda held mixed beliefs which included both traditional and communicative/constructivist perspectives. However, observational data showed that these participants applied traditional practices.

4.6.1. Beliefs and Practice in relation to grammar teaching/learning

This section presents the analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews of C2 teachers with regard to grammar teaching and learning. According to the CCOT curriculum, grammar is considered as a tool to achieve communication and it should have an implicit treatment in the classroom which is contrasted with the previous traditional methods that emphasised the explicit teaching of grammar in isolation from communication. The extracts are analysed with reference to the teachers' stated instructional approach and the actual strategies witnessed during lesson observations. Three themes emerged from data analysis: 1) the need to prioritise focus on form over focus on meaning, 2) the importance of explicit grammar presentation, and 3) the need to value both accuracy and fluency.

4.6.1.1. The need to prioritise focus on form over focus on meaning

As mentioned earlier, FonF exposes the learners to linguistic elements which are integrated into communicative activities whereas FonFs is rather traditional as the linguistic elements are taught separately following a pre-ordained sequence of their importance (Doughty, 2001). In the pre-active interview, C2 teacher participants expressed the belief that although they prefer implicit teaching of language forms, depending on the condition or the tasks in the classroom, their use of explicit teaching was also inevitable. For example, Zoha believed that grammar knowledge is as important as communicative competence because grammar is the basis for effective communication. She stated that:

‘When the students have a good knowledge of grammar, they can apply that knowledge to speaking, listening, reading and writing. I think having a good knowledge of grammar makes the student feel more confident in communicating in English because they make fewer errors and failure in understanding makes them lose their confidence.’
(ZPI: 27)

She further elaborated that:

‘There would be lots of benefit from it for the students when it’s meaningful, so students need to focus on forms, but the meaning is also important...’ (ZPI: 29)

The above quotes show that for Zoha both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction is important for the development of communicative ability.

Like Zoha, Bahar, in the pre-active interview, stated that grammar should be integrated into communicative activities because she believed that for the development of communicative ability, integration of form-focused exercises with meaning focused experience is needed. She stated that:

‘I think in a foreign-language context like Iran, students need to be led into situations in which the target structure is used. They should recognise the form and use of the grammar point, and then they analyse its function to use it accurately and fluently.’ (BPI: 28)

This extract highlights Bahar’s beliefs that as English is considered a foreign language in Iran, a focus on grammar must be incorporated into L2 communicative instruction to enable learners to use language accurately and fluently.

Compared to the other teachers, Hoda, the most experienced teacher, was the one who strongly believed that forms and accuracy should be a significant focus in language instruction, especially in the context of Iran. In the pre-active interview, she claimed that:

‘Because the educational purpose in Iranian secondary schools is to pass the exam, not learning to communicate, thus grammar teaching is necessary. I think if the students don’t learn grammar, they would put words together in an ungrammatical way.’ (HPI: 33)

This comment shows that Hoda sees grammar as playing a central role in order for students to pass the exams. She further expressed a belief that good grammar knowledge is necessary for communication and attached a great importance to grammar in language learning. She also believed that grammar was the foundation for communicative competence to be built on, and she did not think that learners could communicate in English effectively and accurately without a good knowledge of grammar. She viewed grammar as the ‘foundation of language’ and mentioned that students need to focus on form in order to acquire English proficiency.

As has been seen in the analyses of the pre-active interview data, these three teachers hold strong beliefs that grammar should be integrated into communicative activities. They all stressed that students need to have a good knowledge of grammar to enable them to pursue better achievements in their grammar-based examinations.

4.6.1.2. The importance of explicit grammar presentation

Despite their stated beliefs in the pre-active interview that both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction are important, in the observed lessons, C2 participants used explicit grammar presentation followed up by the students doing the grammar exercises in the textbook as controlled practice. For example, in the pre-active interview, Zoha expressed a belief that both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction is important. However, in the two observed lessons, her classroom practices showed that she did present grammar rules explicitly. The following extract shows a typical example of Zoha's work in relation to teaching grammar in lesson observation two.

Episode 14

- 1 [The teacher writes the title of the lesson 'Comparatives' on the board.]
- 2 [She writes the formula on the board and reads it: /as+adjective+as/ and
- 3 /as+adverb+as/]
- 4 T: Today we are going to talk about comparison with 'as...as'.
- 5 [The teacher writes the following two sentences on the board.
- 6 Mahsa is 16. Fatemeh is 16.]
- 7 T: Look at these sentences. Now, who can tell me when we use as...as?
- 8 S1: When they are the same.
- 9 S2: When two things are the same.
- 10T: When they are the same... when we compare things, so we say.... Mahsa is
- 11 as old as Fatemeh or Saba is as beautiful as Mina. (In Farsi) <It means they
- 12 are at the same level. Why are they adjectives here?> Because they are after
- 13 'to be'. (In Farsi) < We said that after 'to be' we use an 'adjective'.>
- 14 [Teacher continues] Now look at this sentence, Ali and Amir speak slowly. Ali
- 15 and Amir are 'subject', 'speak' 'verb', and slowly is 'adverb'.
- 16 (In Farsi) < Ok, then after 'adjective' we use 'to be', but when there is a main
- 17 verb we use 'adverb'. Now I want to say 'they both speak slowly'. What
- 18 should I say?>

(ZO2)

Zoha's instructional practice here shows that she uses explicit focus on forms approach by presenting the grammar rules first (line 1-3). She then wrote two de-contextualised sentences on the board guided the students to figure out the grammatical rules through these examples (lines 6-9). This episode shows that the

key characteristics of Zoha's work in relation to teaching grammar were her focus on explicit grammar analysis, the use of Farsi, and metalanguage to explain the grammatical rules. Her lesson showed traditional teaching characteristics in which she practised overt grammatical explanation; instead of making an attempt to help students to work out rules from examples. In this way, Zoha explicitly and deductively conducts instruction which constitutes a departure from her stated beliefs of incorporating grammar items into the meaningful context. This pattern of interaction in episode 20 was typical of the work of all C2 teachers.

In the stimulated recall interview, Zoha explained that it was not something she was satisfied with and mentioned students' expectations as a reason for her explicit grammar teaching. She elaborated on the challenges of teaching grammar:

R: I noticed that you followed explicit grammar instruction. What were the challenges for you not to apply meaning focused approach as you said earlier it's your preference?

Z: After years of experience, I've realised that the way I teach depends on what my students want. However, as I said, I've always preferred to use more inductive teaching and less control in my grammar teaching. Well, most of the times they [students] want me to explain grammar rules in Farsi. Students are less likely to take an active role so I have to explain the grammar in an explicit way like having more examples to express the grammar rules. I think they learn better and easier when I teach the way they want. (ZSR2)

The above extract reflects the idea that Zoha's choice of approach depends on the students' preferences, not hers as she believes that meeting students' preferences enhances learning. She claimed that according to her teaching experience, this presentation strategy was effective. In our post-active discussion, Zoha also revealed her concern regarding time limitations, as there was pressure to cover the prescribed textbook by the end of the course.

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; Z= Zoha)*

R: You were doing a very detailed grammar lesson, using a lot of metalanguage and involving nothing except explanation and drilling.

Z: I know that this is not the best way to teach.

R: But why do you teach that way if you feel that this is not the way you prefer to teach?

Z: They have to be ready for the exam and this is the quickest way to do it. So I have to constantly tell them what to do and explaining everything over and over again. (ZSR2)

The above extract suggests that lack of time and preparing students for the exam were Zoha's biggest concerns. She said that covering all the topics and focusing only on forms was her only choice. She commented that going into more detail and incorporating communicative activities would need extra time and if she was able to make the decision, she would take the second option.

R: So, you think the problem is about shortage of time, why is that a challenge for you?

Z: I think communicative activities demand considerable time investment and since my students are weak, the spending of time with extra effort would waste time in-class. We have a short period of time and we cannot finish the book if we focus on implicit grammar teaching only. (ZSR2)

This quote shows Bahar's preference for explicit presentation of grammar as it speeds up the learning process. She also stated that in reality, she could not adopt her ideal approach to teaching grammar because the students were in favour of an explicit discussion of rules.

Bahar's classroom observation also showed to some extent inconsistency between what she believed and what she actually did in her classroom. To review relative clauses, which have been taught in the previous session, she used isolated sentences rather than a meaningful context in which the students could communicate. The following extract is an example of how Bahar dealt with this grammar point.

Episode 15

1 [The teacher writes the following two sentences on the board.]

2 [The man teaches English. He came by bus.]

Subject

3 T: Who can tell me how we combine these two sentences?

4 S1: The man who came by bus teaches English.

5 T: Right. We use 'who' to describe people. Now, what about this?

6 [The teacher writes another two sentences on the board.]

7 [He bought the shirt. It is in his room.]

8 S2: He bought a shirt that it is in his room.

9 T: Yes, that's right. But you should not use 'it'.

10 [She writes on the board. The shirt which he bought is in his room.]

that

11 T: 'That' is used for things and people, 'which' is only used to describe

12 objects, and 'who' and 'whom' are used for people. These are called

13 'relative pronouns'. They are the subject or object of the 'relative clauses'.

(BO2)

As seen in the above episode, Bahar uses rule-based presentation (using isolated sentences) to revise the grammar point (line 2&7). She asks students to see if they still remember the rules for using relative pronouns (line 3). She also corrects the student's error explicitly (line 9). Although the students answered correctly, she recaps the grammar point one more time by writing another example on the board (line 10) and explaining it thoroughly (lines 11-13). As classroom observation shows, the key characteristics of Bahar's work in relation to teaching grammar were her focus on explicit grammar instruction and explaining the grammatical rules. In the stimulated recall interview, when asked why she explained the whole grammar point again, Bahar specified that:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; B= Bahar)

R: Here, after you asked students to see if they still remembered the rules, you receive correct responses. Why did you try to explain it thoroughly again?

B: I just wanted to check them if they knew what is all about. I explained it again to make sure they all students understood the grammar point because after that I wanted them to do exercises from the textbook to see what problems they were having and if they knew the rules for using relative pronouns. So, I have to review the rules again and again in this way. (BSR2)

As the above quote shows, Bahar felt that the students need more explanations on this grammar point in order to do the exercises as she was not sure they all understood it. In our discussion afterwards, the tension between her conflicting beliefs was clear:

R: Do you feel they dislike having the context?

B: You know it just makes it harder for them to grasp. If I try to impose context-based grammar presentation, they don't see the benefits of it as they are not used to. I know that it needs to be context-based, but most students are not used to it...to find and discover on their own. I think the most important thing here is how responsive and motivated they are. (BSR2)

This comment reveals that Bahar's general belief about the need to motivate and engage students outweighed her professed beliefs in context-based presentations. Although she believed in context-based work, she also believed that students might not respond positively to it. This shows the tension between her belief in the value of context-based grammar and her tendency to use rule-based presentations.

Further discussion of this issue revealed that although she appreciates text-based grammar teaching, sometimes it is not possible for her to use it because of the difficulty of some grammatical structures and the limitation of time.

'Well, some grammatical structures are more difficult and we really don't have enough time. I think in this situation students learn more easily when they are introduced to key grammatical issues at the beginning of the class rather than being asked to participate in activities or role plays. This is the easiest way for them to learn the hard ones.' (BSR2)

This quote reveals that Bahar's approach to grammar instruction is more traditional in the sense that she strongly believes that grammar should be taught by practicing specific structures. She dedicates a lot of time to the in-class practice of grammar features as she believes that repeated practice can lead to perfection among her students.

The observation of Hoda's classes also revealed that her teaching was controlled and directed by her aims that focused on the explicit presentation of grammar. The following extract exemplifies the way Hoda presented grammar.

Episode 16

- 1 [Teacher writes on the board. 'He decided to stay at home this weekend.']
- 2 T: Tell me what is the structure of this sentence?
- 3 Ss: Subject+Verb+Object+to Verb
- 4 [The teacher writes the structure on the board and reads it.]
- 5 T: (In Farsi) <Now tell me how can we make this sentence negative?>
- 6 S1: Can we say 'He didn't decide to stay at home'?
- 7 T: No.
- 8 S2: The structure is V+not to+V
- 9 T: Yes, very good.
- 10 [The teacher writes the structure on the board.]
- 11 T: (In Farsi) < Now tell me this sentence in negative?>
- 12 Ss: He decided not to stay at home.
- 13 T: Well done.

(HO1)

The above episode shows that Hoda started to explicitly focus on explicit grammar instruction (lines 2-3). She writes the rule on the board and asks the student to make the sentence negative (lines 4-5). The students follow her explicit approach and repeat the rule (line 8). She commonly used grammatical terminology when explaining the rules and used Farsi freely in teaching grammar (and in her teaching generally).

In the stimulated recall interview, she justified the logic behind the way she taught her lessons and stressed that providing the structural pattern helps the students learn more easily and raises their awareness because they are able to remember the pattern and do the exercises.

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; H= Hoda)*

R: Why did you incorporate deductive and explicit approach here but not meaning-focused instruction?

H: Presenting grammar through text does not work for my students. I think explicit approach to teaching grammar is very effective and time-saving. I believe that controlled practice is much better for helping students remember new language items because of its examination-like qualities.

R: So, you mean you have to do this way because of exam?

H: Yes, the students will finally be assessed against the theoretical information in the textbook, so they are concerned about exams. (HSR1)

As the above quotes show, it appears that at Hoda's concern about exam encouraged her traditional practices and may have helped to create consistency between her beliefs and practices. Further discussion of this issue revealed that examinations have great influence on her classroom practices:

'Students just study for the exam and I will be a successful teacher if the students get a good result. They want to be prepared for the university entrance exam which only focuses on grammar and reading. I know, it kind of takes all the pleasure out...of language learning...because you want to communicate and have fun doing it... but... you are going to get through an exam.' (HSR1)

She further stated that because Iranian students are learning English as a foreign language, without explicitly teaching grammar, they would not be able to learn it and to pass the exam. She also believes that grammar needs to be recycled from time to time and it is not enough to do it once.

'My experience tells me that since the students forget what they learn after some times, we always have to recycle the previous grammar points. So, the students need to be reminded of the rules before doing the exercises.' (HSR1)

Hoda's strategies for helping students learn grammar seemed to rely on explicit instruction, repetition, memorisation of grammar rules and language, knowledge of notes and content that she previously taught, needed to complete assessment-related tasks. She was observed talking about assessment criteria to students in both lessons observed. Moreover, Hoda stressed that she had learned English through a teacher-centred grammar-oriented methodology, focusing heavily on rule memorisation and drills. Consequently, she had adopted similar approaches in her own teaching. She believed that these techniques had worked for her as a learner, so she thinks it works for her students as well.

In summary, although differences were found amongst C2 teachers' stated beliefs and preferences, a general view emerges that both implicit and explicit teaching are essential to grammar learning because grammar itself is central to accuracy and communication. Nevertheless, observational data analysis reflected that C2 teachers' stated beliefs diverge to some extent from their actual practices with regards to their approaches to grammar presentation. In practice, they preferred the focus-on-forms

approach and the use of Farsi to explain the rules. These two patterns were frequently repeated during most of these teachers' work on grammar. C2 teachers' delivery method also followed a PPP teaching model. They began each lesson by presenting and explaining the target structure and encouraging the students to practise the structure with the use of controlled drills. It seems that the key influences on C2 teachers' beliefs and practices when teaching grammar were their concern about preparing students for the university entrance exam and covering the content of the school textbook since the focus of the school is on the success of the students.

4.6.2. Beliefs and Practice in relation to error correction

This section presents the data analysis regarding C2 teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to error correction strategies. According to the CCOT curriculum, errors are tolerable, and their treatment should be oriented to communicative competence, rather than on language form. The teacher can postpone the clarification of errors for later moments in the class in order to promote communication. Data analysis revealed how these three teachers elaborated on their beliefs about error correction, the techniques they employed, and the underlying reasons for what they did. Two themes emerged from data: a) the value of implicit error correction, and b) the need to emphasise both fluency and accuracy.

4.6.2.1. The importance of implicit error correction

In the pre-active interview, all C2 participants stated the belief that error treatments are essential as teachers have a strong role in it. For example, Zoha believed that students' grammatical errors should be corrected in an implicit way, leaving students a chance to self-correct. She pointed out that 'Iranian EFL learners tend to self-correct when they notice a mistake in their utterance' (ZSI: 30). This might be closely connected to the idea of learner autonomy in the educational context of Iran.

'When learners are encouraged to correct their own mistakes, not only they become independent, but also they are given an opportunity to consider and activate their linguistic competence so that they can be active participants.' (ZSI: 32)

The above quote shows Zoha's preference to encourage students to self-correct. She explained her experience of error correction in more detail and stated that based on

her experience, she did not correct the students' errors when they were doing communicative activities because she did not want to interrupt or discourage them.

Bahar also expressed the belief that students' grammatical errors should be corrected implicitly using recasts to avoid explicit error correction in front of the class.

'Errors are inevitable in the learning process. I also make mistakes when I speak so I don't want to interrupt too much...and I don't want to use peer correction because students may not feel good when other students correct them...instead, I can ask someone else the same question and get the correct sentence or answer from another student.'
(BPI: 27)

This comment reveals that Bahar tends not to correct students' errors explicitly or by peer correction for the sake of students. She shared her experience of correcting the students' errors and indicated that peer correction might discourage students and cause them to lose face in front of their friends:

'I believe that the best way is to encourage the students to correct themselves. Sometimes I correct them with my voice or facial expression, for example, if the student says 'She have a sister', I'd say 'She have a sister' or 'She has a sister', so that she understands her error... I believe most of the students do not like their peers to correct them ...it may be discouraging...'
(BPI: 35)

Unlike the other C2 teacher participants, in the pre-active interview, Hoda expressed the belief that correcting grammatical errors would not be detrimental to learners. When errors took place, she said she would simply repeat the correct forms instead of the errors, arguing that 'errors seem to have the magic power to hang around in students' brains' (HPI: 37). She stated that:

'Correction is helpful for learning and it's important to get students to engage with errors. When you correct one student's error, there is a chance for the whole class so that others can learn from their peer's error and their own errors.'
(HPI: 39)

She further asserted that if teachers do not correct students' error, they assume they are not making mistakes and they constantly make the same mistake.

According to the observational data, in most respects, C2 participants' actual practices of error correction were not congruent with their stated beliefs. In a few

cases, however, there was congruence. The following extract is an example from the work of Zoha:

Episode 17

- 1 T: Soodeh, would you start reading?
- 2 Soodeh: In the countries, some monkeys work on the farm as farm hands.
- 3 T: Say that again. (In Farsi) <Everybody pay attention to what she says.>
- 4 Soodeh: In the countries...
- 5 T: (interrupting Soodeh) In some countries...
- 6 Soodeh: ... the monkeys work on the farm as farm hands.
- 7 [Students are trying to answer together.]
- 8 T: It's better to put 'some' for 'countries' and 'the' for 'farm'. Say that again.
- 9 Soodeh: Monkeys work on the farm as farm hands in some countries.
- 10 T: That's right. Or, in some countries monkeys work as farm hands on the
- 11 farm.

(ZO1)

As the above extract illustrates, Zoha calls on an individual student to read the exercise (line 1). As soon as the student makes a mistake, she asks the whole class to pay attention to the error she made (line 3). However, she corrects all the errors herself immediately without engaging the whole class in the process of error correction (lines 4-11). As classroom observation shows, Zoha's practice during error correction was incongruent with her stated beliefs that students should be encouraged to correct themselves.

In the stimulated recall interview, Zoha explained the rationale which underpinned her approach:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; Z= Zoha)

R: Here, you mostly corrected the language mistakes directly by providing the correct answer? Why did you correct all the errors yourself?

Z: I wanted to draw all the students' attention to the errors, in this way students will pay attention to what is happening in the class. Once the students have recognised the error, and I have corrected it, it is necessary to repeat the rules once more; otherwise, they will repeat the error. (ZSR1)

As the above comment shows, Zoha believes that when the students identified errors they would remember them and avoid them next time. Further, in our discussion in the stimulated recall interview, another reason she gave was related to the requirements of the examinations. In other words, her stated belief that errors are natural outcomes was overwhelmed by her concern about the examinations. Thus, the interactive dynamics between Zoha's beliefs about the nature of errors and her beliefs about examinations led to inconsistency in her teaching practice.

Moreover, Zoha's prior experience as a student appeared to shape her perceptions about error correction:

'When I was a student during my secondary school, the teachers used to stop the students whenever they said sentences with pronunciation and grammatical mistakes. They used to stop us and correct the mistakes, and then we completed the sentence.' (ZSR1: 17)

Similarly, it was observed that Bahar use an explicit error correction strategy in her class. The extract below shows how she dealt with error correction.

Episode 18

- 1 S: We had Kebab for lunch yesterday. The kebab we had it for lunch was
- 2 delicious.
- 3 T: You should say 'The Kebab we had for lunch'. (In Farsi) <You should
- 4 omit it'.>
- 5 S: OK.
- 6 T: (In Farsi) <Why do you have to omit 'it'?>
- 7 S: (In Farsi) <because 'it'...>
- 8 T: Because 'it' substitutes for the ...?
- 9 S: The Kebab.
- 10 T: Very good.

(BO2)

The above episode shows that Bahar corrected the student's grammatical error explicitly (line 3). She then asks the student to explain the grammar point (line 6). Here, there was some attempt from the teacher to help the student to answer the question correctly (line 8). As classroom observation showed, Bahar corrected students' grammatical errors on-the-spot with a more explicit approach and the use of L1, despite expressing a preference for self-correction.

Later in the stimulated recall interview, upon being asked why she used this type of explicit correction in this episode, Bahar explained the rationale which underpinned this approach:

Stimulated Recall Extract

(R= Researcher; B= Bahar)

R: Why did you use explicit correction here?

B: They have to recognise the error. I think the reason for the student's error here is that I should have arranged some drill practice before doing this task. This error shows that they did not master this grammar point well, so I have to correct it immediately. Otherwise, these kinds of errors will accumulate.' (BSR2)

As the above quote shows, Bahar attributes errors to the lack of grammar knowledge and drills before practice. As such, her view about the source of errors influenced how she corrected them. Another reason she gave for her on-the-spot correction was that the students in her class had become used to being corrected and this would not discourage them.

Overall, C2 teachers believed in the effectiveness of implicit error correction and expressed that students should be prompted to self-correct their errors. In contrast to their beliefs, C2 teachers' practices showed that they tended to correct errors explicitly and to respond to these errors comprehensively. Despite stating a preference for encouraging learners to notice errors themselves, in practice, they corrected students' grammatical and pronunciation errors. When teachers talked about the rationales for these practices, they revealed beliefs which were in conflict with the curriculum's recommendations regarding the process of error correction.

4.6.2.2. The need to value accuracy over fluency

Although, in the pre-active interview, C2 teachers acknowledged that language fluency is important, they indicated that it is the purposes of activities that determined their focus on fluency or accuracy. As Zoha asserted:

'I think both fluency and accuracy are important. But it is difficult to use a balance of fluency and accuracy activities. I think accuracy is a complement to fluency. However, the proportion of fluency and accuracy is determined by the purpose of the activity.' (HPI: 39)

As the above quote shows, Zoha believes the focus on accuracy or fluency depends on teaching objectives. Zoha explained that during the accuracy-focused activity she corrects students and help them to notice the errors, while she builds fluency with no correction or interruption. She stated that based on her experience if she wanted to motivate the students to speak and develop their speaking skills, she would focus on fluency. This practice was not observed in any of Zoha's observed lessons. Zoha corrected all types of students' errors frequently in both lesson observed. However, it was observed that Zoha encouraged the student to self-correct before providing them with an answer.

Similarly, Hoda expressed her belief that she is a proponent of accuracy. The high frequency of error correction in her practice was congruent with her professed beliefs. She stated that students can improve their grammatical accuracy through the frequent practice of structures. She believed that sometimes the students need to know the correct forms when they practiced a sentence pattern. But she did not like to stop them immediately when they made errors. Also, for Hoda, the focus on accuracy or fluency depended on teaching objectives.

Hoda's class observation revealed that her actual practices regarding error correction were closely in line with her stated beliefs. Her observed lessons showed that she frequently corrected students' errors. The extract below shows how Hoda dealt with error correction.

Episode 19

- 1 T: For example, I want to be educated, what should I do? I should read,
 - 2 study educational books or I should listen to educational CDs, or I should
 - 3 watch educational films. So can you tell me what your aim is? Why do you
 - 4 want to be educated? What's your aim of education?
 - 5 S1: I have always want to be an astronaut.
 - 6 T: Wanted. You should say I have always 'wanted' to be or become an
 - 7 astronaut. Ok what else?
 - 8 S2: I want to be engineer.
 - 9 T: Be an engineer. (In Farsi) < *Don't forget to put 'an' before engineer.* >
 - 10 Ok, you want to be an engineer. Do you want to be an engineer because
 - 11 other people in the society look at you and tell you: (In Farsi) < *'Khanoom*
 - 12 *Mohandes'....'Miss Engineer'*>
 - 13 S2: I want help people and building tower and make our city beautiful.
 - 14 T: To help. You should say 'I want to help'...and 'build' not 'building'...
- (HO1)

As the above episode shows, Hoda asks students to talk about why they want to be an educated person (lines 1-4). Hoda corrects the student's grammatical error on-the-spot and explains to her the correct form of the sentence (line 6). Then again she corrects the student's second mistake and explains it in Farsi (line 9). As the classroom observation shows, Hoda corrected all students' errors explicitly which is in line with her stated beliefs that correction is helpful for learning and it's important to get students to engage with errors.

In the stimulated recall interview, when she spoke about her views regarding the process of error correction in this episode, she expressed her beliefs related to these practices:

'When there is a mistake in the sentence, I correct it immediately. I correct all kinds of mistakes especially the grammatical ones. Even if the activity is a speaking activity, I cannot let the students continue speaking while making grammatical errors, because if you do not correct them, they will keep making the same mistake.' (HSR1: 21)

It appears that Hoda feels correcting students' errors are part of the teachers' job. In the post-active discussion, however, she stated that correcting students' error would not embarrass students if it was done properly.

Stimulated Recall Extract
(R= Researcher; H= Hoda)

H: Some of my colleagues say that error correction may be humiliating for some students, so they may stop expressing themselves.

R: What do you think about that?

H: I think correcting students' error would not humiliate them if it was done correctly. Based on my experience, I think I know how to run a class now. Maybe when I was a beginning teacher, this could have been a concern.

R: What do you mean by correctly?

H: It means that I'm not criticising them in front of their classmates because they made the error. (HSR1)

Hoda assumed that her students expected to be corrected by the teacher when they made errors because they were still learners of English and none of them spoke perfect English. Therefore, she believed that the way she did error correction

‘correctly’ was not to belittle students through criticising their lack of knowledge or skills.

It is important to note that some participants seemed unable to articulate many of their stated beliefs on error correction. In the post-active interview they said that they used to think of error correction a lot more when they started teaching, but as time passed, they carried out error correction naturally and unconsciously. On the other hand, some participants did articulate clearly their beliefs and reported error correction practices. This will be taken up in the discussion chapter.

In summary, despite C2 teachers’ consensus on the effectiveness of self and peer-correction, their class observation reveals their direct and explicit approach to correction. Generally, C2 teachers preferred to correct errors explicitly and to respond to these errors comprehensively. All their observed practices featured on-the-spot correction. The teachers offered grammar explanation and drills when they blamed the errors on the lack of grammar knowledge or drill practice. In addition, while teachers believed in the usefulness of implementing self-correction, they still argued that teachers should be the main source to correct students’ errors. They were also found to have adopted selective corrections according to their teaching focus. Moreover, C2 teachers’ beliefs regarding the explicitness of error correction vary depending on the type of errors. A summary of these three teachers’ stated beliefs regarding error correction and their observed classrooms is given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Stated beliefs and observed practices of error correction (C2)

Case	Stated beliefs	Observed practice	Belief/practice
Bahar	Self correction; implicit grammatical error correction; students’ pronunciation errors should be corrected immediately (mix)	Self-correction (with the teacher’s help); recast; error correction with a more explicit approach; correcting students’ pronunciation errors (mix)	Inconsistency/ Consistency
Zoha	Self correction; peer correction might discourage confidence; students’ mistakes should be corrected (mix)	No sign of self-correction; on-the-spot correction and explaining grammar rules (traditional)	Inconsistency/ Consistency
Hoda	Errors should be corrected as soon as they are made; not correcting grammatical errors could lead to fossilisation (traditional)	Frequently corrected all types of students’ errors; (traditional)	Consistency

4.6.3. Beliefs and Practice in relation to the use of L1

This section presents the analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews of the three teachers in second category (C2) regarding the use of the first language. One of the principles of the ELT curriculum is to expose learners to the target language as much as possible. Thus, teacher beliefs and practices regarding the L1 use and the factors that affected their beliefs and practices were also examined in this study. Two themes which emerged from data analysis are: 1) The use of L1 for explaining grammar, and 2) The use of L1 for saving time.

4.6.3.1. The use of L1 for explaining grammar

Data analysis of the pre-active interviews indicated that the three teachers in this group believed that selective use of the L1, by the teacher or by students, could enhance L2 learning in various ways within a communicative framework. For example, Zoha claimed that:

‘I believe the more use of English, the better. Since the students’ exposure to the target language is limited in Iran, the teacher should use English more in the classroom that helps them improve their language skills. But sometimes when they have a problem with English or due to some students’ limited English proficiency, I have to use Farsi.’ (ZPI: 30)

Similarly, Bahar stated that:

‘If I use English a lot in the classroom it may be difficult for the students, but once they have become used to the use of English, they will feel all right. They have to learn how to use English for communication.’ (BPI: 41)

The above comments show that although Zoha and Bahar are in favour of selective use of the L1 in enhancing L2 learning, they suggest that the right thing is to minimise the use of L1.

In the pre-active interview, Hoda was the only participant who holds a strong belief about using L1 in the classroom. She expressed the idea that the use of L1 was more useful to her students as it facilitated the process of teaching grammar:

'I use Farsi when I teach grammar because all of the students will understand what I teach, whereas if I use English, I'm sure it will be more complicated for them. My experience tells me that L1 should be used when teaching grammar.' (HPI: 43)

Hoda considered that the use of L1 to explain grammar prepared the students to do well in the final exam and made them pay attention to the lesson.

Although in the pre-active interview these teachers articulated their beliefs about the benefits of the more use of English in the classroom, in practice, their classroom interactions were dominated by the use of Farsi. C2 participants shifted to L1 very often in explaining grammar points or procedures for specific activities. The following episode is an example from the work of Hoda:

Episode 20

- 1 T: (In Farsi) < *Listen to me first, then you can write all of them in your*
- 2 *notebook.*> Ali is short,
- 3 Mina is tall. Which one is the adjective?
- 4 Ss: Tall and short.
- 5 T: Short and tall. Are they the same?
- 6 Ss: No.
- 7 T: One of them is tall, one of them is short, this is comparative adjective.
- 8 (In Farsi) < *We compare two things or two people. Both are not the same*
- 9 *One is taller, the other one is shorter. Then, what should we*
- 10 *do? We cannot use 'as' here. What do we do? We have to see the adjective*
- 11 *belongs to which column,*> if it is from the first column; one syllable, we
- 12 have to put 'er than' and we say 'Ali is shorter than Mina'.

(BO1)

It is evident from the above episode that Bahar uses Farsi to explain what a 'comparative adjective' is (lines 8-11). This extract seems to show that Bahar's classroom practices may contradict her professed beliefs. Although in the pre-active interview she articulated her beliefs about the benefits of the more use of English in the classroom, in practice, her classroom interactions were dominated by the use of Farsi. In the stimulated recall interview, Bahar stated the reason that her students preferred to use Farsi when explaining some abstract grammatical terms. She attributed her use of L1 to facilitate the teaching of grammar; something many teachers agree is difficult.

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; B= Bahar)*

R: Why did you use L1 to explain the whole grammar point here?

B: I think the most difficult part for the students to understand is the grammar. Sometimes when I explain the grammar in English, they look at me and say ‘when do we use this?’ It’s like they didn’t hear anything. So, I have to explain again in Farsi, give example all the time when I’m explaining.’ (BSR1)

As the above quote shows, Bahar perceives grammar as the most difficult part of the language to teach and learn.

The decision to use Farsi when explaining grammar is additionally indicative of the high value these participants place on fairness. In the post-active interview, Zoha stated:

‘If students did not receive the teacher’s message due to the language barrier, in essence, it was not taught at all.’ (ZSR1: 8)

The justification given was that explaining grammar in Farsi allows students to be on an equal footing, regardless of their listening comprehension skills in English. Zoha also suggested that the use of Farsi helps her to convey what she wants to her students. She further asserted that it is important to resort to L1 in order to explain complex grammar points, such as explaining the difference between Simple Present and Present Progressive.

Contrary to other C2 teacher participants, Hoda’s lesson observation revealed that her stated beliefs regarding the use of L1 are consistent with her actual practice. In her classroom, Farsi was the dominant language of interaction. The following episode is an example from the work of Hoda:

Episode 21

- 1 T: Learning English is easy. (In Farsi) <What does it mean?>
- 2 Ss: (In Farsi) <Learning English is easy>
- 3 T: (In Farsi) <What is the subject?>
- 4 Ss: Learning English.
- 5 T: Ok, underline 'learning English'. (In Farsi) <Write 'subject' above it.>
- 6 T: Driving carelessly is dangerous. (In Farsi) <Say the meaning>
- 7 Ss: (In Farsi) <Driving carelessly is dangerous>
- 8 T: (In Farsi) <What is the subject?>
- 9 Ss: Driving carelessly.
- 10 T: Yes. Underline it. Now tell me what is the opposite of dangerous?
- 11 Ss: Safe.
- 12 T: (In Farsi) <What does safe mean?>
- 13 Ss: (In Farsi) <safe>
- 14 T: Ok. (In Farsi) <What is dangerous?>
- 15 Ss: Adjective.
- 16 T: (In Farsi) <Yes. Write 'adj' above it.> Now write 'danger' is a noun. (In
- 17 Farsi) <Means danger.>

(HO2)

The above extract illustrates how Hoda deals with the use of L1 in grammar presentation. She starts reading a sentence and asks students what that sentence means in Farsi (line 1). The students respond to the question by translating it into Farsi (line 2). She frequently asks students to underline the grammar points which she thinks are important (line 5&10). She tends to translate almost all the words and sentences into Farsi (lines 11-16). The above extract is typical of Hoda's extensive use of Farsi in the classroom.

In the stimulated recall interview, on being asked about her frequent use of Farsi, she indicated that she prefers to use L1 since it helps to convey what she wants to her students. She said:

R: I noticed that you frequently used L1 here when you explained grammar. Can you tell me why?

H: What's important for me is that my students understand what I am saying. The time is also important. Because we don't have enough time to use English to explain, for example, a grammar point, over and over until all the students understand it. I prefer to facilitate this process by using Farsi. (HSR2)

In the post-active interviews, when we discussed her preference to use L1 for teaching English, she gave various justifications: a) the use of L1 was economic in that it enabled the teacher to teach a great deal of content in a short time; and b) it was the method she had been used to from her student days both at school and university.

4.6.3.2. The use of L1 for saving time

L1 was also found to be used when teaching was constrained by time. In the post-active discussions, these three teachers reflected that sometimes they switched from English to Farsi to save time. They stated that there was no need to spend lots of time on trying to explain the meaning of a word as it would be wasting time. For example, Zoha stated that she used various methods to explain a word to students but they did not understand it. As a result, she explained the meaning of the word in Farsi. The extract bellow illustrates how Zoha handled this activity.

Episode 22

- 1 T: Boat and ship. What's the difference?
- 2 S1: (In Farsi) < *ship and boat* >
- 3 T: Who works on a ship? Sailor. A person who works on a ship.
- 4 S2: Ships and sailor are for fighting?
- 5 T: That's right . Now, what is navy?
- 6 S3: What is fighting?
- 7 T: (In Farsi) < *Look* >. Iran and Iraq had war many years ago. They were
- 8 fighting.
- 8 S3: (In Farsi) < *War?* >
- 9 T: Yes, (In Farsi) < *It's war.* >

(ZO2)

The above episode shows that there was some attempt here by Zoha to encourage the students to speak in English. Zoha first tries to explain the meaning of a new word in English (line 3). Meanwhile, one student asks for the meaning of another word (line 6). Zoha explains it in English and then in Farsi (line 7&9). Zoha's lesson observation reveals that her stated beliefs regarding the use of L1 are consistent with her actual practice.

In the stimulated recall interview, when I asked Zoha about her use of L1 for explaining the meaning of new words, she explained:

*Stimulated Recall Extract**(R= Researcher; B= Bahar)*

R: Do you think the way you used L1 here works for you?

Z: Yes. Once you begin speaking in English, they give up completely and start using Farsi. So I think sometimes if it is necessary like when they ask for the meaning of a word and you try everything like miming, gestures, explanation, drawing, if these don't work then you can give the Farsi equivalent. In some cases I do say the word in Farsi to save time, in some cases I clarify some explanations in English.' (ZSR2)

The above quote shows Zoha's preference to use L1 for saving time. It appears that Zoha had some doubt and uncertainty. She was not sure what strategy works best for her. The following extract from a discussion with Zoha summarises the general sentiment among these three teachers:

R: Some say we should not waste time trying to use the TL to explain difficult vocabulary.

Z: Yes, I agree with that. We just have an hour of class so I think if you use mimics or drawings; you are just wasting your time. I first try explaining in English, but if I feel that student doesn't understand I use Farsi. (ZSR2)

Overall, while these three teachers' intent was to have the students express their ideas in English and to interact with them in English, concerns over learning grammar, time limitation, classroom management, and constraints on students (limited participation and low proficiency) kept them from creating more opportunities for their students to use English. Although in the pre-active interview they expressed a belief in the value of selective use of the L1 in enhancing L2 learning, classroom observation revealed that they conducted their lessons largely in L1 (Farsi) and used the L1 for almost every classroom function in their lessons, from explaining grammar and the meaning of new words to checking the students' answers, managing the class, and giving feedback.

4.6.4. Beliefs and Practice in relation to the teachers' role

In traditional approaches, the role of the teacher is considered to be that of controller and transmitter of knowledge of the target language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). However,

in the constructivist /communicative approach, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator, an organiser, and a guide. CCOT entailed a shift in the roles teachers and students play in the classroom as teachers take up the role of becoming learning facilitators. In the curriculum reform environment, Iranian teachers' role would be to guide students through their learning process and assist them in acquiring the skills needed to become independent learners. Such a role was radically different from the one these teachers assumed in the classroom before the reform. One theme emerged from data analysis: 1) the view of teachers' playing diverse roles, which is discussed in the following section.

4.6.4.1. The view of teachers' playing diverse roles

According to the results of the pre-active interview, these three participants used a range of different terms to describe teachers' roles, such as facilitator, organiser, controller, manager, instructor, knowledge provider, nurturer, guide, and helper. C2 teachers described themselves as sometimes playing the role of 'instructor' to provide directions at the beginning of the class and then acting as a 'facilitator' to support the students. In other words, first they try to impart language knowledge and give directions, and then follow this by guiding, giving advice, answering questions, and monitoring students as they work. For example, Bahar and Zoha believed that they have multiple roles related to their overall objectives for student success. For example, Zoha believed a teacher should play different roles such as being a facilitator and an instructor. In the pre-active interview she said:

'Teacher should be like a guide, a facilitator, and an instructor. The most challenging thing is that I have to play different roles, which is more difficult than being a knowledge provider. As a teacher, I should let most of the things be done by the students and my job is to act as a facilitator and help them.' (ZPI: 47)

This comment highlights Zoha's preference for having facilitating role to help the students, although she is aware of its challenges. She further explained that her role has changed since she became more of a facilitator, which gave students more chance to practice English in class.

For Bahar the teacher has to be a 'good listener, to know how to judge and guide'. She thought that showing empathy was one way of building the confidence and self-esteem of learners. Bahar demonstrated those skills in one class I observed:

She asks one question, reformulates it in a simpler form, in English, in Farsi until she gets some kind of answer...she forces students to think 'when money goes out, what account do you debit...you have to think...'she corrects, she advises, she praises. She has special attention for those who were absent in the previous lesson. (BO2)

The above extract shows Bahar's role as an advisor, helper, and guide. Bahar said that teachers always have good intentions but these are not enough, teachers have to show that they care about their students. Showing them the way to success by taking one step at a time was how she demonstrated care.

Unlike the other two C2 teachers, Hoda expressed a strong belief in the traditional role of the teacher, as shown by her statement that 'teacher should be a controller. I think teachers should control the students' understanding and their behaviour (HPI: 51)'. In the pre-active interview, she described her actual teacher role as 'an authority' and 'a coach':

'I believe the teacher is a key element and an authority in language learning. What's important for the students is information. They are concerned about the exam. The responsibility of students' learning depends mainly on me.' (HPI: 51)

Hoda further stated that:

'I believe that the teacher's role is like a coach when transfers knowledge to players regarding techniques and strategies, the players are expected to develop those skills through practice and experience. The same is true here in our classroom.' (HPI: 53)

It seems that Hoda believes the students need coaching to move forward.

According to the pre-active interview data, C2 teacher participants (except Hoda) reported that they sometimes played the role of 'instructor' to provide directions at the beginning of the class, and then acted as a 'facilitator' to support the students. However, the activities that teachers used in their classroom differed somewhat and did not seem to reflect these roles.

As seen previously (see episodes 14, 15, and 21), the classroom observation data showed that these three teachers mainly played the role of controller and instructor rather than that of facilitator and supporter in their teaching. In the post-active interview, they gave reasons for this lack of consistency between their stated beliefs and their actual practice, and, in so doing they also expressed their dissatisfaction

with current learner roles. For instance, in Bahar's classroom teaching (see episode 15), contrary to what she said in the pre-active interview, the students and the teacher were in traditional roles. There was no evidence of the teacher's efforts to move learners towards autonomy. She spent a lot of time trying to achieve silence in the classroom. Bahar had a lot of classroom management problems which seemed to prevent some of the students from listening and learning.

In the post-active interview, Bahar pointed out that the traditional teacher and learner roles inherited from earlier times had an influence on the current roles she enacted in the classroom.

R: what do you think about your teacher role in this lesson?

B: The students expect to see the teacher in a traditional role, or better say it, as the transmitter of knowledge. I am not satisfied with my current role. But you know the contextual constraints such as the educational system are kind of obstacle to adopting desired teacher roles in class.

R: Can you tell me what those obstacles are?

B: I believe it's because of the faults in our education system, students expect everything from the teacher. For the students, a teacher is a person who knows everything and should teach what's needed. The students expect everything from us. Therefore, that ideal teacher's role as a facilitator does not work in this context.' (BSR1)

The above quotes highlight Bahar's dissatisfaction with her current role which she felt to be the traditional one, that of a transmitter of knowledge. She believes that the contextual constraint such as traditional educational system prevents her to adopt her ideal teacher's role as a facilitator.

Similarly, in her both lesson observed, Zoha was not able to act as a facilitator of learning due to the students' poor language skills and their dependency on her to deliver knowledge in the classroom. In the post-active interview, Zoha stated the reason why she tries to lecture in her class.

'Sometimes it is very difficult to avoid lecturing in the classroom. According to my experience, if I use communicative activities all class time, the students think that I was not teaching at all. I have to balance lectures and communicative activities.' (ZSR1)

Zoha went on to express the view that neither the students nor the teachers could adopt their ideal roles, due to classroom management problems caused by external factors. She pointed out that students felt they could disrupt lessons as they expected to learn English in other ways, mostly through private lessons. This led to the teacher adopting the role of authority in class. Again, this contradicted what she had said in her pre-active interview about her role as guide and helper.

It is worth noting here that Hoda was the only teacher whose stated belief was to a great extent consistent with her actual practice among the C2 participants. The observations of Hoda's lessons indicated that her stated traditional beliefs were reflected in her practice. In the classroom, she was more of an instructor and controller and the lesson was mostly teacher dominated. She consistently controlled the students to make sure that they were engaged in the targeted activity. For most of the time, the students listened to the teacher, answered her questions, and copied whatever she explained to the class. She explained that it was her role to simplify the process of learning for the students by her direction and control. For Hoda, being a facilitator of learning in her classroom was not a role that she could maintain regularly. In the post-active interview, she justified the logic behind the traditional role she played in her teaching:

‘Once you let the students work on their own, you’ll allow them to be playful and you cannot control the class anymore. So, they won’t learn anymore.’ (HSR1)

Hoda believed that a change in teachers’ role from authoritative transmitters of knowledge to facilitators of learning transforms the classroom into a ‘playful’ environment, which impedes students’ learning. Thus, she reacted to such a role by controlling the learning environment. Moreover, what Hoda liked most about her own class was that her good management skills brought about instructional success. She was able to complete everything that she planned within the lesson by keeping a fast pace. Also, in conducting activities, she viewed appropriate control over students as the key to attaining educational success.

Overall, looking at the different roles that the teachers believed they had to play in the classroom, it is fair to say that, in practice, these teachers adopted traditional roles of the EFL teacher in the classroom, not the roles of one who facilitates the learning

process and co-constructs knowledge with the students. The teacher was the dominant controlling figure in the class. Learners were not encouraged to become autonomous nor did the teacher conduct genuine conversations with them to allow them to express their views.

4.6.5. Beliefs and Practice in relation to learner-centred teaching

This section presents the analysis of the pre-active interviews, classroom observations, and post-active interviews of the teachers with regard to learner-centred instruction. Learner-centredness is another pedagogical principle underlying the CCOT. The reformed curriculum calls for a learner-centred approach to language teaching and learning and a shift of students' roles from passive receivers to active constructors of knowledge. The three teachers in C2 seem to embrace both the constructivist ideas of the curriculum reform and many traditional ideas about language teaching at the same time. In the pre-active interview, they expressed their belief in both learner-centred and teacher-centred teaching, but their actual classroom teaching was teacher-centred. Two themes emerged from data analysis: 1) the importance of a flexible teaching approach, and 2) the view of learners as passive recipients of knowledge.

4.6.5.1. The importance of a flexible teaching approach

All the teachers in the pre-active interview emphasised that the learners are expected to be active participants rather than passive listeners and to take part in all the activities facilitated by the teachers. However, different from the other teachers in the study, Bahar, Zoha, and Hoda (C2) believed that both learner-centred and teacher-centred ways of teaching should be followed in teaching English depending on different purposes and contexts. For example, Bahar expressed the following belief regarding her flexible teaching approach:

'I will adjust my teaching approach according to the needs and levels of the students. When the teaching content is simple and there is sufficient time, I will give them more communicative tasks and group works. But when exams are coming up, there is no time doing interactive activities. So, it depends on the task.' (BPI: 43)

This comment shows that Bahar believes in integrating these two approaches and using them in a flexible way depending on teaching content and task type. In addition, in the pre-active interview, she acknowledged that students should play an active role in the learning process to enable them to communicate confidently, appropriately and coherently in various situations, but student levels and individual differences among them should also be taken into consideration by the teacher.

In the pre-active interview, Hoda said:

‘I believe that the idea of letting the students depend on themselves completely depends on the activity in class. The students used to rely on the teacher and it’s not easy for them to learn on their own. The teacher is responsible for teaching and learning.’ (HPI: 55)

Hoda further stated that, according to the teaching objectives, she tries integrating both learner-centred and teacher-centred approach to teaching.

Additionally, in the pre-active interview, Zoha pointed out that her students’ learning was her main responsibility. She stated, ‘If I don’t explain the lesson to the students thoroughly, they wouldn’t learn it’ (ZPI: 51). She was concerned about her responsibility to meet the requirements of the examinations. In contrast to Hoda’s traditional belief, she also expressed some constructivist beliefs regarding students’ language learning. She said that ‘The students can learn better when they are able to learn independently, rather than rely on their teacher’ (ZPI: 51). When reflecting on her past experiences as a language learner, Zoha also criticised the traditional approach to language teaching her previous teachers used to adopt in the classroom.

Overall, C2 teachers believed that both learner-centred and teacher-centred ways of teaching should be followed in teaching English depending on different purposes and contexts.

4.6.5.2. The view of learners as passive recipients of knowledge

Observation of C2 teachers’ classroom practices showed a tendency towards more traditional teacher-centred instruction. Their lessons were teacher controlled and the students were not provided with opportunities to develop autonomy. For example, despite Bahar’s belief in integrating learner-centred instruction and teacher-directed teaching, her observed lessons revealed teacher-centred characteristics in which she

was the authority and her students had limited opportunities for interaction, and limited freedom in deciding what and how to learn. Therefore, her systematic lecturing approach resulted in dull classes with learners disconnected from what teachers were transmitting.

In the post-active interviews, she stressed the importance of classroom control to improve students' learning and stated:

'Based on my teaching experiences, I think my primary responsibility is to cover the content of the textbook completely to make them ready for the exam. So, I have to finish the lesson in a given time. I have to have control over the students to improve their learning.' (BSR1: 29)

This rationale highlights a recurring concern in Bahar's comments on preparing students for the exam. In the post-active interviews, she consistently emphasised that it was a teacher's responsibility to maintain control over her students. To her, then, being 'learner-centred' largely meant ensuring that her students learned the content of the lessons accurately. Moreover, it appears that being obliged to teach fixed content limits the teacher's freedom as to what and how to teach.

Even though, in the pre-active interview, Zoha stated the belief that the students should take the lead in their learning, her observed lessons (see episode 14) revealed that her students showed little motivation, remained passive, and there was evidence that she felt frustrated by their lack of participation. In the post-active interview, Zoha stated that she herself experienced the value of encouraging students to be autonomous learners, but she felt it was too ideal, and unmanageable in her teaching context. She said:

'I'm eager to teach students as much as I can, I have to efficiently transfer my knowledge to them. I have to make more interactive activities so that they speak out...they learn how to use language. But sometimes they get bored and they don't feel interested in learning English and I don't know the reason.' (ZSR2: 32)

This comment indicates that Zoha experienced a tremendous conflict between her own desire to be an effective teacher with motivated students and the reality of her classroom in which students were non-responsive and bored. This illustrates her limited understanding of and unfamiliarity with the required teaching approach. Zoha's major concern was basically to provide various activities for the students to

engage in the classroom. However, there was no attempt to develop critical thinking among the students by involving them in activities and no reference to interactive learner-centred learning in terms of initiating meaningful talk or construction of knowledge, as emphasised by CCOT approach. She added that the students are not used to such a learner-centred approach because the students rely on the teachers' instruction.

Furthermore, in the stimulated recall interview, Zoha attributed her traditional teaching approaches to the diversity among students' ability levels, commenting that:

‘The students are diverse and cannot be treated the same. Having different level of students in the same class makes learner-centred way of teaching almost impossible. Some of them don't care to learn even if you give them ready things.’ (ZSR1: 27)

This quote reveals that although Zoha was strongly against high levels of control in the student-teacher relationship, the students' proficiency level made her to have more control. For Zoha the students' interest in the lesson was an important factor to ensure their engagement in the English classroom. She further criticised the system that made the students expect everything from the teacher. In the post-active interview, she also said that, ‘the more I tried to make my classes learner-centred, the more I lost control over my classroom, (ZSR1: 31). It appeared that she felt more comfortable in a teacher-fronted class.

Similarly, although in the pre-active interview Hoda stated the belief that she was in favour of applying both learner-centred instructions and teacher centred teaching, observations of her teaching showed that she tried to maintain a controlled and disciplined atmosphere in which students were quiet and on task, and raised their hands before speaking. There was no evidence of the teacher's giving learners some choices or opportunities to express their own opinions or to build their own knowledge. In her observed lessons, the students spent most of the time listening to the teacher's explanations, answering her questions, and writing what the teacher told them to write.

Episode 23

1 T: We are tired of sitting here. Underline 'tired of', (in Farsi) <you should use
 2 'ing' after it. Write after the preposition 'of' or two words verb, we use 'ing'
 3 form.>

4 T: Marzieh < make a sentence with 'practice'. >

5 S1: Practicing for a long time made me tired.

6 S2: <Can we say 'make' too?>

7 T: < For the third person we must put 's' after make. So it should be 'makes'
 8 then. Now you read next one.>

9 S2: He was thinking about repairing the house.

10 T: <Why does 'thinking' get 'ing'? >

11 Ss: Because it is past continuous.

(HO2)

The above classroom episode shows that Hoda tightly controlled the activity in which the students had limited interaction and listened to what the teacher said and followed her instructions. As classroom observation shows, Hoda's lessons were teacher controlled and the students were not provided with opportunities to develop autonomy. The tasks were very controlled and information exchange between the teacher and the students followed the traditional pattern. Hoda gave the students no chance to express themselves freely and told them to adhere to what she had taught them. She based all her lessons on the content of the textbook. When asked about this observation, she replied:

'Actually, when I teach this way, the students not only receive information from the teacher, they practise the language. When they do the work, they analyse and practise the language. I cannot rely on them working by themselves, since they lack experience.' (HSR2: 29)

Accordingly, for Hoda maintaining a student-centred environment in the classroom was not feasible as she thinks that the students need more experience for this to happen:

R: You mean they should learn how to work independently?

H: Yeah. The majority of my students are not ready yet to work on their own due to their low level of English and they are very dependent on the teacher. They won't be able to do well in class without their teachers. (HSR2)

Hoda further stressed that students should listen to the teacher and obey what she says in the classroom. Her practices and comments showed that she believed her teaching would be effective only if students were quiet, remained in their seats, and paid attention to her all the time.

In the post-active interview, we also discussed her preference for using a 'lecture' teaching method. Hoda asserted that this method prepared the students to do well in the final examinations and made them pay attention to the lesson. Hoda also indicated that she knows that she was the dominant controlling figure in the class and lecturing gives her a sense of safety even though it could be boring for the students. Moreover, when reflecting on her past experiences as a language learner, she mentioned some teachers who had taught her in the past:

'I often use the traditional teaching methods through which I was taught in the university. Switching to learner-centred teaching needs time, preparation and lesson planning.' (HSR2: 35)

Hoda explained that even attending workshops and seminars on learner-centred teaching did not help her as she claimed they were 'just a bunch of theories'.

To sum up, the observational data revealed that even though all these three teachers were more in favour of constructivist/communicative views of teaching, their practice exhibited traditional characteristics. Teachers implemented a whole range of learner-centred activities, which they selected according to the level of their students and to their context. Though these activities were meant to provide sufficient flexibility for learners to construct their own learning, most activities in the study were teacher-controlled. Moreover, teachers focused on whole class activities. Their classrooms were set up in the traditional manner with student desks in rows facing both the teacher's desk and the board. The students had limited interaction, limited freedom in deciding what to learn, and how to learn.

In the post-active interviews, the teachers expressed their struggles to promote a learner-centred approach in the classrooms. They mentioned classroom control, organising lesson content, time management, and being prepared for the exam, as main constraints on implementing learner-centred instruction as recommended by the CCOT. They also referred to individual differences among the students that should be carefully considered by the teacher. During their post-active interviews, teachers also

noted how their personal schooling and teaching experiences influenced their beliefs and practices related to learner-centred teaching.

A summary of the C2 teachers' belief statements and their observed classroom practices with regard to five principles of CCOT can be seen in Appendix 6.

4.7. Factors influencing teachers' enactment of their beliefs into practice

The data analysis of the teachers' retrospective comments on their practice reveals several factors related to teachers, students, and/or the context influencing their practices of CCOT curriculum in their EFL classroom. These frequently mentioned experiential and contextual factors in stimulated recall interviews revealed that the teachers were exposed to an open system where they received various kinds of influences from the contexts (see figure 4.5 below).

Table 4.5. Factors influencing teachers' practices of curricular reforms in classrooms

Context	Categories	Influencing factor
Micro-context of classroom	1. Teacher-related	Past learning experience
		Apprenticeship of observation
		Professional teaching experience
		Teacher/student relationship
		Lack of reform experience
	2. Students-related	Student proficiency level
		Individual differences
		Students' needs and expectations
		Classroom management
	3. Workplace conditions	Time constraints
		Large student number
		Traditional classroom layout
The textbooks and supplementary books		
Exo-context of school	School requirements/ opportunities	In-service training
		Teachers' collaboration
Macro-context of society	Educational policies	The examinations
		The curriculum
	Social setting	Lack of EFL environment

As presented in Table 4.5, the context in which teachers implemented their beliefs in practice can be regarded as a complex system that constituted the micro-context of classrooms, exo-context of school, and macro-context of school and society. These findings are explained in detail in the next chapter.

4.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter, the findings obtained from the pre-active interview, the observations, and the post-active reflections for each participant's beliefs and practices have been compared in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the EFL teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices. The main characteristics of teachers' beliefs about grammar teaching, error correction, use of L1, teachers' role, and teacher-centred teaching as five key elements of CCOT-based curriculum were outlined and tensions between teachers' beliefs and their practices were also highlighted.

The relationship between teachers' professed beliefs and their classroom practices is a complex one. In this study, the classroom observations focused on the extent to which the teaching and practices of EFL secondary teachers reflected an understanding of the underlying principles of the CCOT and the different ways in which such practices were aligned and/or misaligned with their professed beliefs. As the teachers were studied within particular contexts, the explanation they articulated to justify their actions were likely to reflect the ways in which they made particular sense of the specific demands of the context.

This chapter presented how teachers in this study displayed a strong relationship between their professed beliefs and CCOT pedagogy. However, the findings from the observations indicated that the teachers stated beliefs are not always manifested in their practices. The analysis showed there was a large gap between teachers' beliefs about CCOT stated in the pre-active interview and expressed in the post-active interview and their actual practices. Nevertheless, there are instances where teachers' beliefs are either completely congruent or partially congruent with their practices. Interestingly, across the participants, teachers with more CCOT-oriented beliefs displayed more CCOT-oriented pedagogy in their teaching practice. Moreover, the EFL teachers in this study had a number of commonalities in their pedagogical belief

systems and the teaching routines and approaches they employed, despite variation across individual participants and cases.

The contextual factors were found to lead to this discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices. Moreover, the participants' teaching beliefs and classroom practices were influenced by their previous learning and teaching experiences and they were also contextualised in their particular teaching situations. Thus, findings suggest that enabling CCOT pedagogy requires that teachers' beliefs are aligned with CCOT, but also that their context needs to be conducive towards enacting their CCOT beliefs into practice.

The next chapter presents the discussion of the findings to my research questions with reference to the conceptual framework and the reviewed literature.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

Situated in an EFL context, this study employed a qualitative multiple-case study research design in order (a) to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices regarding English language teaching and learning within the context of curricular reform and (b) to identify factors influencing the translation of teacher beliefs into teaching practice. Borg (2006) has argued that analyses of teachers' practices and cognitions which ignore the complexities of micro- and macro-contexts for teachers' work are likely to be partial or flawed. For that reason, in order to understand the rationales and the various factors influencing the teachers' beliefs and the decisions they make in the classroom, the educational context within which teachers work (e.g. classroom and school) was also examined. Such an understanding of the intertwined relationship between beliefs, practices, and context informed the discussion chapter of this dissertation.

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study (as shown in Chapter 4) in relation to the research questions (see 1.5). An interpretation of the results, with reference to the conceptual framework, research methodology, and the literature review are included. As the findings in previous chapter revealed, the participating teachers were divided into two categories according to their beliefs and practices regarding CCOT (see Chapter 4).

Generally speaking, the findings of the current study revealed that regarding the five key aspects of CCOT curriculum, there was a large gap between teachers' beliefs stated in the pre-active interview and their actual practices and the beliefs underlying these practices. Three main themes which emerged from the findings will be discussed in this chapter. These can be summarised as:

- Tensions between teachers' stated beliefs and actual practices of curricular reform.
- The impact of cultural contexts on the relationship between beliefs and practices.
- The experiential factors influencing the teachers' beliefs and their practice.

Figure 5.1 below shows the relationship between the three themes.

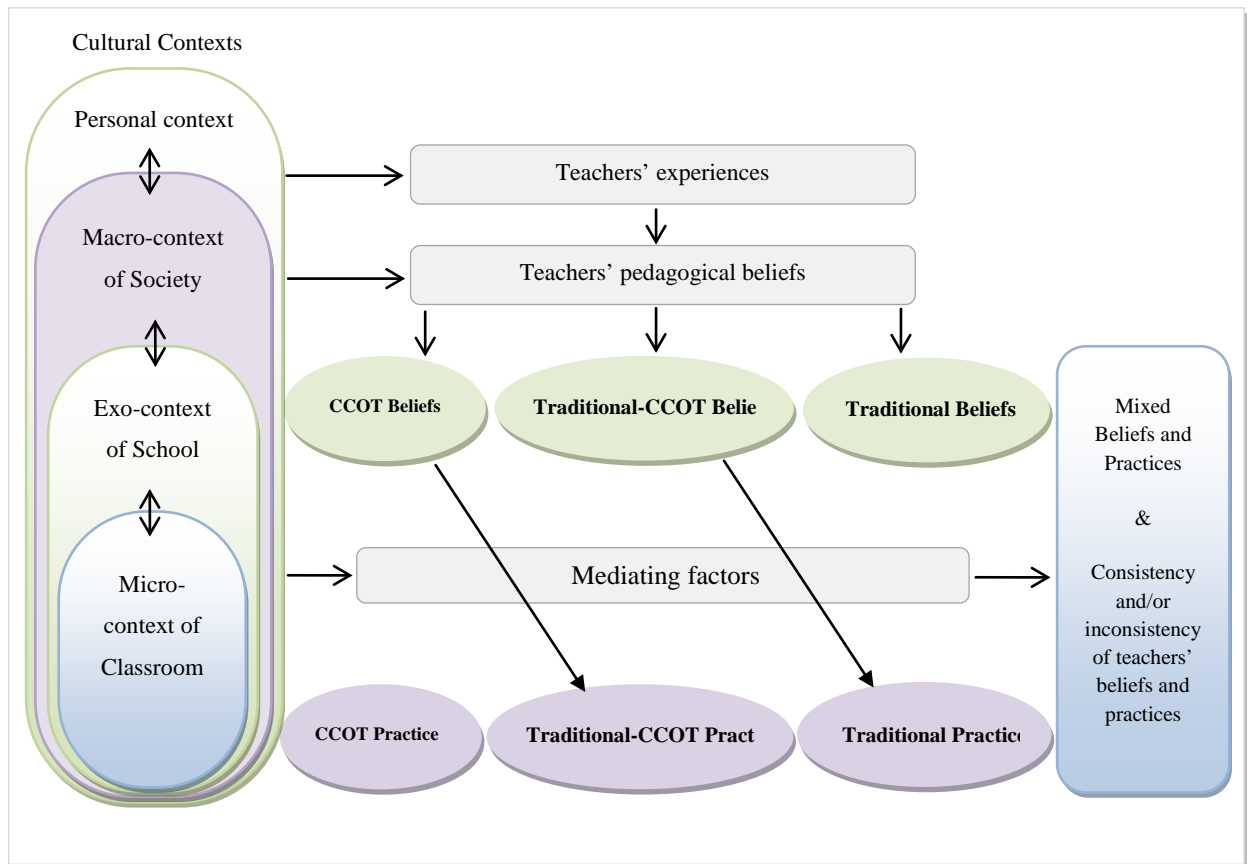


Figure 5.1 *A model of the Relationship between EFL teachers' beliefs and practices*

Thus, this chapter will be organised into three main sections. The first section (5.2) discusses the findings of the first three research questions all together. More specifically, it discusses the first research question about teachers' beliefs with regard to CCOT, the second research question about understanding the connections between beliefs and practice and the extent to which teachers' beliefs were congruent or incongruent with their actual practices in relation to CCOT, and the third research question about the reasons underlying the belief-practice inconsistency. The findings of the fourth research question will be discussed in the second and third sections (5.3 and 5.4), which highlight the factors impacting on teachers' beliefs and practices. It discusses the factors influencing the teachers' beliefs based on post-active interview data where participants' perceptions of the contextual and experiential factors are found to influence their beliefs about English teaching and learning and emphasise the situated nature of teachers' beliefs. The final section (5.5) provides a brief summary of the chapter.

5.2. Tensions between teachers' beliefs and practices of curricular reform

This section discusses the findings about teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to CCOT curriculum. It discusses RQ1 which explores the teachers' beliefs about CCOT. It also answers RQ2 and RQ3, which examines the extent to which the eight teachers' beliefs were congruent or incongruent with their practices, and the underlying reasons for the belief-practice inconsistency respectively. In the previous chapter, results of the relevant interviews and observation data regarding the five features of CCOT curriculum were analysed and compared. In the following, discrepancies between these two types of data will be discussed, which will shed light on the complex nature of teachers' beliefs under the context of curriculum reform.

One key issue to emerge from this study is what Phipps and Borg (2009) describe as noticeable 'tensions' between the teachers' stated beliefs and their observed practices regarding CCOT. To a large extent, the teachers' beliefs expressed in their pre-active interview were compatible with the guiding principles of the CCOT, but were not reflected in their actual teaching practice. This finding lends support to the research in language education as Basturkmen (2012) found in her research review limited correspondence between teachers' stated beliefs and their practices. Moreover, a number of researchers investigating teacher cognition have also reported gaps between the teachers' stated beliefs and practices (e.g., Orafi, 2008 in Libya; Phipps and Borg, 2009 in Turkey; Sato and Kleinsasser, 2004 in Japan; and Zhang and Liu, 2014 in China). The findings of this study also confirm the many studies outlined in the literature review (e.g. Basturkmen et. al, 2004; Feryok, 2008; Heip, 2007; Li and Walsh, 2011; Nishino, 2008; Orafi and Borg, 2009; Tsui, 2007) which imply the complexity of the relationship between beliefs and practice and indicate that teachers' stated beliefs are not always manifested in their classroom practices.

5.2.1. Teachers' beliefs as reflected in the practices of grammar teaching

The curriculum reform mandates that grammar should be taught to support communication and in a way that it is integrated into language activities. Drawing upon the findings from the pre-active interview data analysis, it may be concluded that the stated beliefs of study participants revealed their strong alignment with CCOT approach to grammar teaching and the curriculum goals of developing students' communicative skills. Almost all participants stated that they are keen to

apply a communicative or meaning-focused approach and prefer to help students discover the language instead of giving grammar rules. This finding supports Savignon's (2002) argument that grammar should have an implicit treatment in the curriculum to facilitate the understanding of messages. Most of the teachers stated the belief that the underlying purpose of teaching grammar was to enable learners to communicate and saw communication as fundamental to language learning. They also believed that context-based grammar presentations lead to better learning.

However, according to the analysis of the observational data (see 4.5.1 and 4.6.1), most teacher participants tended to place more emphasis on grammar and language form which were not congruent with their stated beliefs (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Phipps and Borg, 2009). The first and most common presentation strategy adopted by C1 participants was that the teachers provided context-free sentence examples, then elicited rules from the sentence examples given, and finally finalised the structural formula and rules. By adopting this approach to grammar presentation, where they try to elicit grammar rules from the sentence examples, it looks as if the teachers were using an inductive approach. They believed that these sentences examples themselves were the situation or the context which highlighted the grammar point to the students (see 4.5.1).

It is worth mentioning that the teachers who adopted this approach to grammar presentation still focused on de-contextualised sentences containing the target grammar points and used these to establish the respective rules for the forms. This behaviour was similar to that of the female teacher in Phipps and Borg's (2009) study, but the rationale they provided for their behaviour was not the same. The teacher in Phipps and Borg's study did not like the way she presented grammar, but she had to use that way because she felt it was what her students expected, which reflected a tension between her beliefs and practice. The teachers in this study believed this was a way of encouraging students' active learning, which they really valued.

Furthermore, C2 teacher participants employed more traditional approach by using deductive one which, according to them, was more straightforward and less time-consuming to carry out the lessons. They insisted in using the focus-on-forms approach by presenting the grammar rules first; after that, students should be able to

apply the rules to their actual tasks. Therefore, they were consistent in making use of examples from the textbook and explaining grammar items thoroughly to their students. Especially, in the case of Hoda, the most experienced teacher, who had strong inclinations towards the conscious study of grammar and believed that linguistic competence can only be acquired through explicit instruction. This finding echoes the observation of Farrell (2013) who concluded that the experienced teacher's classroom practices were more related to his beliefs.

The findings from pre-active interview also revealed that the teachers felt a need to strike a balance between focus-on-form and focus-on-meaning instruction. This seems to be in agreement with Lightbown and Spada's (2006) claim that it is best not to choose between the two approaches, but to find the best balance between them and also similar to the study by Valeo and Spada (2016) which concludes that teachers and learners prefer instruction that demands switching between attention to form and attention to meaning.

In real practice, however, both meaning-focused and form-focused approaches were only adopted by C1 participants, whereas C2 participants taught grammar explicitly, focusing on forms. C2 teachers' presentation strategy was more deductive, though they stated in the pre-active interview that they favoured a more inductive approach. They justified this practice by the fact that this strategy was easier for both the teachers and the students since they have to prepare students for the grammar-based examinations; therefore, students need to have a good knowledge of grammar. This view is similar to what Borg (2003) found with the teachers in his study and also similar to that of the teachers in Zhang and Liu's (2014) study, which reported that the teachers have to place more emphasis on grammar and language form than speaking because the school's examination is mainly based on the students' knowledge of the language system such as grammar and vocabulary rather than assessing the ability to communicate.

Moreover, in the post-active discussion, the teachers stated the reason that students expect them to present grammar points explicitly. This is not surprising since student expectations of traditional, explicit grammar teaching are familiar to many teachers (Borg, 1999). The teachers also attributed the inconsistency to the students' proficiency level and expressed that they adjusted their instructional practices to meet

the needs of students at different levels. They believed that lower-proficiency students need more teacher-directed explicit grammar instruction, so that they could at least be exposed to basic grammar rules before actually practising them. This ideal is attributable to the teachers' personal experiences (Breen et. al., 2001; Phipps and Borg, 2009). Teachers' instructional modifications to meet student expectations also confirm the results of Bailey (1996), Borg (1998, 1999a, and 1999b), and Richards and Pennington (1998). Moreover, C1 teachers justified that they integrated communicative approach with traditional teaching because of situational constraints. For example, the teachers indicated that explicit grammar instruction is useful for enhancing the knowledge and motivation for learning in low proficiency students. This finding confirms Underwood's (2012) study which indicates that most teachers believe integrating grammar with communication would have both instrumental advantages (e.g., students could use grammar for communication) and experiential advantages (e.g., students' satisfaction of the class might increase), and their evaluation of these advantages was favourable.

Furthermore, tensions between teaching beliefs and practices were observed as the teachers attempted to use deductive and inductive approaches. With integration of both explicit and implicit way of teaching grammar, they think it will be more effective to get control of the classrooms. Thus, they were more concerned about 'classroom management and control during observed lessons' (Andrews, 2003; Borg, 2001). This view supports the findings from existing study conducted by Phipps and Borg (2009), who found that student expectations and preferences, as well as classroom management concerns, led teachers to take decisions and actions which were contrary to their stated beliefs. On the other hand, C2 teachers affirmed several reasons why they continue to teach grammar in traditional ways: (a) the teachers believe that learning grammar rules and then applying them is the best way to learn grammar, (b) that students prefer to learn grammar rules for accuracy of the target language, and (c) the teachers believe the methods they have used work successfully and there is no need for new strategy.

In summary, the findings of this study indicated that teachers believed grammar was the foundation on which communicative competence rests, but there was very little evidence of CCOT in their actual practice regarding grammar teaching (Richards and Pennington, 1998; Sato and Kleinsasser, 1999). Most of the teachers' practices

followed a traditional approach where language teaching focused on form (grammar), rather than meaning (communication) and students displayed their understanding of various language structures through recitation and completion of drills. This supports the findings in Phipps and Borg's (2009) study, which examined tensions in three experienced EFL teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices and reported that there were cases where a strong contrast between the teachers' professed beliefs and their observed practices existed. By contrast, Farrell and Lim's study (2005, p.9) found a 'strong sense of convergence between the stated beliefs and actual classroom practices' of grammar teaching of one of the two experienced teachers in their study.

In addition, teachers' intentions to adopt a reform-oriented approach to grammar appear inhibited by various factors such as lack of time, training, and knowledge of the reform. The lack of time to prepare lessons that might require an entirely new approach to teaching and the apparent absence of appropriate materials to facilitate that approach suggests that even teachers with strong beliefs about CCOT might not intend to adopt a reform-oriented approach. This fact is important in the sense that these teachers have developed their own theories about grammar teaching which are shaped by an interaction of multiple sources from their educational and professional experiences as language learners and teachers, and specifically they take into consideration the socio-educational context unique in the EFL learning environment.

5.2.2. Teachers' beliefs as reflected in the practices of error correction

Another key principle endorsed by the curriculum reform is that errors are natural parts of the language learning process and suggests that the teachers should not correct too much to encourage confidence and fluency. Almost all of the teachers involved in this study considered errors as natural outcomes during the process of language learning and preferred implicit correction as the best approach to encourage students to be more reflective and analytical about their errors. The teachers' stated beliefs reinforced the findings from the researcher's preliminary survey study (Parvaresh, 2010), which reported that majority of teacher participants believed that errors should be seen as a natural part of learning and should be corrected implicitly.

More specifically, pre-active interview data revealed that C1 teachers believed that they should not correct errors in speech unless the errors caused comprehension

difficulty. They also expressed the belief that students need fluency to achieve communicative purposes, thus the teachers should avoid explicit error correction in front of the class. Their reasons to use this strategy included unwillingness to interrupt the flow of communication and reluctance to humiliate the students. This finding confirms previous studies (e.g. Richards, Tung and Ng, 1992; Numrich, 1996) which showed that teacher favoured implicit oral error correction. Similarly, C2 teachers believed in the effectiveness of implicit error correction and expressed that students should be prompted to self-correct their errors. In contrast to C1 participants, C2 teachers were proponents of accuracy, although they believed that the focus on accuracy or fluency depends on teaching objectives.

Nevertheless, classroom observation revealed that both divergences and convergences existed between stated beliefs and practices regarding error correction as C1 teachers used a combination of direct and indirect correction despite stating a preference for implicit correction. This finding goes in line with Ng and Farrell (2003) which indicated that clear divergences exist between teachers' beliefs and practices in the area of error correction, but that on some occasions their beliefs and practices matched. Although observation revealed C1 teachers mainly inclined to use recast, in some occasions they appeared to be reluctant to provide error correction. One of the reasons why teachers may feel this way seems to be that they are worried about triggering negative emotions in their students. It appears that in teachers' mind the issue of the affective factor and the importance of promoting fluency are related – as Matin put it: 'to over-correct inhibits students and they lose fluency'(MSI: 47). The fact that teachers tend to connect the idea of error correction with notions of fluency versus accuracy and students' emotional responses was also noted in previous studies by Basturkmen et al. (2004) in New Zealand and Mori (2011) in Japan. As data from post-observation interviews revealed, these teachers were concerned with promoting fluency and avoiding embarrassment, since more explicit correction types are potentially more disruptive. A similar concern was observed by Yoshida (2010) among Japanese language teachers, who stated they used implicit correction to avoid causing embarrassment or anxiety. Methodologists such as Harmer (2007, p.108) also recommend teachers not to interrupt students when they are involved in so-called fluency oriented tasks, unless 'gentle correction' is used. By 'gentle correction',

Harmer appears to be referring to the recast, which is generally considered to be the most implicit type of correction.

In contrast to their beliefs, C2 teachers' practices showed that they tended to correct errors explicitly and to respond to these errors comprehensively (see section 4.6.2.1). Despite stating a preference for encouraging learners to notice errors themselves, in practice, they corrected students' grammatical and pronunciation errors. This finding corresponds to the Farrell and Lim's (2005) study in which teachers used explicit oral error correction for speaking accuracy. The teachers' justification indicated that most teachers cannot resist the temptation to provide the correct answer for the errors as this practice does not take much of their time. When teachers talked about the rationales for these practices, they revealed beliefs which were in conflict with the curriculum's recommendations regarding the process of error correction. For example, in the post-active discussion, C2 teachers expressed that it is very important to correct student's grammatical and pronunciation errors immediately because if the teacher does not do so, students will keep making the same mistakes. They justified that in most occasions explicit correction is more useful than the implicit one. However, C1 teachers' beliefs regarding the explicitness of error correction varied depending on the type of errors. For example, a few teachers like Sarah tolerated students' errors, trying to let students correct themselves to bring to light learner autonomy (see 4.5.2.2). They believed that explicit error correction makes students over-reliant on the teacher and reduces their confidence to speak.

It needs to be noted that some participants seemed unable to articulate many of their stated beliefs on error correction. In the post-active interview, they pointed out that error correction has become routine as a part of their teaching practices and they came not to be as conscious of them as they used to be. In other words, in practice, they seem to correct spontaneously and do not tend to follow any particular technique when correcting students' errors. This may explain why they were not able to articulate in much detail their error correction practices. There were no clear procedures that guided these teachers on how or when teachers should correct students' errors. This finding corresponds to the previous research on teachers' beliefs and practices (e.g. Basturkmen, et al, 2004) that teachers are not always aware of how they respond to learners' errors. Although, few participants did articulate clearly their beliefs about error correction practices.

To conclude, teachers' beliefs in that errors should be mostly corrected implicitly, that students should be prompted to self-correct, and that teachers should avoid explicit error correction in front of the class, are incongruent with their actual practices as revealed from the analysis of teachers' error correction practices. Such inconsistencies can be ascribed to the fact that teachers –as they revealed in the post-active interviews- never received any training on how to correct their students' errors. A further reason for the incongruence between teachers' beliefs and practices appears to be related to the students' needs and expectations. Teachers in the stimulated-recall interviews reported that they see error correction as their responsibility and feel that it is hard to avoid this job.

5.2.3. Teachers' beliefs as reflected in the practice of the use of L1

Whether a teacher should apply L1 in his/her teaching or not, was discussed with the participants. The findings from the eight case studies revealed that the teachers' stated beliefs regarding the use of L1 tended to diverge from their classroom practices but there were instances where they converged as well. Although, in the pre-active interview, all of the teachers were fairly unanimous in their belief that the L1 should be limited and confirmed these feelings in the follow-up interviews, their frequent use of L1 during classroom practice reflected general resistance towards exclusive or maximal use of TL recommended by the CCOT guidelines. In line with Turnbull and Arnett's (2002) findings, the current study revealed that L1 is used for interactional, pedagogical and administrative purposes in the classroom.

Similar to Macaro (1997, cited in Macaro 2009, pp.35-36), the findings of this study suggest that, the teachers' stated beliefs regarding L1 use had two different theoretical positions: C1 teachers holding the 'virtual position' believed that the L2 could only be learnt through itself and that L2-only classrooms could create a 'virtual reality' which mirrored the environment of the target language country; C2 teachers holding the 'optimal position' believed that learning the L2 through L2-only was an ideal and that in some cases using the L1 might be more effective in enhancing learning. Although most C1 teachers preferred to stick with L2 to explain a difficult concept, C2 teachers chose to employ L1 in this function.

Interestingly, while CCOT recommends that teachers should use English as much as possible in the classroom, not all teachers followed such a guideline. Despite expressing a preference for exclusive use of the target language (TL) in the pre-active interview, C1 teachers mostly showed lack of commitment to using English only in actual practice. They believed that it is better to spend more time on L2 rather than take a short cut in L1 (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Classroom observation showed that C1 teachers engaged students in a variety of strategies and used English throughout their lessons; however, they used L1 (Farsi) for the purpose of grammar explanation, discipline and complex instructions (Cook, 2001; Turnbull, 2001; Van Lier, 1995). While, C2 teachers who believed in the value of selective use of the L1 in enhancing L2 learning, conducted their lessons largely in Farsi and used the L1 for almost every classroom function in their lessons, from presenting grammar and explaining rules to checking the students' answers and giving feedback. This finding echoes Turnbull's (2001) claim that teachers should use the L1 for the sole purpose of ensuring students' understanding of a grammatical concept or vocabulary item.

What seems to be worthy of note is that all of the teachers, in the stimulated recall interviews, expressed a belief that it is impossible to totally exclude L1 and that the use of L1 can yield positive results. This finding concurs with a number of studies found in the literature (Cook, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Macaro, 2005, 2009; Nation, 2003; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002). The teachers reported several reasons for the mismatch between their beliefs and practice with respect to their L1 use. Similar to a number of studies, L1 is considered an appropriate choice to explain certain functions such as grammar explanation (Cook, 2001; Butzkamm, 2003; Edstrom, 2006; Macaro, 1997; Nation, 2003; Zhang, 2015). The five teachers in C1 justified that the use of Farsi in the classroom serves to facilitate the instruction of grammatical structures; therefore, this reduces the time that would otherwise need to be spent explaining difficult concepts or grammatical structures. Thus, they believed that the occasional use of L1 can have a powerful and positive effect (Macaro, 2009). C2 teachers also asserted that certain grammatical points and new words should be explained in Farsi since this strategy would be more effective and time-efficient. This argument goes in accordance with Cook (2001) who proposes that L1 may help present the meanings of abstract and complicated vocabulary items in a less time consuming but more effective manner.

Drawing upon their previous teaching experiences, the teachers all recognise the need and the usefulness of blending L1 (Farsi) in their instruction. This is similar to Macaro's (2009) own teaching experience, as he had certainly been using small, justified quantities of first language in the classroom. He also asserted that she had used her first language (Italian) to assist him in learning his second language (English) without any apparent negative effects. Additionally, given the students' mixed level of English proficiency, they all perceive the difficulties of using English only in their classroom practice, and therefore, the use of L1 serves to resolve the linguistic difficulties and affective problems caused. Moreover, most of the teachers expressed the reason that students prefer them to use L1 for explaining grammar and clarifying complex instructions which confirm a number of studies (Nazary, 2008; Macaro, 1997, 2009). In addition to this, the teachers' explanation of the contradiction was that using Farsi could be sometimes unconscious; especially when a teacher is trying to control the classroom she uses an L1 word or phrase.

Additionally, in the post-active interview, C1 teachers expressed that L1 use could play a positive role in L2 teaching and learning, in keeping with a communicative approach to encourage teacher-student interaction. It is evident that most of the teachers believe that switching to L1 while being inevitable is useful. It is used as a strategy to simplify their language to accommodate students' low language proficiency and to create a non-threatening classroom climate. This finding concurs with Harmer (2007) who argues that L1 use encourages interaction between teacher and students at a basic level and enhances the social atmosphere in the classroom. In the same vein, C2 teachers justified that the use of L1 may assist students in reducing affective barriers and increasing their confidence in their ability to successfully comprehend the TL (Cook, 2001) and results in an increased willingness by students to communicate verbally and express their ideas. However, C1 teachers asserted that the excessive use of the L1 by the teacher may result in teacher-fronted lessons in which individual learners may only be speaking the second language for a limited amount of time (Macaro, 2001). As the literature suggests, many researchers (Cook, 2001; Harmer, 2007, Turnbull, 2001; Van Lier, 1995) warn against the overuse of the L1.

Overall, classroom observations showed that all of the teachers alternated between using the L1 (Farsi) and TL in teaching (Macaro, 2001; Turnbull and Arnett, 2002),

with C2 teachers using the highest amount of Farsi in their lessons. The teachers' realisation of their use of L1 (see 4.5.3 and 4.6.3) revealed that they attached different roles to L1 usage in L2 learning. These roles are explained in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 The role of L1 in L2 classroom

- Consolidating learning, e.g. checking answers and explaining grammar rules to ensure understanding.
- Giving instructions, e.g. explaining a task and its objectives.
- Maintaining discipline, e.g. telling students to stop chatting or ask students to raise their voice while they were reading.
- Praising, e.g. saying 'well done' in Farsi to a student who answered correctly.
- Motivating, e.g. bringing humour into the classroom.
- Correcting mistakes/ giving feedback, e.g. correcting the pronunciation of a word.
- Explaining new/difficult vocabulary, e.g. giving the translation of a word.
- Discussing cultural ideas of the target country, e.g. the specific festivals of western countries.

Having said that, as revealed in the stimulated recall interviews, the teachers in this study linked the use of L1 with purposes such as dealing with lower level students, saving classroom time, motivating them, giving them confidence, and building rapport with them. This is in line with Nation (2003) and Edstrom (2006), who argue that using L1 helps maintain classroom discipline, build rapport, praise students, and reduce social distance with students. For example, when students did a good job, most teachers used L1 to tell them how well they have done because the use of L1 may reinforce the fact that the praise is real (Edstrom, 2006). These justifications given in the present study by the teachers indicate that teachers' beliefs in the importance of using L1 for saving time, reducing learning anxiety, and building rapport with students (core) seem to be stronger compared to their beliefs (peripheral) in the importance of exclusive or maximal use of L2. This explanation corroborates the arguments of Phipps and Borg (2009) that core beliefs are experientially-rooted and outweigh other peripheral beliefs.

To sum up, it can be stated that the teachers' beliefs about the role of the L1 to teach English, to a great extent, were inconsistent with their actual practice, exclusive or

maximum use of TL was not reflected in the practices of most teachers in the present study. Although they are aware of the curriculum requirement to use a maximum amount of English in class, for various reasons, most of the teachers use frequent use of L1. Almost all participants articulated that based on their prior experience, the best way for learners to achieve communicative competence is by interacting in the target language and supported extensive use of the target language with a view to compensating for the disadvantages inherent in the foreign language context. However, post-active interview data revealed that even the keenest supporter of strict target language use still believes in occasional teacher and/or student L1 use.

5.2.4. Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the teacher's role

Another key principle endorsed by the curriculum is a shift in the roles teachers and students play in the classroom as teachers take up the role of becoming learning facilitators. The teacher is no longer seen simply as a transmitter of knowledge, but a co-communicator and guide (Larsen-Freeman, 2008). According to the teachers' professed beliefs in the pre-active interview, all of the eight teachers share in common a willingness to promote their role as that of a facilitator. The teachers used the metaphors of 'helper', 'consultant', 'organiser', 'guides' and so on to interpret the roles they played. They also believed in the importance of prioritising the students' needs and interest, promoting collaboration, managing group work, empowering students through learner autonomy, and motivating the students. This is in line with Richard and Rodgers (2014) who asserted that a teacher can be an organiser, a counsellor, and a group process manager and also concurs with Mangubhai et al. (2007) who identify different teachers' roles such as facilitator of communication processes, guide rather than transmitter of knowledge, analyst of student needs, counsellor/corrector, and group process manager. C1 teachers also expressed the belief that respecting and caring for students as individuals would help create an atmosphere that fosters a safe classroom so that students can feel comfortable forming relationships. This argument is in accordance with Beck's (2008) view of teachers' roles, proposing emotional containment, which is related to how teachers communicate with students and the emotional and motivational elements of teaching. Additionally, the teachers all share the view that they have an educational role to

fulfil beyond simply teaching their subject (English), and should represent a good role model.

Nevertheless, not all the teachers' beliefs were compatible with their practices. For instance, C1 teachers' beliefs regarding their role as facilitators of learning were consistent with their classroom behaviours, however, in other instances, their professed beliefs contradicted how they acted in their classrooms. From their perspective, to facilitate means to help the students learn better during the learning process. Accordingly, even though they sometimes act as instructors in order to make sure the students understand the concepts as well as the process of the class, few of them played the role of a facilitator during the communicative activities by monitoring classes, providing advice, answering questions, and giving feedback.

Likewise, C2 participants stated the belief that they should play diverse roles in the teaching process because of the dynamic nature of communicative classrooms. They also stressed that they should be like 'a friend, a guide and a helper' and their primary role is to motivate students to learn English. As Nasim asserted that based on her experience using interesting activities and letting students have some fun would develop a kind of 'less severe- more kindly' approach to language learning. However, classroom observation data revealed that C1 teachers exhibited both traditional and constructivist roles while C2 teachers mainly played the role of controller and instructor rather than that of facilitator and supporter in their teaching.

The findings from the stimulated recall data revealed that the teachers had different reasons for not applying their beliefs in practice. These findings suggest that although most of the teachers in the study are inclined towards becoming a facilitator and a guide, they are concerned about being questioned for not teaching when practicing communicative activities. Thus, to make CCOT appropriate in this cultural context, some teachers in the study combined lecture and communicative activities in their classrooms. Furthermore, although in the pre-active interview, majority of the participants believed that communicativeness encourages classroom discussion and participation and also disagreed with the view of teacher as just knowledge transmitter in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2014), the results from the post-active discussion revealed that it is difficult for the teachers to avoid lectures in the class, since the students were accustomed to learning English through lectures. They stated

the reason that in the context of Iran the teacher is valued for being the knowledge holder and the students think that the teacher was not teaching if he/she did not lecture in the classroom. Based on their experiences, the students did not consider communicative activities to be serious learning. Appealing to student desires was important to most teachers in the study, who expressed many times that maintaining a good rapport with their students is of the utmost importance.

Furthermore, throughout their teaching careers, most of the teachers have held a traditional role in the classrooms where they lectured most of the time and gave students limited chances to participate in classroom discourse.

5.2.5. Teachers' beliefs and practices of learner-centred teaching

The CCOT curriculum expects teachers to adopt some learner-centred approaches in which the students' roles from passive receivers changes to active constructors of knowledge, whereas the reality in the context does not seem to support this expectation. The traditional context of education in Iran values teacher authority which may present a challenge for secondary school teachers. Teachers were regarded as the all-knowing figure in the classroom and it was in the best interest of the students to listen and quietly follow their teacher.

Notwithstanding the fact that most teachers in the study stated that they believed in learner-centred teaching and claimed that promoting learner autonomy and student collaboration are of great importance, their beliefs were not consistently reflected in their practices. C1 teachers' practice can be best described as presenting a blend of teacher-centred and communicative learner-centred, while C2 teachers' classes were observed teacher-fronted, teacher-centred and teacher-dominated. This seems to suggest a contradiction between the pre-active interview results and classroom observations. Among eight participants, only Sarah's stated beliefs was congruent with her actual classroom practice as both being learner-centred.

The findings of the study revealed that C1 teachers who held CCOT beliefs have been trying to find a balance between creating a teacher-centred and a student-centred learning environment. In practice, they tried to implement a range of learner-centred activities which they selected according to the level of their students and to their

context; though most of these activities were teacher-controlled. On the other hand, C2 teachers who held mixed (traditional-constructivist) beliefs were learner-centred in how they viewed themselves as teachers, but were teacher-centred in their classroom actions, and did not realise this inconsistency. Their class exhibited an extremely uneven power relationship. Learners should have some opportunities to ask questions; that is, a higher proportion of student initiative is suggested not only for a more balanced distribution of the power relationship, but also for promoting 'more investment on the part of the learner' (Thornbury, 1996, p.282).

In addition, most teacher participants did not create any reason for students to interact with one another and as a result, in most cases, the students ended up doing the activities individually and in silence. In Zoha's classroom, for example, students were all given the same handout to complete and did not need to communicate and share opinions. Thus, it seems that while almost all participating teachers wanted to promote interaction and communication, most of them did not achieve this. Collaboration was almost absent in most of the teachers' practices, and in only a few occasions group or pair work activities employed by C1 teachers. The observation of the students' behaviours in group activities revealed limited learning opportunities. According to Gillies and Boyle (2011, p.64) 'placing students in groups and expecting them to work together will not promote cooperative learning'. Instead, collaboration and group work require 'careful planning, monitoring, and evaluating'. Thus, learning how to implement cooperative learning requires more than working in groups. The teachers need to ensure that groups function cooperatively and to encourage each member of the group to participate and contribute at their own level of proficiency (Crandall, 1999). Observational data also showed more teachers' than learners' talk and more teacher-learners interactions than learner-learner interactions.

It is worth noting here that lack of adoption of learner-centred approaches could be related to a cultural expectation that teacher should be the sole authority in the classroom whose priority is to maintain strict control of learners' behaviour. One reason for the difficulty of applying learner-centredness is, as Thornbury (1996, p.287) points out, that teachers may feel 'disempowered'. This could be well understood from Johnson's (1994) study with four ESL teachers which showed that although the teachers wanted to implement learner-centred teaching, classroom constraints and issues related to classroom management resulted in more teacher-

centred teaching. Moreover, the education system in Iran is a highly examination-oriented system; teachers are immersed in a culture where students' performance in examinations comes first and they have to apply strategies that would ensure success in examinations. It seems that for these teachers culture was a determining factor in their teaching orientation (Pajares, 1992), as they all admitted that their teaching was transformed by the demand of students and examination-oriented culture. Thus, teachers' implementation of learner-centred teaching was heavily determined by the prevailing school culture and context. This has also been found in several studies carried out in traditional cultural contexts (e.g. Orafi and Borg, 2009). The findings of this study also support the claim of the importance of contextual factors and constraints in influencing teachers' actual practices (Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996; Zhang and Liu, 2014)

Overall, to a great extent, there were discrepancies between what teachers believed about learner-centred teaching and their individual instructional practices. Despite education policies recommending learner-centred teaching, most teachers' classroom interaction was mainly teacher-centred. Classroom observations revealed a lack of interaction among learners. Even for group work, the teachers did not provide opportunities for discussions between learners. In the post-active interviews, most participants claimed that throughout the years of experience, they have tried to move from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches giving learners the opportunity to become more creative, reflective and responsible for their own learning. However, as observational data showed, these teachers did not really empower learners to develop learner-centred skills. Learner power in their perspective was understood more as learners' responsibility to succeed in their examinations than the freedom of learners to decide on their learning. Additionally, although the teachers in the study believed in the development of learner autonomy, they did not know how to teach it. As noted by the teachers in the post-active interview, the lack of teacher training was an impediment to the implementation of learner-centred teaching and to promote autonomous learners. They also attributed their struggle of maintaining an exclusively student-centred classroom to a massive gap between the students' level of English.

The above categories illustrate that teachers' pedagogical practice is shaped not only by their beliefs, but also by their context (personal and educational). The inconsistency between the teachers' beliefs and practices found in this study,

therefore, raises an important question: what constraints made the teachers resist using CCOT activities in their classrooms? The final research question (RQ4) examined the factors which shaped the teachers' beliefs in implementing CCOT. These factors and the relationship between them are discussed further in the following section.

5.3. Contextual factors influencing beliefs and their enactment into practice

The analysis of the relationship between the teachers' beliefs and practices in Chapter 4 addresses the importance of contextual factors in contributing to the tensions between the teachers' beliefs and practices. In this regard, it is important to identify various contextual factors influencing the interplay between teachers' beliefs and practices and more importantly to determine how the teachers perceived and responded to these contextual factors, which prompted them to behave in certain ways. The contextual constraints are the most widely recognised factors accounting for the discrepancy between teacher cognition and classroom practice (Li, 2013), and have been reported in many studies which investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices (e.g. Borg, 2003, 2006; Zheng, 2015) in general and reform-oriented practices research (e.g. Zheng and Liu, 2014; Orafi and Borg, 2009) in particular.

As discussed in the literature review, many scholars share that a variety of contextual factors arising from both macro and micro levels can affect the teachers' ability to fully implement their beliefs into practice (Borg, 2003; Burns, 1996; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Woods, 1996). Accordingly, this study looks beyond observable behaviours and takes into account the inner logic which underlies the teachers' actions, to reveal the dynamic relationship between the teachers' beliefs, practice, and contextual factors. Hence, during the interviews, teachers were encouraged to comment on aspects of their context which they felt influenced applying reform-oriented practices.

A key influence on teachers' beliefs and teaching practices which is highlighted in the literature and which this study is considered in seeking to understand teachers' practices of CCOT is the teachers' pedagogical context, that is, the psychological, sociocultural, and environmental realities of the classroom and institution. The data

analysis of the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice disclosed in Chapter 4 revealed that teachers did not teach in a context-free abstract way, rather they intended to resolve different contextual issues coming from the micro-context of classrooms, the exo-context of schools and the macro-context of society (see Table 4.5). Some of these factors are the high-stakes examinations, time constraints, lack of professional development, teacher collaboration, the school culture and professional context. It is, also, important to note that all of these factors are viewed by the teachers as constraints preventing them from enacting their beliefs.

5.3.1. The impact of cultural contexts

Perhaps the strongest factor shaping teachers' beliefs is their cultural context. The findings as shown in Figure 5.1 indicated that the teachers' beliefs and practices of CCOT were affected by a range of interrelating factors. The findings revealed that C1 teachers who held CCOT beliefs integrated traditional teaching with CCOT practice. On the other hands, C2 teachers with mixed (CCOT-traditional) beliefs tended to use traditional practice. This inconsistency can be explained by the strong influence of the educational social-cultural context which included a crucial context for professional development, workplace-school context, and classroom context. It could also be argued that the educational cultural context did not provide solid support or congruence with the communicative-constructivist beliefs that C1 and C2 teachers held. Though, observational data revealed a partially positive school environment into which C1 teachers were put reinforced some of their constructivist practices. In this respect, the constraints or social context aspect of the teaching environment was considerably influential. As discussed in chapter 1 (see 1.2.5), constraints enable traditional practices and restrict the constructivist practices. This is broadly in line with the findings in the literature discussing the impact of context on the degree of belief-practice consistency (Fang, 1996; Borg, 2003; Basturkmen, 2012; Feryok, 2007; Kleinsasser, 2004; Phipps and Borg, 2009; Wedell, 2009, 2013; Zheng, 2015).

Furthermore, the findings of the study agree with the argument of Sanchez and Borg (2014) that even teachers who work in the same institutional context may interpret and react to it in diverse ways. As Sanchez and Borg (2014) put it,

‘Context is not an objective entity external to teachers; rather, the elements that make up the different levels of the teaching context (from the classroom to the educational system more broadly) are filtered through teachers’ cognitions.’(p.52)

In that respect, it could be argued that teachers constructed context shape their decisions in how they apply reform-oriented practices. For example, Sarah and Matin, teaching in the same school, made use of their L1 but, in line with different interpretations of the students at this school. While Matin used the L1 to simplify her grammar explanations and make it short, Sarah used it for affective function to reduce the students’ anxiety.

This could be also well understood from Sanchez and Borg’s (2014) study with two EFL teachers which showed that the two participants from Cortázar School did not perceive their students in identical ways, and this had an impact on their selection and use of instructional strategies when explaining grammar. Therefore, it can be argued that the teachers’ CCOT practices do not take place in the vacuum but within a number of interrelated factors. These factors, as reported from the teachers in the stimulated recall interviews, can be related to the context, the students, and the teachers themselves.

5.3.2. The influence of school and national examination

A noteworthy finding of this study is that the high-stakes testing exerts a huge impact on how teachers conceptualise and approach English language teaching. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.4 &1.2.5), the educational system in Iran is basically exam-based and the national exams including the English section of university entrance examination determine the norms for the teaching and learning of the language. In this respect, in the context of secondary schools in Iran, the most important test is the university entrance examination (*Konkur*). According to Riazi and Mosalanejad (2010) secondary school teachers feel responsible for preparing students for the high stakes exams. This may force teachers to focus on teaching the skills that are tested in the exams and ignore the ones which are not. Therefore, any practice that can help students succeed in the exam becomes a good option.

The teachers in this research strongly believed that they had the responsibility to help students achieve success in exams, thus they mostly adopted the traditional teacher-

centred approach as they thought this approach can best help them fulfil the purpose of enhancing students' exam performance. This finding reaffirms previous study conducted by Yan's (2012) in China, who identified an implementation gap despite the fact that teachers of English were positively disposed towards the new curricular principles; however, teachers felt that their ability to implement those principles was hindered by several reasons such as the washback effect of the examinations.

A major finding in this study was teachers' commitment to improving learners' outcomes in examinations. As stated in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.4), the teachers are immersed in a culture where performance in examinations comes first. With such an orientation there is a tendency for students to prefer that teachers direct them to what they need to learn to optimise success in examinations. In the post-active interviews, most teachers explained their reason for their traditional practices by indicating their concern about preparing students for exams, which is an important criterion for teacher evaluation in many schools. In such an exam-based educational culture, successful education is reflected mainly in good test performance. As such, the administrators expect teachers to focus on students obtaining higher test scores, despite research showing that higher test scores are not necessarily indicative of increased student learning. As Larsen-Freeman (2003, p.5) pointed out, 'having to prepare one's students to pass a particular standardised exam can be a powerful influence on what one teaches'. Nishino's (2008) study also indicated that the teachers' concern over entrance examinations had a strong influence on their perceived importance of English skills and knowledge. Given that in Iran, the national examinations for English mainly test students' vocabulary, grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension, without listening and speaking tests, the teachers believed that grammar and vocabulary were more important for passing entrance examinations. This is very similar to Nishino's (2008) study, whose teachers believe that listening and speaking skills are less important for passing entrance examinations.

The washback effect of the exam-oriented culture on teachers' beliefs has been reported by many studies carried out in diverse contexts, such as Orafi and Borg (2009) in Libya, Underwood (2012) in Japan, and Zhang and Liu (2014) in China. In Libya, for example, Orafi and Borg (2009) discovered high-stakes examination as the most important influencing factor that works against the implementation of the

mandates of the national curriculum. According to Underwood (2012), similar reports appear with regard to national curriculum elsewhere, for example, China (e.g., Huang, 2009), Iran (Dahmardeh, 2009), Taiwan (Liu, 2005), and Turkey (Ozsevik, 2010).

Furthermore, almost all teacher participants pointed to the discrepancy between the focus of the exams and the goal of the curriculum. As the post-active interviews revealed, this mismatch led teachers to focus on reading and grammar and to pay little attention to the development of students' communicative skills. It needs to be borne in mind that although the curriculum aims to extend students' abilities in the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing (Dahmardeh, 2009), exams still focus on grammar memorisation and vocabulary knowledge, and ignore other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing.

Given the supremacy of the role of the exams in determining what happens inside the classroom, one could argue for the necessity to adjust the focus of the exams according to English curriculum (Zhang and Liu, 2014). Orafi and Borg (2009, p.252) claim that 'policy changes in pedagogy not supported by changes in assessment may have a little practical impact in the classroom'. It is clear, then, that the mismatch between assessment and the curriculum is another factor that works against communicative-constructivist oriented teaching in Iran.

5.3.3. Time pressure and content coverage

Another important point to be raised for the gap between stated beliefs and actual practices is the influence of time pressure, as almost all of the participants were unhappy with the limited amount of time allocated to language teaching in secondary schools. According to the teachers, the time that was given to the ELT in Iran must be increased since they had not enough time to even cover textbooks, let alone applying communicative activities which take longer time. As discussed in the previous chapter, most teacher participants in the post-active interviews confirmed their strong beliefs stated in the pre-active interview about their preferences in applying constructivist/communicative activities, however, they stated that the time pressure does not allow language teachers to achieve what they want. According to the teachers, more time

has to be spent on English teaching in order to fulfil the requirements of a CCOT curriculum.

In the stimulated recall, the teachers frequently commented that time constraint was their biggest concern. All eight teachers reported that in order to fulfil the strict and fixed teaching plan and content coverage within the regulated time, sometimes they had to discard the communicative activities and directly present and explain the knowledge points. For instance, although Nasim had the experience of creating good communicative activities, she was constantly torn between presenting grammar explicitly, focusing only on forms, and incorporating communicative activities. She stated that if there was sufficient time, she would take the second option. Moreover, although most of the teachers confirmed their strong beliefs about teaching grammar through meaningful contexts, implementing communicative tasks to teach grammar seemed to demand considerable time investment, which the 90-min lesson could not afford. In the post-active interviews, almost all of the teachers unanimously stated that it is very good and desirable to utilise communicative activities but they are not practical enough to be adopted in their classes due to the time consuming nature of the activities. This finding reaffirms previous study conducted by Zheng (2013), who found that time constraints activated the tensions between the teacher-centred ways of teaching and communicative ways of teaching.

Having said that, another impediment to the implementation of the teacher' beliefs was claimed to be the level of the students, as stated earlier. In the interviews, all of the teachers said that the students' levels were not homogeneous in their classes and this caused difficulties and problems in their teaching. Hence, heterogeneity of students' levels combined with time constraint caused the teachers to concentrate on the pace of the teaching rather than the students' learning and to exhibit traditional teaching practices in their lessons as the participant teachers claimed.

5.3.4. The paucity of experience with curricular reform

The revised CCOT curriculum moves away from the traditional behaviourist approach to language teaching and learning to an inquiry-based constructivist approach that emphasises student-centeredness, communicative activities and using English for instruction (Moodie and Nam, 2016). As discussed in Chapter 1 (see

1.2.5), when the new curriculum was introduced, English language teachers had not received adequate support to enable them to develop new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. English language teachers' language proficiency, content knowledge, and pedagogical skills will need upgrading to meet the curriculum's requirements. If teachers are to implement an innovation, it is essential that they have a thorough understanding of the principles and practices of the proposed change (Wedell, 2009). However, such an understanding does not exist among the teacher participants. Hence, most of their practices reflected their own teaching experiences as well as the teacher-centred grammar-oriented curriculum that had previously been in place.

Accordingly, it can be argued that we cannot expect teachers to accept unfamiliar approaches to English language teaching and completely disregard their accustomed ways of teaching. As Wedell (2005) argues, any teachers training programs need to make links between the newly proposed practices and teachers' prior experience and existing beliefs. Therefore, the teacher training and development programs are responsible for providing teachers with opportunities to uncover their beliefs and reflect upon their classroom practices (Orafi and Borg, 2009) and to take into account the contextual factors which influence what teachers do inside the classroom.

As has been demonstrated earlier, the teachers stimulated recall interview highlighted various constraints that hamper implementing pedagogical reform. The teachers admitted their lack of understanding regarding some of the CCOT requirements and principles, as they believed they were not fully prepared for such reform. The teachers also believed that lack of support is another obstacle to adopting and going ahead with pedagogical reforms. They all commonly referred to the inadequacy of in-service training and stressed that during in-service training session they are bombarded with theoretical input but receive no concrete ideas on handling practical issues.

It is interesting to note that Sarah and Atena who had graduated from the teacher training university and were the least experienced among the teachers still remembered some of their formal training input. Nevertheless, such acquired input did not seem to influence their practices of CCOT. Their lessons were to some extent teacher-controlled, rather than learner-centred. Despite efforts by educational

authorities to promote pedagogic practices through training, there are still serious discrepancies between official discourse and classroom reality. As discussed in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.5), teacher training is still conducted in a traditional way and lacks sufficient training for the practical application of the new approaches. It seems that processes of in-service teacher training fall short of preparing teachers for the expectations placed on them.

Accordingly, teachers need support in order to make these significant shifts. Wedell (2003, p.447) advises planners of innovation to consider how teachers would be supported in making the professional adjustments of the proposed English curricular reform. Therefore, this study suggests that, at the planning stage, the planners of innovation need to predict any cultural conflicts that might occur as a result of the introduction of the innovation and thus to make the necessary preparation to make the teaching and learning settings in the context ready to implementing the imported innovation.

Having said that, reform projects in Iranian context constitute a top-down transmission model and impose on practitioners by a powerful 'outsider' without considering their culture and other contextual realities in their planning of reforms (Wedell, 2009). Reforming instructional practice entails much more than the dictation of the principles of certain methods and approaches. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to deal with the new strategies and procedures of the system. This leads to the notion of teacher professional learning which plays a central role in relation to putting change into practice (Fullan, 2016). Therefore, it can be argued that for successful in-service training, reform principles need to be integrated into teachers' existing beliefs about its practicality, and this, to some extent, can be facilitated by involving teachers at the initial conception phase of formulating the principles of the new policy so that the final product is seen as originating from teachers, not from elsewhere (Chafi and Elkhouzai, 2017). Consequently, as Fullan (2016) suggests, the training of teachers regarding the implementation of reform ideals should start at the pre-stage of the implementation and continue during the actual implementation process of the innovation. Teachers' profession is a reflection of their beliefs, which have a direct impact on how and to what extent teachers put into practice curriculum reform.

Generally speaking, it appears that the role of contextual reality in affecting the implementation of CCOT reform was not given sufficient attention. Accordingly, the limited training opportunities for learning how to teach CCOT may be the reason for not implementing the CCOT approach despite believing in its importance (Figure 5.2).

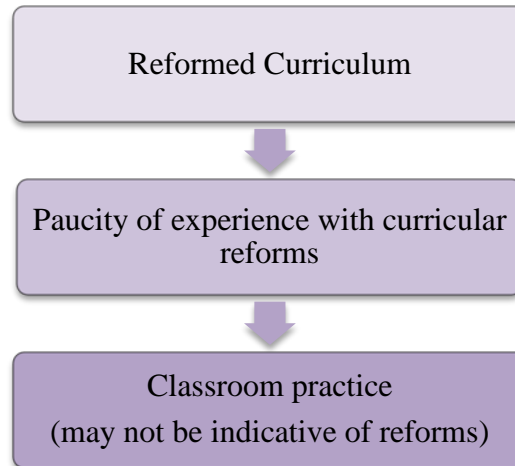


Figure 5.2 *The paucity of experience with curricular reform*

Teachers' responses showed that although some teachers claimed that it was necessary to improve oneself as a teacher and keep on learning to improve professionally, teachers failed to either make time for it or more commonly, were not aware of ways in which such development could be brought about.

5.3.5. Lack of teacher interactive collaboration

Another point emerging in this study which may have led to the gap between the stated beliefs and actual practice is the lack of teacher interactive collaboration and professional training. The observed teachers operated in a highly individualised and personal ways and lacked collegial interaction and peer supervision. The participating teachers had no opportunity to observe other teachers at work and seemed to know little about their colleagues' relationships with students and their educational beliefs. Fullan (2007) identifies interactive professionalism as crucial to effectively contend with ongoing development in education. He views teachers and other stakeholders operating in groups, interrelating recurrently to devise schemes, put new ideas to test, resolve new problems, and assess effectiveness. In this regard, teachers would be constant learners in a cooperative community of interactive professionals. In addition,

most of the teachers expressed the belief that the relationship with their colleagues is a compelling factor and powerfully link to the implementation of an innovation. This argument is in line with Fullan (2007) who argues that institutionalising change is largely conditional upon collegial support.

Moreover, of particular importance when implementing reform, is the investigation of the culture of teachers who interpret and execute the curriculum. The need to examine teacher beliefs and practices stems from the conception that teachers are the ones who process and implement the curriculum depending upon beliefs and contextual constraints.

5.3.6. School culture and professional context

Another reason found in this study that may have led to the gap between the teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practices could be the cultural challenges that the reform poses for the existing norms and values (Fullan, 2016; Wedell, 2008, 2013) of the education system in Iran. School culture, which is shaped by the culture of the society teachers and learners live in, was another important impediment to the implementation of the teachers' beliefs in their actual teaching. Applying CCOT principles such as 'calling for learner involvement, allowing learners choice, changing teachers' and students' roles, and breaking down hierarchic barriers in the classroom' (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p.66) is a challenging task for English language teachers in secondary schools in Iran. Such an application is a challenge to cultural and educational values as well.

The finding that the norms and behaviours in the working context affect the behaviour and attitudes of teachers when they are challenged by change is not very surprising. As I discussed in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.1 and 1.2.5), although the educational system in Iran expects teachers to do the required CCOT practices, the EFL teachers tend to act according to the existing norms and values in the workplace context. Wedell (2013) asserts that the norms and behaviours in the working context affect the behaviour and attitudes of teachers when they are confronted by change. He mentions a number of factors that may influence what happens in the classroom such as fellow teachers, students, and the effect of existing norms and behaviours in the working context. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 (see 1.2.2), in the Iranian traditional ELT

culture, teachers are considered authorities of knowledge and deserve high respect. Good teachers should be knowledgeable, capable of passing on knowledge to students effectively. In such a test-centred educational culture, successful education is reflected mainly in good test performance.

Another aspect related to the cultural challenges is that CCOT comes from the western context which is culturally different from the Iranian context. That is, the CCOT system was expected to work in the Iranian educational context since it showed evidence of success in other contexts. The cultural challenge for teachers then could be their ability to adopt a system which was originally brought from the western context where the norms and values are largely different from the ones in the Iranian context. As Leila put it, 'the imported western theory of education and the context of Iran are not compatible' (LPI2: 57). The act of borrowing a theory of education is not enough. Effective pedagogical change needs to be built in the soil of its local context or condition, something teachers can relate to and identify with, and also through a consultative process, involving all stakeholders.

In terms of the context of instruction, it can also be argued that no two environments would share exactly the same features. Every community is managed by people who are different culturally, mentally, and educationally. Administrators in one community do not share the same beliefs and ideologies as those of others. Even teachers or learners do not have the same conception of the process of teaching and learning. Consequently, implementing even a single theory in two different contexts would lead to different procedures and outcomes.

In addition, the finding of this study that the context where the teachers work has an impact on teachers' beliefs and practice is in line with the findings in the literature (Fang, 1996; Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992; Basturkmen, 2012; Wedell, 2009; Wedell, 2013). The findings clearly highlight the mediation of cultural challenges on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices under CCOT reform. The effect of cultural challenges that the innovation poses for the existing norms and values are based on a detailed analysis of what actually happens inside the classroom. The teachers in this study admitted that their teaching was transformed by demands of their students and the school culture. For these teachers, it is clear that culture was a determining factor in their teaching orientation (Pajares, 1992).

Moreover, as discussed in chapter 1 (see 1.2.3), the classroom settings and the teaching approaches, used by teachers in Iran do not appear to facilitate the implementation of CCOT as they are associated with the norms in the Iranian context: i.e. (as we have seen from the eight cases) learners' expectation of getting good grades, lack of time, professional development, teacher collaboration, and lack of reform experience, as I discussed above.

Holliday (1994) describes the influence of the workplace context as the deep action of local cultures and he referred to factors at the school level and also to others related to 'the wider educational institution'. Wedell also (2009) provides evidence, from case studies, that policy makers of reforms at the top level of organisations usually underestimate the contextual realities in their planning of reforms and therefore plan without considering the implementers' needs.

In addition, as the previous study (Parvaresh, 2010) conducted by the researcher showed, the majority of the participants reported a range of contextual factors (some are cultural challenges) that seem to have contributed to the limited implementation of CCOT principles. This may indicate that the cultural challenges that the reform poses on teachers' beliefs and practices are strong and thus these challenges affect their desire to innovate in such context.

5.4. Experiential factors affecting teachers' beliefs and practices

The findings suggest the fact that language teachers' classroom practices are influenced by a wide range of interacting and often conflicting factors. In addition to contextual factors, this study pointed to a range of experiential factors which led to the tensions between the teachers' stated beliefs and what actually happens inside the classroom concerning the intentions of the curriculum. The experiential aspect includes references to educational and professional experiences in the teacher's life that had some bearing on an understanding of their current teaching practices. As is revealed from the pre-active interview and stimulated recall data, teachers' beliefs are shaped by multiple factors such as their experience as language learners, their apprenticeships of observation, and their accumulated teaching experience gained from pre-service and in-service training.

5.4.1. Influence of prior experience as language learners

Teachers' own language learning experience forms their personal views of learning and teaching and has an important role in their pedagogical beliefs and practices (Borg, 2003; Ellis, 2004). As discussed in the literature review, several writers argue that much of what language teachers know about teaching comes from their memories as students, as language learners, and as students of language teaching. This argument holds true for the participants of this study.

Reflecting on their past experiences as language learners, all eight participants discussed positive and negative educational experiences and how their personal schooling experiences influenced their beliefs and practices. Most teacher participants described the classroom environment where they learned English as a traditional one. Desks were arranged in rows, teachers dominated the classroom talk, and students' interaction with each other was minimal. For instance, when reflecting on her past experiences as a language learner, Atena criticised the traditional approach to language teaching her previous teachers used to adopt in the classroom and noted that her negative experience as learner created intention to be different from the models of teaching that she experienced as English learner. She believed that a student-centred environment enhances students' learning as it gives them a chance to exercise a sense of ownership regarding their language learning. Bahar also described that English was taught at her school in a traditional approach where teachers talked for most of the classroom time and students had minimal opportunities to engage in classroom discussions. In the same vein, most teacher participants stated that they tried to avoid traditional approach to teaching because of their own negative experience.

The influence of teachers' prior experience as language learner supports the results of several previous studies (Borg, 2005; Johnson, 1992, 1994; Lortie, 2002; Pajares, 1992). Borg (2003) asserts that,

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

Even though the eight participating teachers reported having similar English learning environment as language learners, they reacted differently towards their past language

learning experiences. For example, Nasim believed the traditional approach to language teaching she encountered, as a learner, did not help her much because she ‘was passively receiving knowledge instead of researching and actively seeking it’ (NPI2: 25). She believed that ‘when a teacher just keeps on transmitting knowledge to the students, they kind of receive it fast and also discard it fast’ (NPI2: 25). On the other hand, Hoda was in favour of ‘teacher-centred instruction’ and reported that ‘students can only learn a language through rule memorisation and repetitive practices’ (HPI2: 27). She believed that these techniques had worked for her as a learner, so she thinks it works for her students as well. Consequently, a heightened awareness of her own success as a language learner over time had made her willing to use similar approaches in her own teaching.

5.4.2. The anti-apprenticeship of observation

For teachers, their professional learning starts from a set of beliefs about learning and teaching they have developed through the ‘apprentice of observation’ (Lortie, 1975), given all the years they spend observing and learning in schools. These beliefs form their initial conceptualisations as a teacher and are likely to continue to influence their cognitive learning and teaching practice throughout their career (Cheng, Cheng, and Tang, 2010). Johnson (1999) explained that teachers’ beliefs were formed early in life as a result of the accumulated experiences they gained as language learners in schools. As mentioned earlier, the models of teaching that the teachers experienced as students contrasted with expectations outlined in the current English curriculum.

The present study found that participants’ experiences strongly exemplified an anti-apprenticeship of observation. When talking about teaching language, two participants referred to specific teachers they liked and respected and talked about transferring a positive experience into their current practice. For example, Sarah and Nasim had experienced, at some point, instruction rooted in CCOT approach. Therefore, they had an image of what was possible and what a communicative/constructivist approach might look like in actual classroom practice. This finding provides a very clear example of the impact of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 2002).

On the other hand, six of eight teachers referred to teachers whom they did not like and found ineffective. These teachers expressed the anti-apprenticeship, wanting to be

different than the model of their public education. Typical of English education at the time, they were in large, teacher-centred classes with many grammar and translation exercises, audio-lingual drills, and tests. For instance, Atena and Bahar did not experience foreign language instruction based on CCOT principles. Their prior experiences were more traditional with instruction organised around grammar structures, and an emphasis on memorising forms and learning the rules and exceptions. Nevertheless, this did not prevent them from forming beliefs compatible with CCOT. Accordingly, the teachers' past traditional English learning experiences not only shaped their beliefs about teaching and learning but also influenced their current instructional practices. They questioned the model of teaching which they had observed for so long and appeared surprisingly open to new approaches to instruction unlike what they had experienced and witnessed as students.

The present study found that participants' experiences strongly exemplified an anti-apprenticeship of observation. Hence, negative experience as learners created intentions to be different from the models of teaching that they experienced as English learners. Nearly all participants were critical of their secondary school English classes, and as teachers, their negative experiences seemed to strongly influence their beliefs about and approaches to language teaching. Most of the teachers described their experience saying, 'English class was not that fun' and they have 'just studied English for tests'. Like in Johnson's (1994) study, this was particularly evident in their emphasis on making class fun (see also Moodie and Feryok, 2015). Figure 5.3 presents Moodie's model encompassing themes for the anti-apprenticeship of observation based on this study.

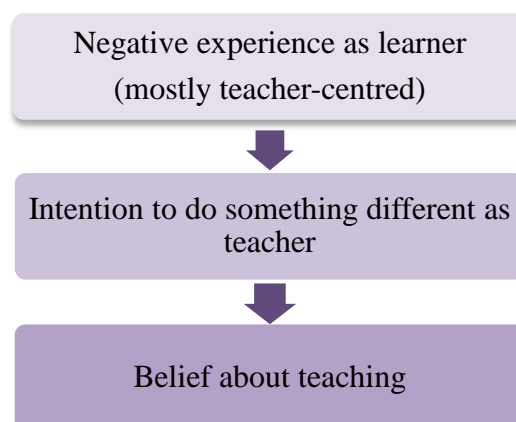


Figure 5.3. *The anti-apprenticeship of observation (Moodie, 2016)*

It can be argued that the significance of the apprenticeship of observation is that prior language learning influences beliefs and practices throughout one's career and it becomes the dominant model of ELT practice for teachers (Borg, 2003, 2006; Johnson, 1994).

In summary, the lack of experience with CCOT as learners has been found to inhibit enactment of curricular reforms; however, the influence of prior learning on beliefs and practices is a connection that must often be inferred (see Moodie and Nam, 2016). Previous studies discussed the importance of prior L2 learning on ELT practices (Borg, 2006); however, in the present study, all teacher participants described the influence of L2 learning on teaching as either having positive impact or compelling them to be different from their teachers. The findings revealed that the intentions of the participants were to be different; however, an important observation was that their beliefs and practices did not necessarily align with curricular reforms. Their recollections of negative learning experiences created conditions for them to act; however, lacking experiential knowledge of the principles of curricular reforms from their experience as learners revealed that they were missing an important aspect of teacher development.

5.4.3. Influence of accumulated teaching experience

Another point emerging in this study which may have led to the gap between the stated beliefs and actual practice is teachers' resistance to change due to the long experience factor. The influence of the knowledge and practices they gained through experience appeared more clearly in the case of C2 teachers who had 18-28 years of experience in teaching English. Hoda, the most experienced teacher, stated clearly in her comments about her actual practice that she reached a stage in her experience where she can depend on her own judgment rather than following the official curriculum reform. This confirms Phipps and Borg's (2009) study who found that teachers' core beliefs, often more grounded in their experience, are more stable and exert a more powerful influence on practice. For example, teachers may believe the curriculum requires them to use one method, but their experience has led them to believe that students learn better or are more motivated by a different method.

Concerning the discrepancy between the stated beliefs and actual practice, the finding in this study resonates the results of Basturkmen's (2012, p.287) research review in language education who found that experienced language teachers' stated beliefs are more consistently reflected in their real practices. Moreover, this study corroborates Basturkmen (2012) conclusion that 'deeply held principles would be applied more consistently than principles acquired more recently'. For example, the study showed that C2 teachers relied on traditional practices due their long experience of using them and thus their negligence of applying CCOT principles was due to the recent introduction of the system. Thus, this study confirms the finding in the literature of language education in that the beliefs of experienced teachers become more firmly embedded in their practices over time (Basturkmen, 2012). Sikes (2013) also argues that experienced teachers tend to show a negative attitude towards change and often react towards it in a dismissive way.

It is worth mentioning here that the findings as shown in Figure 5.4 indicate that teachers stand on a continuum in such a way that the more experienced teachers in the study tended to keep a number of traditional elements in their teaching approach than the less-experienced ones.

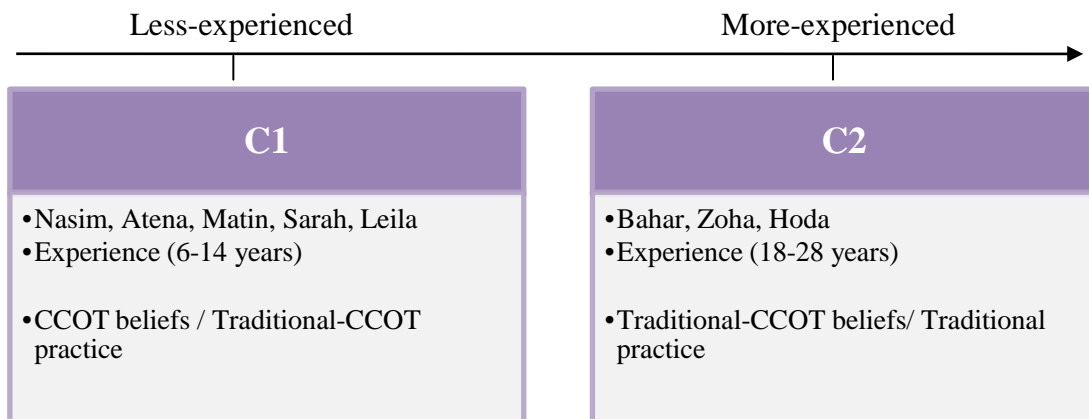


Figure 5.4 *More-experienced vs. Less-experienced teachers*

The findings indicate that the challenges in introducing and implementing curriculum change should not be underestimated. Hence, there is a critical need to look into these factors before introducing innovation or reforms in the curriculum, in order to ensure the desired end results and outcomes.

5.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the major findings to my research questions in relation to the conceptual framework, literature review, and research methodology selected. This study provides a broad understanding of the dynamic interaction between the teachers' beliefs, their practice and the context. It also sheds light on the factors that prevent teachers from enacting their beliefs. This study also suggests that in understanding the teachers' beliefs, it is not sufficient to investigate only what the teachers believe, rather it is more important to understand how they are related.

The study, therefore, extends our current understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning and their actual practices with regard to the implementation of CCOT principles. It also provides evidence for the importance of considering teachers' existing beliefs about foreign language teaching and learning and other contextual factors to understand the intention behind their actual practices of CCOT.

With respect to the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, the data showed a number of disparities within teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the CCOT reform. This study indicated that although the teachers' professed beliefs seemed to be more in line with a constructivist view of teaching and learning, in real practice, they seemed to exhibit more traditional classroom practices (see Figure 5.1). The study showed that the teachers opted to prioritise the dominant core belief teacher-centred approach, which was deep-rooted from the teachers' experience of teaching. Thus, the teacher participants' reliance on the teacher-centred approach may have been influenced by the teachers' experience when they were students since their teacher-centeredness seems to be deeply rooted in the educational tradition. However, the compatible core and peripheral beliefs led to consistent practice, which agrees with other research findings (e.g. Phipps and Borg, 2009).

Furthermore, the participants have not sufficiently and appropriately been trained to carry out the reforms in their classrooms. Rather, these participants have superficially been introduced to these reforms which they may have found attractive but did not fully understand and were not made aware of their importance in the teaching/learning process, and did not experience them in their training. In addition, the school culture and context, in terms of professional support, did not help the

participants continue their few attempts to apply traces of these reforms into their classrooms. Hence, the teachers' lack of training seemed to be one of the main reasons for the incongruence between teachers' beliefs and practices. In this respect, the paucity of experience with the principles of reform indicated the need for having a comprehensive preparation for all teachers who intend to implement reform.

Concerning the features of the teachers' beliefs about learner-centredness, the teachers did not attach as many constructivist roles to the learners in their practices as they claimed. The concept of learner-centredness could not be fully implemented due to the teachers' concern about examinations and other contextual factors such as time limitation, students' needs and expectations, and different proficiency level of the students.

To conclude the discussion in this chapter, Figure 5.5 represents a model emerging from this study that provides a more general explanation of the factors that interact in shaping the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual practice. It also shows the complex interplay between these factors, which interactively mediate the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs about language teaching and learning and their actual practices and lead to limited uptake of reform in reality. It presents teachers' complex belief system which consists of teacher beliefs, classroom practice, and contexts. The contexts, including macro-context of society, exo-context of school, and micro-context of classroom shapes the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice. The 'core beliefs and peripheral beliefs' and 'professed beliefs and beliefs in practice' interact with each other, contributing dynamic relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice (Zheng, 2015). As Figure 5.5 demonstrates, teacher belief systems are linked in a web, connecting individual teachers' mental lives and social contexts of language teaching, teachers' previous teaching and learning experiences and current teaching. To understand teachers' beliefs and practice, therefore, these connections need to be uncovered.

In sum, to understand teachers it is essential to understand their beliefs and experiences as well as the professional context in which they socialise, teach and learn. The next chapter will summarise and wrap up this thesis by discussing the conclusions, limitations, the implications of the study on teaching and teachers, and offering recommendations for further research.

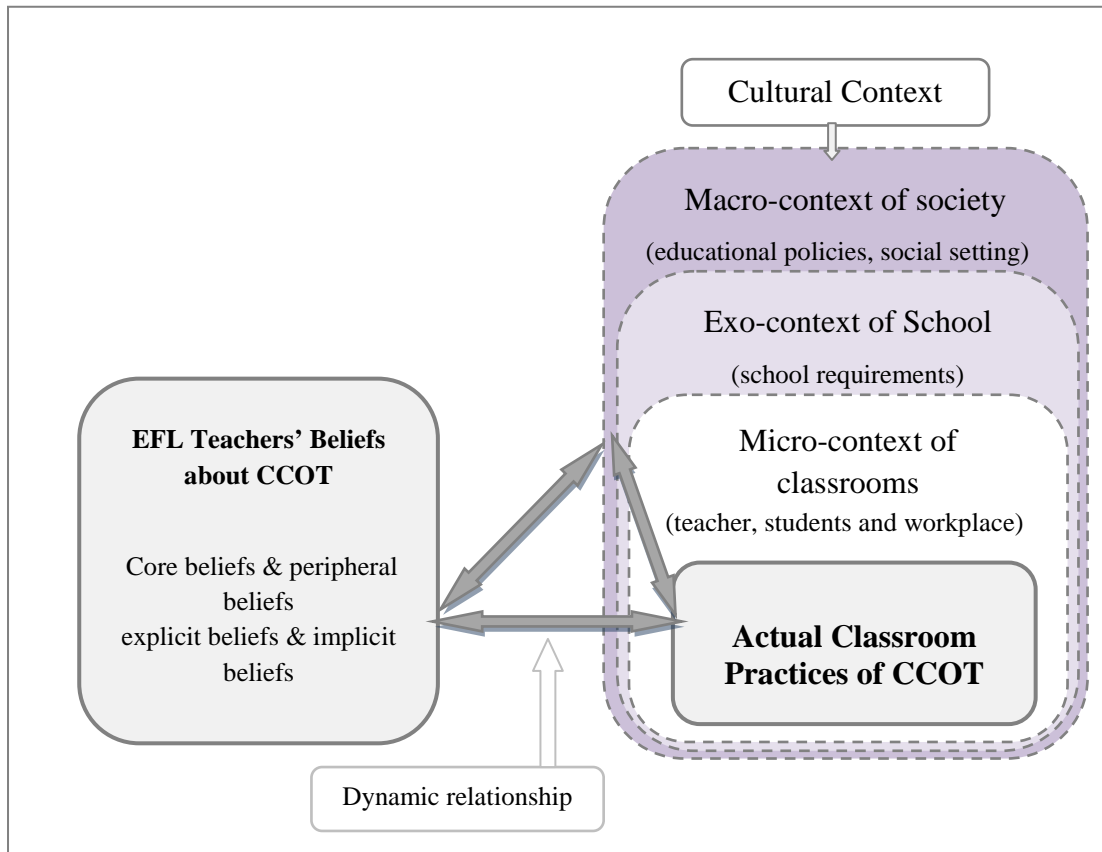


Figure 5.5 *Model for the teachers' stated beliefs about CCOT and their actual classroom practices*

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This study set out to investigate the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices regarding CCOT curricular reform and the factors that prevented teachers from putting their beliefs into practice. Chapters 4 and 5 presented findings and discussion from within- and cross-case analyses. The findings of the present study throw some light on the complex nature of secondary English teachers' beliefs and practices within the context of curriculum reform in Iran. More specifically, the results provide some explanations for what is going on in English classes, why teachers do what they do, and why what is planned at the level of curriculum is not practised.

This concluding chapter consists of five sections. Section 6.2 summarises key findings of this research study. Section 6.3 presents contribution to knowledge of the study. Section 6.4 depicts practical pedagogical and section 6.5 specifies methodological implications of this study. Section 6.6 and 6.7 address limitations and makes recommendations for future research, respectively.

6.2. Summary of main findings

To achieve its objectives, the study has addressed four research questions. The first RQ examined teachers' beliefs regarding CCOT. The second RQ dealt with teachers' beliefs and actual practices of CCOT. The third RQ examined the extent of consistency and inconsistency between the teachers stated beliefs and their actual practices and provided explanations of the inconsistency as revealed by the present study teachers. The fourth RQ uncovered various factors viewed by teachers as influencing their CCOT practices, as identified from the stimulated-recall interviews.

Concerning the first research question, interpretation of data revealed that the beliefs of the English teachers are multi-dimensional. On one hand, the teachers are inclined toward many communicative/constructivist ideas underpinning the curriculum

innovation, such as learner-centred teaching and teacher–student interaction. They feel supportive of these ideas because of the intrinsic appeal of the constructivism-oriented approach, which promises to help develop students’ communicative ability. On the other hand, the teachers also embrace such traditional beliefs and practices as teacher-centred and textbook-based instruction, focus on grammar and language form, drill and practice, and teacher authority. Some of these traditional beliefs have long been valued in the Iranian educational culture, but other beliefs are related to the constraints of the teaching reality, such as high-stakes knowledge-based examinations. Many of the teachers are simply replicating the pedagogy they experienced in their own school or teacher education classrooms, which are often still rooted in a behaviourist paradigm. However, some of the case study English teachers seem to be able to blend the Western-based theories of language teaching and learning with traditional cultural and educational values without much internal conflict. This suggests that the teachers are sensible, practical and flexible beings: they adopt a selective strategy and seek a middle ground that fits best the local context and their own comfort zone (Zhang and Liu, 2014).

As far as the second and third RQs were concerned, both consistency and inconsistency between teachers’ beliefs and practices were found. The remarkable belief-practice gaps and policy-practice gaps found in the present study indicate that curriculum reform has not achieved its intended objectives. Additionally, the study found that teacher core beliefs had a stronger influence on their actual practices than their peripheral ones. For example, two teachers expressed their core beliefs by claiming that having control over students is more important than the peripheral belief, i.e. the usefulness of self-correction. The findings suggest that the teachers’ practice was congruent with more dominant and core beliefs, which highlighted the complex relationship between beliefs and practice. Furthermore, as previously mentioned in Chapter 4, the teachers’ beliefs tend to fall on a spectrum of varying degrees of alignment with CCOT practices- teachers with more CCOT-oriented beliefs displayed more CCOT-oriented pedagogy in their teaching practice.

With respect to the fourth RQ, a number of contextual and experiential factors were found to constrain teachers’ abilities to fully implement their beliefs into practice, including micro-context of classrooms: (e.g., student-related factors, teacher-related factors and workplace conditions), exo-context of schools (e.g., school requirements),

and macro-context of society (e.g., educational policy and lack of EFL environment). Moreover, the teachers' beliefs are shaped by their educational experiences such as past schooling and teaching experiences, and current teaching experiences.

Figure 6.1 presents a diagram that shows key factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practice and the relationship between these factors.

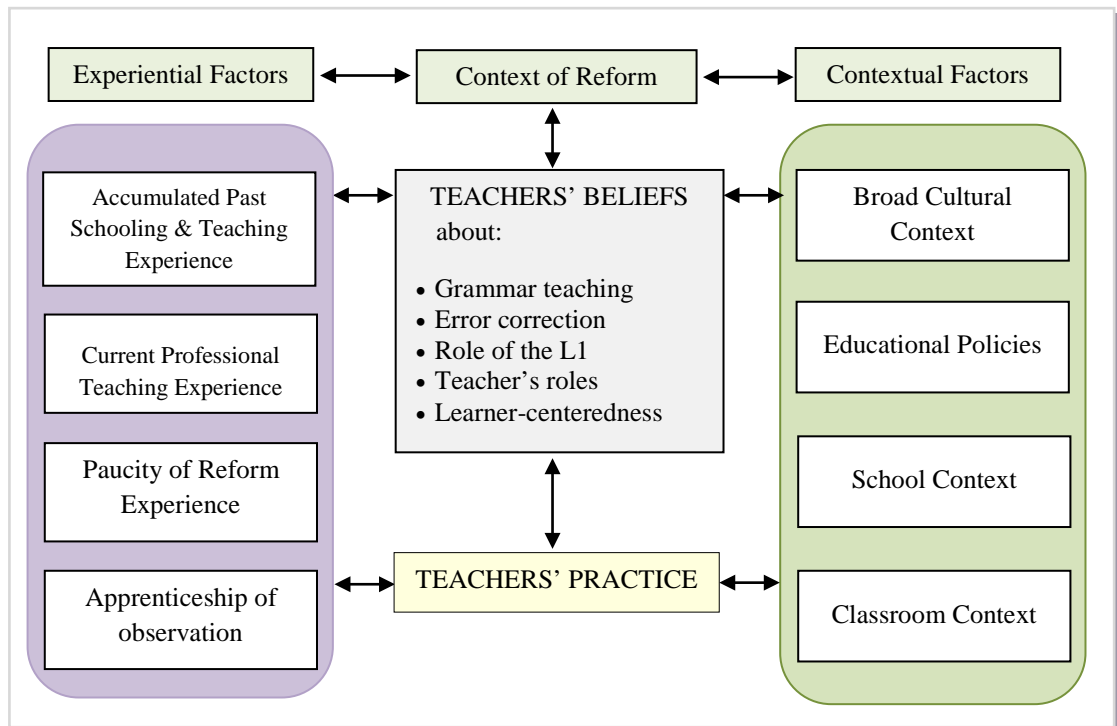


Figure 6.1 *Factors shaping teachers' beliefs and practice*

By understanding the impact of EFL teachers' beliefs on their instructional practices, professional development and teacher education programs in Iran will better assist in-service and pre-service teachers reflect on their beliefs and recognise the impact they have on their behaviours and decision making process in the classroom. The current investigation has several pedagogical implications not only for in-service teachers but also for teacher education programmes, curriculum developers, and educational policy makers.

6.3. Contribution to knowledge in the field

The findings of this study contribute to the field of language teacher cognition and curriculum reform research in a number of ways. It has contributed to the understanding of the teachers' beliefs and practices within the context of curricular reform in Iranian state secondary schools context and to the area of pedagogy in a broad sense. As noted in Chapter one, this study is the first of its type that investigates EFL teachers' beliefs and practices of CCOT in the target context (i.e. Iranian secondary school). Hence, answering my research questions, while relying on the collected and analysed data, should fill a gap in the literature about Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs regarding CCOT reform and their practices and contribute new knowledge to the field. This is an important contribution because it fills a gap in the literature, especially when we know that studies in language teacher cognition in literacy in general are under-researched (Borg, 2006). This research also addresses current gaps in our understanding of FL teachers' implementation of CCOT, by asking teachers to reflect on the significant events that have determined their CCOT pedagogical strategies. In addition, the present study has not only examined the consistency/inconsistency that exists between teachers' beliefs and practices but it has also highlighted the potential tension(s) that may exist in the teachers' belief systems. Examining the relationships between teachers' beliefs and practices has provided a fuller insight into the way teachers view and deal with CCOT.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 and the literature, CCOT implementation in practice has been associated with many challenges. This study makes a number of contributions to the ELT literature in particular and to the mainstream literature in general about teacher beliefs and practices with regard to the implementation of CCOT reform and the factors that contribute to the translation of teacher beliefs into teaching practice. First, reflecting on the findings discussed in the previous chapter, this study highlights the importance of studying both teachers' beliefs about CCOT and their actual practices in order to understand the intertwined relationship among beliefs, practices, context, and the actual implementation of CCOT. That is, taking for granted teachers' stated beliefs about CCOT without looking at the extent of how these beliefs are consistent or inconsistent with the teachers' actual practices may provide inaccurate interpretation of how CCOT is implemented in practice. The limited consistency between teachers' stated beliefs about CCOT and their actual

practices found in the study highlights the importance of understanding the reasons behind such mismatch to provide insights for the benefit of CCOT reforms. This study provides detailed insight into the role of teachers' beliefs, the contextual factors and the nature of CCOT reform in shaping how teachers implement CCOT in actual practice and sheds light on some of the challenges that teachers experienced in implementing CCOT reform practices. Thus, the findings of this study offer implications (see following sections) for curriculum developers, educational policymakers, teachers, and teacher educators in Iran and in a variety of educational contexts where similar issues have been reported about CCOT implementation worldwide and for any future CCOT reforms.

Second, as noted in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, a very limited volume of research has been published on EFL practising teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning and their relationship with teachers' practices in international contexts where languages are taught by non-native speaker teachers (Borg, 2009). Most language teacher cognition research has been carried out in English-speaking countries and in relation to the cognitions and practices of mainly native speaker teachers of the target language teaching in either private language schools or at the university level. Thus, the present study fills a gap in the research by focusing on EFL in-service secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices of curricular reform in an under-resourced context of Iran. Moreover, few qualitative studies which have addressed non-native speaker teachers of English in non-English-speaking countries were done mostly by English native speaker researchers who did not share either the cultural or linguistic background of the participants. This study fills this gap, among others, since the participants and the researcher are Farsi-speaking, and studied and worked in the context of Iran (Tehran, to be more precise). Thus, the relevance of this study can be attributed not only to the aspects being examined but also to the context being explored and the people (both teachers and researcher) participating in it.

6.4. Pedagogical implications of the study

This study focuses on practicing teachers' perspectives of what they think, believe, and do in classrooms. It extends the teacher beliefs discourse by throwing further light onto the still ambiguous relationship between teachers' beliefs and practice. Therefore, it leaves pedagogical implications mainly for teacher education and

curriculum development and reform. Although this study focused on in-service teachers and implications relate to in-service teacher education, they can also refer to pre-service teacher education.

The discrepancy found in this study between teachers' stated beliefs and their actual teaching practices, and also teachers' limited uptake of CCOT in practice, provides implications for policy makers in the Iranian MOE, that even though the teachers incline toward CCOT, they do not usually translate it directly into the classroom reality. That is, the policy makers should not take for granted the assumption that teachers would see the advantages of CCOT reform, and consequently would easily adopt and implement it in practice, but they should understand that CCOT reform implies a change in the way teachers behave and think. Therefore, attention needs to be given to the requirements embodied within the CCOT reform and what they imply for teachers' classroom practices and to the role of teachers' beliefs and other contextual factors in affecting the implementation of CCOT reform.

In the following sections, I suggest some implications for the MOE in Iran, for teacher education, managing curricular reform, and many other important issues in secondary foreign language education in Iran. These implications can apply to any similar context of curricular reform elsewhere.

6.4.1. Implications for teacher education/development

This section presents the following potential implications for the Ministry of Education in Iran in particular and for teacher education in ELT in general.

Given the powerful influence of teachers' beliefs on their instructional practice, teacher education should play an important role in helping to raise teachers' awareness of their beliefs and to make the teachers' implicit beliefs explicit. Given that many implicit beliefs were elicited from the teachers' reflection on their practice, constant reflection on what they have done in the classroom can be an effective way to increase teachers' awareness of the beliefs underpinning their practice. As Farrell (2016, p.2) asserts, 'many teachers remain unaware of their beliefs because they do not readily articulate them to themselves or others nor do they reflect on how they influence their practice'. Therefore, teacher education programmes could be designed

to involve specific tasks which attempt to elicit teachers' beliefs and encourage them to rationalise their beliefs and identify how such beliefs influence their practice.

Accordingly, language teachers should be encouraged to consistently reflect on their teaching beliefs, as these are the driving force behind many of their classroom actions (Farrell, 2015). Moreover, as many tensions relate to contextual factors that are unavoidable, teacher educators could offer suggestions and guidance for teachers to plan strategies either to adapt their beliefs or make possible changes to these contextual factors (Zheng, 2015). Accordingly, teacher educators not only can encourage teachers to be flexible in adapting their beliefs and practice to meet the demands of contextual issues, but also to improve teachers' autonomy in adapting the teaching context.

Secondly, the results of this study on teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning and their actual practices reflected the reality of CCOT implementation as seen through the eyes of the implementers themselves and also reflected teachers' actual practices. Therefore, designers of teacher education programmes in Iran should make use of the outcomes of this study to inform teacher-training programmes about CCOT reform and put in place plans to equip teachers with the necessary skills to enable them to provide school-based professional development in schools. In such school-based professional development, there would be more opportunities for teachers to follow-up the implementation of CCOT during practice as well as to provide immediate support and assistance to teachers about CCOT implementation in real practice. As the Iranian curriculum emphasises students' development of communicative competence, teacher education programmes should devote more time and attention to language use in the classroom. Teachers need to be exposed to, trained in and have demonstrations of the types of classroom interaction that can enhance students' ability to interact and communicate effectively and develop their critical thinking skills. According to the teachers, such trainings were seldom carried out. Consequently, any teacher training programme should not be limited to the introduction to specific teaching methods and approaches; rather they need to pay more attention to the importance of good communication while teaching, or to the kind of interaction patterns that can promote meaningful interaction and eventually students' language and cognitive development.

Thirdly, the portraits of teachers' beliefs and their practices such as those which are provided in the data analysis can be a good means for facilitating teachers' reflection. These portraits can be included in teacher education curricula (both in-service and pre-service) so that teacher trainers and their teachers examine the meanings in the examples of teachers' actual classroom episodes and of quotes from teachers' own analysis of their work. The training activities can be designed to help teachers discuss the factors and motives that underlie the actual CCOT implementation and reflect on them as a preparation to enable those prospective teachers to manage their own CCOT practice and explore the cognitive bases of their work. Teachers should be able to understand and appreciate the changes that the curriculum is attempting to implement. Initial teacher training should, among other things, prepare teachers to be ready to handle changes in the curriculum.

Another issue that teacher education can address is teachers' resistance to change. The study showed that one of the factors that might have led to the gap between the stated beliefs and actual practice is teachers' low level of commitment to applying CCOT in practice and also teachers' resistance to change due to their long traditional experience. Teacher educators need to draw teachers' attention to possible gaps between their own beliefs and the ideas endorsed by the curriculum innovation and help them adjust those incompatible conceptions so that teachers can make informed decisions about appropriate teaching practice in the midst of curriculum change. Policy makers in Iran can address this issue by designing in-service professional development programmes to help those teachers accept the CCOT reform. Fullan (2011) argues that in order for people to accept change they need to have intrinsic motivation to work and to have a deep and sustainable success. Therefore, the teacher education programmes need to recognise teachers' expertise, and their potential resistance to change. The training can include activities that reinforce their enthusiasm for implementing CCOT, develop their understanding of the rationale behind it and make them aware of the purpose, value and the meaning of implementing CCOT in their practice. Alongside efforts to address teacher beliefs (e.g. through teacher education programmes), efforts must also be directed at making teachers' context more conducive to CCOT practice.

6.4.2. Implications for policymaking and curriculum planning

Although this study centres on the perspectives of the teachers, it also provides a set of recommendations for policy makers and curriculum developers. The findings indicate that the challenges in introducing and implementing curriculum change should not be underestimated. Hence, there is a critical need to look into these factors before introducing innovation or reforms in the curriculum, in order to ensure the desired end results and outcomes. Moreover, in incorporating new concepts about teaching into local contexts, curriculum planners should not reject all teachers' existing values or beliefs. Therefore, before producing the new curriculum, research should be done to examine teachers' general beliefs.

The findings showed that most English teachers' stated beliefs in relation to English teaching and learning were generally consistent with the direction of the principles of the CCOT curriculum. However, their instructional practices were reported as being considerably diverged from their professed beliefs. They usually adopted a mixed approach which integrated the features of a traditional English language teaching approach as well as a communicative approach. The exam-oriented environments were found to take on the major responsibility for this discrepancy. Therefore, the first priority of policy-makers is to reform examination content in line with the aims of the new curriculum. For example, English exams should include listening comprehension and speaking tests rather than grammar and written work alone.

In addition, the Ministry of Education has to reconsider and rethink the suitability of the reform effort to the current Iranian teaching and learning environment. Therefore, there is a need for the MOE to review the curriculum to suit the needs of less proficient students, in order to ensure effective implementation of the CCOT and for the aim of the curriculum reform to be successfully achieved. Wedell (2005) argues that coordination between the aim of the curriculum and teachers' immediate working environments is important to confirm the curriculum change is enforced as meant.

The findings of this study may be useful in revising the curriculum in a way that is beneficial for the students' pedagogical and communicative needs. Sometimes teachers' beliefs may not be congruent with the ideas underpinning the curriculum innovation and the reasons for this inconsistency need to be identified, analysed, and addressed. Furthermore, the findings can create an awareness of the problems and

challenges the CCOT has posed for teachers, with a view to improving language education in Iran. They can lead to a better understanding of the secondary English curriculum reform and of the impact of the current curriculum on the English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching and learning.

As suggested earlier, policymakers need to bear in mind that teachers' own beliefs can play an important mediating role in curriculum implementation. To ensure the successful implementation of the English reform in the classrooms, educational policy makers have to take account of teachers' beliefs as an integral part of their knowledge base. Thus, ignoring teachers' long-held beliefs about English teaching, learning, and curriculum will hinder the integration of innovative ideas and practices that Iranian EFL teachers are encouraged to adopt in the classrooms.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that any curricular reform effort must begin from the ground up. It must begin with the realities of classroom life and address both macro and micro issues that will impede and/or support any curricular innovation.

6.5. Methodological implications of the study

The following implications for educational research methodology emerged.

First, to capture the complex features of teachers' belief systems, this study draws on multiple data sources, including observations and interviews which helped me overcome the limitations of each (Silverman, 2001) and also reflected different assumptions about teacher beliefs (Borg, 2006). The combination of observations and interviews revealed more tensions between different data requiring exploration in more detail. When juxtaposing data collected from observations and interviews, different types of belief, such as professed beliefs and beliefs in practice, explicit and implicit beliefs became apparent in the study and these would not have been possible if only one instrument was used.

Second, many researchers (see Borg, 2006) have demonstrated that there have always been discrepancies between what teachers said and what they did in the classroom. This study showed the value of studying teacher beliefs from both emic and etic perspectives. By making direct reference to actual classroom practices, I was able to infer the teachers' beliefs which were then used to compare with what the teachers

claimed. The combination of emic and etic perspectives highlighted the interactions between core and peripheral beliefs, and explicit and implicit beliefs.

Third, methodologically, the study confirms the value of using a qualitative multiple case study in studying teachers' beliefs and practices to avoid the methodological problem of the potential gap between teachers' beliefs 'expressed in relation to ideal instructional practices and, in contrast, in relation to instructional realities' (Borg, 2006, p.279). Another advantage of using a multiple case study is that it helps the researcher to gain insights into the nature of human thinking and human behaviours which are always context-bound.

Finally, this study encouraged the teachers to self-reflect on what they had done. It revealed to be important in the study that the teachers' critical self-reflection offered rich data about how their mental lives underpinned their practice and also encouraged them to become aware of their beliefs and made it possible for them to change their beliefs or practice. The study showed some evidence of how the stimulated recall interviews brought about the teachers consciously change their practice.

6.6. Limitations of the research

This study was valuable in providing a comprehensive analysis of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the key premises of CCOT reform. Yet, due to the complexity and diversity of language teacher cognition research, this study has some limitations that are acknowledged below.

I believe that many of the issues highlighted here reflect ones highlighted in previous research and will resonate more widely in the Iranian context. Also, the study illustrated issues specifically related to the Iranian educational context; thus, it is context-bound. Still, the result of the study could be of interest and relevance to other contexts that share similar characteristics and conditions.

I must also acknowledge that there are probably many aspects of the motives behind teachers' actual practices that this study did not capture. Although this study revealed a range of factors which explained teachers' limited uptake of the CCOT reform, many other factors might not be captured due to teachers' evasiveness during the interviews.

The findings in one geographical location may not be representative of the overall EFL secondary classrooms in the country. However, the teachers involved in this study were typical in their qualifications and educational backgrounds, which imply that the findings that emerged from this study are likely to be relevant to an understanding of the interplay between teachers' beliefs and practice and how they view the curriculum and what happens in secondary EFL lessons generally.

The study mainly focused on investigating the beliefs and practices of teachers of English; did not involve any other stakeholders such as school supervisors, head teachers, or principals. Considering the views of those stakeholders on CCOT reform, and how it is implemented in practice, would have provided further insights about reform implementation. For example, as senior teachers are required to assist the implementation of curriculum reform in the schools, giving more focus to their role of helping teachers and how they do this in practice, would have provided more explanation of teachers' limited uptake of CCOT.

Notwithstanding the above limitations, attempts were made to maximise the credibility of findings and interpretations. Despite these limitations, it is my personal belief that the present study has generated rich data, which has contributed to the knowledge on teachers' beliefs about language teaching and learning in relation to CCOT approach and their actual practices.

6.7. Suggested areas for further research

This research suggests several fruitful areas for further investigation. Teachers' beliefs and their role in Iranian education have been relatively unexplored and would be useful to examine with larger samples and in other contexts within Iran, for which this study's methodology and tools may offer a starting point. It would be interesting to look also at other beliefs that teachers hold that may influence their practice that were beyond the scope of this study, such as beliefs relating to self-efficacy, or to specific subjects of study.

Various studies that attempt to trace teachers' beliefs and practice within the context of curricular reform might provide more extensive insights and implications for both in-service teacher education and the implementation of the curricular reform. As this study has provided insights into the implementation of CCOT reform, I would

suggest that more research of this kind would provide insights both in Iran and elsewhere. As previously mentioned, conducting a research on the teachers' beliefs about English teaching and learning of one geographical setting may not be representative of the overall EFL secondary classrooms in the country, therefore this study suggests further research comparing the differences and similarities between the teachers from different regions.

While this study focused on in-service teachers' beliefs and practices of EFL teaching and learning, studies that trace teachers' experiences throughout the entire pre-service teacher education program, including the practicum and perhaps their initial teaching experiences would most certainly provide a more comprehensive understanding of how they learn to teach and the development of their identities as English language teachers. Moreover, future studies should investigate the long-standing effect of pre-service teacher education, especially how teachers carry their newly emerging concepts and instructional practices into new instructional settings.

In order to depict the change and development of the systems resulting from the curriculum reform, a more longitudinal case study would better capture the interplay within the complex belief systems and could provide richer information with regard to the implementation of the recent curriculum reform. A future study could be carried out to look at how the same eight teachers perceive and view the curriculum reform and the impact it has on their classroom practices over time.

Finally, since this study mainly focused on the teachers of English as the implementers of reform, investigating the students' views and perceptions of the curriculum reform and the impact of the curriculum implementation on students' learning could provide instructive insights into the teaching and learning process in EFL classroom contexts in Iran. Moreover, if values and beliefs about language teaching and learning had been examined from the perspectives of students, colleagues, school leaders and administrators, more tensions would have emerged from the data. In addition, a more thorough exploration of the cultural and social perspective of the systems is needed to broaden the study of teachers' belief systems.

6.8. Personal reflections

To conclude, here are some comments on how this study has contributed to my own development.

Going through the long journey of this research, I have been overwhelmed by a combination of feelings of anxiety, frustration, satisfaction and enjoyment. Living abroad in a foreign country and leaving my family behind to undertake the process of this research was a challenging experience. However, my family support and encouragement throughout this journey, together with the moments of achievement, was a great support to me. Also, sharing feelings with my supervisors and other research students helped in maintaining interest to continue the work on the study.

Going through the stages of this research has been a learning experience for me. I realised that having a clear awareness of the research topic from the very beginning and having a passion about it makes one continue through the stages of the study with determination, confidence, and interest. Moreover, my strong beliefs about the importance of this research, and its contribution to existing knowledge helped in maintaining my enthusiasm to continue the work through to the end.

Furthermore, going through this research process helped me to become more analytical of my work environment, look at it critically through the eyes of scientific research enquiry, question policies and try to make sense of challenges or needs required in any reform implementation process. The research period has made me more aware of the situation in my context and has given me an appreciation of the difficulties that teachers face when they are required to implement educational reforms. It has also made me more sympathetic to teachers in general, and with English teachers in Iran in particular. I realised that any reform implementation needs to be informed by a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the reform strategies that are likely to be effective in any given development.

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APPENDIX 1: Information and Consent Form for Teacher Participants

Birkbeck University of London

Department of Applied Linguistics and communication



Name of Researcher: Parvaneh Parvaresh

Research Title: Teacher cognition and practice within the context of curricular reform

Dear Participant,

This research study is taking place as part of my work towards the degree of Doctorate in Applied Linguistics supported by the Department of Applied Linguistics and communication at Birkbeck University of London. The study aims to investigate Iranian English teachers' cognition and practice with regard to curriculum reform and I would like to invite you to participate in this study. You have been selected because you are teaching English in the educational system of Iran and I am interested in receiving your valuable comments as an experienced teacher who is directly involved with students.

I would be very grateful if you would kindly agree to take part in this research. If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in a pre-observation interview which will last approximately for an hour and will focus on issues of English teaching and learning. I will then ask you for permission to carry out the research in your classroom through observations. You will then be interviewed after every classroom observation. All interviews and observations will be audio-recorded. The study will be conducted at times that are convenient for you.

Your participation in this research is absolutely voluntary and that you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime. This study is purely for research and academic purpose. Information gathered will be treated with strict confidence and will only be reported in anonymous form. Findings from the research may be published, but your identity will remain confidential.

If you do agree to take part, please sign the consent form below. You are free to withdraw this permission at any time and without giving a reason.

Thank you very much for reading this information sheet. I hope that you will enjoy taking part in this study, and thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Parvaneh Parvaresh

PhD candidates

Birkbeck, University of London

Email: parvaresh18@yahoo.com

Participant Consent Form

Birkbeck University of London

Department of Applied Linguistics & communication

Name of Researcher: Parvaneh Parvaresh

Please tick the box if you agree with the statement

1. I confirm that I have been given an overview about the above research and I understand the information explaining it and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.

2. I understand that my participation is purely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I give permission for the researcher to have access to my responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.

4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

If you are willing to participate in the research, please sign the form below.

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

APPENDIX 2: Information and Consent Form for School Principals

Birkbeck University of London

Department of Applied Linguistics & communication



Name of Researcher: Parvaneh Parvaresh

Research Title: Teacher cognition and practice within the context of curricular reform

Dear Principal,

This research study is taking place as part of my work towards the degree of Doctorate in Applied Linguistics supported by the Department of Applied Linguistics and communication at Birkbeck University of London.

I am interested in getting valuable comments of the English Language teachers of your school as experienced teachers who are directly involved with students and to seek their participation in my study.

I am writing to seek your kind permission to grant me access to your school English teachers to be able to collect data for my study. The study involves three face to face teachers' interviews and two classroom observations. Participation will be voluntary and will be conducted at times that are convenient for each participant. The names of participating schools and teachers will not be disclosed when reporting the study and the data will be kept securely and will be used for academic purposes only.

Looking forward to your consent to grant me the permission to interview the teachers and observe their classes. If you have any queries about the research please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Parvaneh Parvaresh

PhD candidates

Department of Applied Linguistics & communication

Birkbeck University of London

Email: parvaresh18@yahoo.com

Principals Consent Form

I have read and understood the information mentioned above and I am willing to grant permission to collect data for the study which is conducted by the researcher, Parvaneh Parvaresh. I understand that the name of school and teachers' identity will remain confidential and that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

Name of principal Date Signature

Researcher Date Signature

APPENDIX 3: Pre-active Semi-structured Interview Questions

I. Participants' background information

Presentation of interviewee: name and age.

- Education: Where? When? What?
- Reasons for choosing teaching as a profession: Why and how did you become an English teacher?
- Years of teaching English as a foreign language? What grades are you teaching?
- Time spent abroad: how long? Where? Did it, or did not, affect you and your work?

II. Data that feed into research questions

1. What do you recall about your experiences learning English at secondary school?
 - Can you give me an example of a good language teacher that you had? What did you like about her teaching methods?
 - Did you enjoy your English lessons? If yes, why? If not, why not?
 - Could you describe your English class when you were a student at secondary school? What was the teaching like?
 - What teaching approach did your past English teachers use in the classroom?
 - Can you tell me something about your experiences of English learning at university?
2. Tell me about your formal pre- or in-service teacher training experiences.
 - Did they promote a particular way of teaching?
 - How does your professional training influence your teaching practice?
3. How do you describe the current teaching approach you use in the classroom? For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative, etc.
4. Which aspect of English as a subject do you think is the most important for secondary school students to learn?
5. What kind of teaching method/activities do you believe best helps students to achieve the mastery of English?
6. Based on your teaching experience, what do you find is the best way to help students master the grammatical system of English?
 - What do you think about the role of explicit grammar instruction?
7. What is your philosophy about error correction? What kind of errors do you correct, how and when?

8. What do you think about the use of L1? Do you allow your students to use their first language in your classes? When and why?
9. How do you describe your role in the classroom as an EFL teacher?
 - o You have been teaching for X years. Has your view of the role of the teacher changed in that time? In what ways?
10. What do you think is the role of the students in your English class?
 - o You have been teaching for X years? Has your view of the role of learners during a lesson changed in that time? In what ways?
11. What do you think about group and pair work? Which one do you prefer? and what are the advantages and disadvantages?
12. What do you feel are the most important aspects of teaching English in your classroom? For example, reading, writing, listening, communication, etc.
13. Are there any restrictions on the kinds of materials that you can use or on the content and organisation of your lessons?
14. Does the school that you work for promote any particular style of teaching?
15. Do you regularly observe your colleagues or others teaching?
 - o Do you often discuss teaching issues with your colleagues?
16. What are the challenges for you as a teacher that helps/hinders determining your instructional choices?
17. What factors do you believe improve your teaching practices?

APPENDIX 4: Sample Transcription of Semi-structured Interview

R = Researcher and interviewer

N = Nasim (interviewee)

Greetings.

1 **R:** Thank you very much for participating in my research.

2 **N:** No problem.

3 **R:** Should we start now?

4 **N:** Yes.

5 **R:** Would you please tell me your name, age, education. What did you study?
Where and when?

6 **N:** My name is Nasim (pseudonym) and I am 38 years old. I've got BA in
English Literature and MA in TEFL from Azad University of Tehran. I got my MA
degree in 2007.

7 **R:** How long have you been teaching English?

8 **N:** I've been teaching English in junior secondary school for 16 years now.

9 **R:** What grades do you teach?

10 **N:** At the moment, I teach 2nd and 3rd grades.

11 **R:** Why did you choose teaching English as your profession?

12 **N:** Frankly speaking, I was not planning to be an English language teacher. When
I first graduated from secondary school, I wanted to continue Math to be an engineer,
actually; and I couldn't get my choice, then I shifted to be an English language
teacher. At that time the only major that was available to me was to study English. I
accepted it as a challenge, I can't say I was good at it at first, but I'm doing well after
these long years of experience.

13 **R:** Have you ever been abroad, if yes, how long? Where? Did it, or did not, affect
you and your work?

14 **N:** I have been in California, US for six months and took a Teacher Training
Course. This experience has really changed my personality, my career, and I became
familiar with their culture.

15 **R:** What do you recall about your experiences learning English at secondary
school? Can you give me an example of a good language teacher that you had? What
did you like about her teaching methods?

16 **N:** I really loved my English teacher at junior high school. I loved her character.
She used to teach very nicely - her way of teaching was very good - she used to
explain everything clearly and use the blackboard well. She motivated me to learn

English. She was so kind. This interest stayed with me until high school. Although, I didn't like very much my teachers in senior high school, I think that the love of my first English teacher stayed with me and I believe it affected my decision to study English at the university and at last I became an English teacher.

17 **R:** Could you describe your English class when you were a student at secondary school? What was the teaching like?

18 **N:** It was a normal class, with mixed ability students in a senior high school. The teachers only taught based on the textbook. They were teaching in a traditional way, for example, teaching grammar explicitly, and using Farsi to explain everything, like translating every sentence. So I went to private institute because English lessons at school were very simple to me. I couldn't learn a lot from school. The teacher took up a lot of the time with classroom management; the class was boring for me. But, the teacher taught grammar and pronunciation very well, so I think it built the foundations of my grammar and pronunciation. I learnt other skills, such as speaking and listening from my private lessons.

19 **R:** Tell me about your formal pre- or in-service teacher training experiences. How does your professional training influence your teaching practice?

20 **N:** I think professional training is necessary, but nowadays the MOE's programmes do not always meet my needs. For teachers like me who have taught for many years, we can handle classes very well. What I need is more active and fun teaching, with some teachers sharing their experiences, tips of teaching the four skills, grouping, awarding, etc.

21 **R:** So you would be willing to attend under those circumstances?

22 **N:** Yes, I am willing to attend sessions where other experienced teachers share some information, experience and tips. As teachers we need to sit and discuss things together, but usually there is no time for us. But when you attend these kinds of in-service trainings, they don't provide you with sufficient knowledge how to conduct the class. I think apart from training, we teachers should be given some trial period before we started any reform. I believe at first the ministry or the department should give us some trial period maybe six months...conduct the training, so we have the trial, we can try the skill. Then we can gather back and give them some of our experience, reflections, reflect back on what we have done. Then we can start with the improved one.

23 **R:** So do you think that the way the training was conducted was not effective?

24 **N:** Yes. There was so many input in a very little time...everything was cramped in a short training course. I think it should be a hands-on experience for the teachers to try to use the ideas of the reform first. So instead of a one or a two days training where you explain what and how, there should be a progressive one...professional development, an extra trainings because as teachers we need to reflect on how we feel and to give somebody our input. It's now like you are left just like that and you

yourself have no idea whether you are doing the right thing or not...whether you are doing what the curriculum required you to do.

25 **R:** Please tell me which aspect of English as a subject do you think is the most important for secondary school students to learn?

26 **N:** I think to get them interested in English, basic communication abilities, and grammar concepts. I think teachers should have sense of humour and let students have some fun in order to make them like English. So, they have to enjoy the lesson first. In addition, negotiating and deciding on teaching activities together with the students make them enjoy learning English.

27 **R:** What kind of teaching method/activities do you believe best helps students to achieve the mastery of English?

28 **N:** I prefer collaborative types of activities for developing both linguistic and communicative skills in my students.

29 **R:** Based on your teaching experience, what do you find is the best way to help students master the grammatical system of English? What do you think about the role of explicit grammar instruction?

30 **N:** In my opinion traditional teaching method focuses on grammar rules and disregards the needs of the students to use these rules in real contexts. I prefer not to teach grammar in a traditional way that focuses on theory and repetitive practice, like the way some of my teachers used to teach in my secondary school. I believe grammar should be taught in context with the help of real-life examples and communicative activities. So I think if I use too much grammar explanation or grammatical terminology, it would simply make the learning experience tedious for students.

31 **R:** I see. So what do you think is the best way to teach grammar?

32 **N:** You know there is a gap between students' levels in our classes. Therefore, sometimes I have to follow form-focused instruction and explain grammar in Farsi. I think the form and forms are both important so I'd mix them because students have to be prepared for the exams.

33 **R:** What is your philosophy about error correction?

34 **N:** I think errors are natural in the process of language learning and I usually ignore students' errors in their oral practice and teachers should be tolerant towards learners' errors if they could make themselves understood. Previously I used to correct student's grammatical errors directly, but then I decided to correct their errors by repeating the correct ones without telling them explicitly what is wrong. I believe if we allow the conversation flow without error correction, it pulls the students out of their shell and lets them communicate.

35 **R:** What kind of errors do you correct, how and when?

36 **N:** I used to correct student's grammatical errors directly earlier in my career, but

later I decided to correct their errors by repeating to them the correct responses without telling them explicitly what was wrong. When I feel that error correction is going to hinder them, or it's going to make them feel less confident, or it's going to make them worry about making mistakes, then I hold back. I think we should let the conversation flow and we should not correct their errors. In this way we can pull the students out of their shell and let them communicate. I think the best way is to correct students' grammatical errors in an implicit way.

37 **R:** How do you do that?

38 **N:** From my personal opinion, the most important factors to consider when providing error correction are the students' personalities and level of communicative ability. I usually try to pay careful attention to balancing the students' confidence level and the frequency of error correction. I try to avoid excessive correction because I want my students to feel relaxed and free and confident in their speaking.

39 **R:** You mean for you fluency is more important than accuracy?

40 **N:** Based on my personal experience, if I want to conduct an activity to liven up the classroom atmosphere or to motivate the students to speak, I would focus on fluency. But I can say that the proportion of fluency and accuracy is determined by the purpose of the activity. I know that the communicative approach stresses language fluency. So, I primarily focus on fluency to promote students' motivation.

41 **R:** Based on your experiences as a teacher, what do you think about the use of L1 (Farsi)?

42 **N:** I think that English should dominate classroom interaction when teaching English. I always encourage groups to discuss, using as much English as possible. I prefer not to use Farsi and always try to teach English through English and encourage my students to speak English to get use to it. I will let them to talk, to speak, to use the language. But I need to keep reminding them don't speak Farsi. Some students don't speak English or they speak very quietly, very passive. I think being passive is the biggest problem.

43 **R:** In what activities they are going to use their first language?

44 **N:** Maybe some sort of like role-play, group discussion. I give them some space to speak Farsi but I always tell them everything must be in English.

45 **R:** How do you describe your role in the classroom as an EFL teacher?

46 **N:** I think teachers should have facilitating role which means involving students and participating in their learning activities. I consider myself as a facilitator of students' learning, giving them the tools that help them learn. I can say that my role is like an advisor and I think when I put students in groups, it makes them work together in a community with the social interaction roles. Then in case of any problem, as an advisor, I can help them. I think that a good language teacher should be first a guide for the students and then act as a helper.

- 47 **R:** What do you think is the role of the students in your English class?
- 48 **N:** The classroom should be a comfortable environment for the students in which they can freely behave without hesitation. Students should be active and independent. They should be responsible for and take decisions about their own learning. If students could do this, I can say that their self-confidence in learning would increase. I think teachers should let students have some fun in order to make them like English. Using interesting activities in the classroom is one way to create motivation.
- 49 **R:** How far can you adopt these roles in your classrooms?
- 50 **N:** In the current classrooms, I try to adopt these roles, but I don't know if I was successful. You know students got used to the traditional roles in which teacher gives, learners take. I'm not the traditional type of teacher and I try to help my students develop their language abilities. I want my class to have a team like atmosphere. I think over these years of experience, I have developed a kind of less severe- more kindly approach in managing the classroom and giving responsibility to students.
- 51 **R:** You talked about motivation, what do you do to motivate your students?
- 52 **N:** I am sure having a sense of humour, giving supportive feedback, and building a good relationship increase the students' motivation. I think learning will be more fun when you yourself...not only the students will enjoy the lessons but you as a teacher will enjoy the lessons too when you use something that you are very interested in. You know, when the class is against the students' interest, they will not follow the lesson after a while and then their minds go elsewhere out of the class. So, I try to retain their attention and look for something that would make them interested in the topic.
- 53 **R:** What do you think about teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching?
- 54 **N:** Teaching has to be interactive, learner-centred and involve active learning. I think learner-centred is the best. It can enhance students' confidence which is essential in the development of students' communicative competence. Instruction should be in a way that students solve problems together, complete tasks, learn from each other and collaborate with each other. It should be that way for the students to be eager to learn, to have high motivation, and not to expect everything from the teacher. I believe that the students can learn better when the teacher encourages them to speak and engage with the activities.
- 55 **R:** How do you describe the current teaching approach you use in the classroom?
For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative, etc.
- 56 **N:** Well, actually according to the curriculum we should teach based on learner-centred teaching. I myself prefer learner-centred teaching, but in practice we cannot implement it, sometimes because of the large number of the students and also the different level of the students. But I have always tried to have a learner-centred class. You know students are different. It's very hard to use the active learning and learner centred approach because they are dependent on teachers. Some students are very active, they are eager to learn.

- 57 **R:** You mean because of passive students you cannot apply learner-centred teaching?
- 58 **N:** Of course, we have some passive students too. I try to involve them. I try to attract them by using various activities and by giving tasks. But we need to train our students at the very beginning to get used to it. We have to start from the primary school because our students like getting everything from the teachers. That's why when we are doing active learning and learner-centred teaching in the classroom, the class will be in a very noisy.
- 59 **R:** As a language teacher what do you think about group and pair work? Which one do you prefer? And what are the advantages and disadvantages?
- 60 **N:** I believe students can learn better when they devote themselves to group work. I myself prefer group work. I think that the instruction should be in a way that students solve problems together, complete tasks, learn from each other and collaborate. But we should consider the ability of the students. The students are not in the same level in one classroom. Some weak students might stay passive even in group work activity.
- 61 **R:** What do you feel are the most important aspects of teaching English in your classroom? For example, reading, writing, listening, communication, etc.
- 62 **N:** Actually we should emphasise all four skills in English. The students have to read, they have to write and they have to listen and all these skills actually help them in learning a language. It's good but sometimes it is impossible because there are many things that need to be considered such as the classroom size, time limit and exam requirements. Facilities are also limited for listening lessons for example, a listening lab is needed. Again weak students are in the same classes with the strong students. You know, in a class of mixed ability, weak students easily get frustrated and feel pressured.
- 63 **R:** Are there any restrictions on the kinds of materials that you can use or on the content and organisation of your lessons?
- 64 **N:** **No.** There is no restriction but we have to cover the prescribed textbook. So we use text book and work book as supplementary.
- 65 **R:** Do you use other supplementary materials in class?
- 66 **N:** Yes, sometimes. I cannot always use them because I need to finish the curriculum but whenever I find opportunity I try to bring extra materials. I try to find interesting, daily things from daily life.
- 67 **R:** What are your main considerations when designing extra tasks and activities?
- 68 **N:** I try to bring interesting things and materials for them. Sometime we play games. It's what they like most and it's effective. This makes them to participate more and attracts them.

- 69 **R:** Do you regularly observe your colleagues or others teaching?
- 70 **N:** No, we usually have no opportunity to observe our colleagues but at times we gather back every teacher and we discuss...are we doing the right thing?
- 71 **R:** What aspects of your teaching you would like to develop?
- 72 **N:** I wish we could find more opportunity to go abroad and talk with native speaker teachers of English to exchange our experiences on how best to teach English.
- 73 **R:** Thank you very much for attending this interview. I wish you all the best.

APPENDIX 5: C1 Teachers' belief statements and their observed practices of curriculum

	(C1)	Stated Beliefs	Observed Practice	Beliefs/ Practices
Grammar Teaching	Nasim	Grammar should be taught in context; focus on meaning (CCOT)	Contextualised grammar exercise ; focus on forms instruction (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Atena	Grammar is best acquired unconsciously/inductively; focus on meaning (CCOT)	Sentence-based grammar presentation ; extensive use of metalanguage (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Matin	Grammar should be presented in contextual situations; focus on meaning (CCOT)	Explicit focus on grammar presentation; rule-search and discovery-based approach (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Sarah	Students should be encouraged to analyse language and discover rules; contextualised grammar teaching (CCOT)	Contextualised grammar exercise; use regular grammar practice exercises (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Leila	Grammar should be taught in context implicitly; focus on meaning; inductive teaching approach (CCOT)	Focused mostly on explanation of grammar rules; explicit grammar instruction (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
Error Correction	Nasim	Errors are natural outcomes; neglecting of students' errors in oral practice; implicit correction; focus on fluency over accuracy (CCOT)	Repeating to them the correct responses (recast); implicit teacher correction (CCOT)	Consistency
	Atena	Peer-correction; focus fluency; tolerate the students' errors (CCOT)	Self-correction (with the teacher's help); recast (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Matin	Encourages self correction Avoiding explicit and over error correction; focus fluency on developing speaking skills (CCOT)	Repeat error with questioning intonation/facial expression (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Sarah	Avoid an explicit error correction in front of the class; focus fluency (CCOT)	Avoiding an explicit error correction; recast (CCOT)	Consistency
	Leila	Tolerate the students' errors; implicit correction; recast; encourage self-correction (CCOT)	Explicit correction; corrects student errors immediately; recast (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
Use of L1	Nasim	Teach English through English; English should dominate classroom interaction (CCOT)	Use L1 to explaining difficult words or grammar; flexibly use of both English and Farsi (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Atena	Prefer not to use L1; use English as much as possible (CCOT)	Use L1 for explanation of new words and grammar rules (traditional)	Inconsistency
	Matin	Communicate in the target language; use English as much as possible; includes L1 for consolidation (CCOT)	Use L1 to simplify grammar explanation; use L1 for consolidation (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Sarah	Students should use English only and express their opinions in English; use a bit of L1 to motivate students (CCOT)	Encourages student to speak in English; the use of L1 for grammar explanation; L1 use in bringing humour and reduce students' anxiety (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Leila	L1 should be used as little as possible; more use of English for communication (CCOT)	Use L1 for explanation of new words and grammar rules (traditional)	Inconsistency

Contd. C1 Teachers' belief statements and observed practices

	(C1)	Stated Beliefs	Observed Practice	Beliefs/ Practices
Teacher's Role	Nasim	'facilitator', 'advisor', 'guide', 'helper' (CCOT) having sense of humour and bringing fun (CCOT)	Fostering relationships; facilitator, helper and guide; authoritative, instructor, and controller (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Atena	'guide', 'friend', 'helper', 'mother' (CCOT) motivating students (CCOT)	Teacher played the main role of an instructor first, then as a facilitator, and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Matin	'facilitator', 'advisor', 'helper', 'observer' (CCOT) building rapport and trust (CCOT)	All students express their views freely (CCOT) facilitator, provider of knowledge, and guide (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Sarah	'facilitator', 'advisor', 'consultant', 'friend', 'helper' (CCOT) motivating students, prioritising students' needs (CCOT)	Facilitator, organiser, helper, and guide (CCOT)	consistency
	Leila	'guide', 'facilitator', 'leader'; prioritising students' interest (CCOT)	Facilitator, helper and guide; authoritative (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
Learner-Centred Teaching	Nasim	Student should play an active role; cooperative learning; encourage learners to engage (CCOT)	Balancing teacher-centred and a student-centred learning environment (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Atena	learner-centred approach enhances the students' learning; students should share ideas and learn from each other (CCOT)	Creating a sense of ownership over the learning; strategies for promoting and developing learner autonomy (CCOT)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Matin	Interactive teaching; teaching and learning should be towards developing learner autonomy (CCOT)	Teacher-centred (traditional) A few occasions of group or pair work activities (CCOT)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Sarah	Engage all the learners in the lesson; collaboration and group work (CCOT)	Using strategies for promoting learner autonomy; encouraging students to participate (CCOT)	Consistency
	Leila	Student's active participation; cooperative learning to motivate the students applying the learner-centred instruction to develop various skills (CCOT)	Both teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency

APPENDIX 6: C2 Teachers' belief statements and their observed practices of curriculum

	C2	Stated Beliefs	Observed Practice	Beliefs/ Practice
Grammar Teaching	Bahar	Students need to have good knowledge of grammar; both form-focused and meaning-focused instruction are important; text-based grammar teaching (mix)	Explicit presentation of grammar; de-contextualised grammar teaching; PPP teaching model (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Zoha	Grammar knowledge is as important as communicative competence; focus on grammar must be incorporated into L2 communicative instruction; grammar is best taught through natural exposure (mix)	Transmission model of teaching; using de-contextualised sentence and practising overt grammatical explanation (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Hoda	Both implicit and explicit grammar presentation; forms and accuracy are important; good grammar knowledge is necessary for communication (mix)	Explicit focus on forms; explicit discussion of grammar rules; used grammatical terminology (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
Error Correction	Bahar	Self-correction; implicit grammatical error correction; students' pronunciation errors should be corrected immediately (mix)	Self-correction (with the teacher's help); recast; error correction with a more explicit approach; correcting students' pronunciation errors (mix)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Zoha	Grammatical errors should be corrected in an implicit way; peer correction might discourage confidence; encourage self-correction; students' mistakes should be corrected (mix)	Repeat error with questioning intonation/facial expression; no self-correction; on-the-spot correction and explaining grammar rules (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Hoda	Errors should be corrected as soon as they are made; identify all students' errors; not correcting grammatical errors could lead to fossilization (traditional)	Frequently corrected all types of students' errors; (traditional)	Consistency
Use of L1	Bahar	Students should get the message, no matter in English or in Farsi; use English for communication (mix)	L1 use very often in explaining grammar (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Zoha	The use of L1 to facilitates the teaching of grammar; more use of English for communication (mix)	Use of L1 to explain grammar rules (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Hoda	Using L1 is easier for the teacher; use of L1 is useful for the students to understand grammar better (traditional)	L1 was the dominant language of interaction; extensive use of L1 (Farsi) in the classroom (traditional)	Consistency

Contd. C2 Teachers' belief statements and observed practices

	(C2)	Stated Beliefs	Observed Practice	Beliefs/ Practices
Teacher's Role	Bahar	Teacher's primary role is to motivate students (CCOT); the teacher is facilitator, controller and responsible for clarification and knowledge transfer, and leader (mix)	Teacher planned all activities; act as a controller and instructor; (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Zoha	A teacher's role is to make a class interesting to motivate students (CCOT); The teacher is responsible for teaching/learning (traditional); directing and guiding the students; organiser (mix)	Controller, using the lecture method; No emphasis on encouraging or motivating students to practise (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Hoda	The primary role of the teacher was to transmit knowledge; authority; coach; controller (traditional)	Act as a controller and instructor (traditional)	Consistency
Learner-Centred Teaching	Bahar	Students should play an active role; Integration of both learner-centred and teacher-centred ways of teaching (mix)	Students had limited opportunities for interaction; classroom control (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Zoha	Students' learning is teachers' main responsibility; engagement in the English classroom; interactive learner-centred learning (mix)	No attempt to develop critical thinking; no reference to interactive learner-centred learning (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency
	Hoda	The teacher is responsible for teaching/learning; both learner-centred and teacher-centred teaching (mix)	Controlled all the activities and the students' behaviour; Students listen and obey (traditional)	Inconsistency/ consistency

APPENDIX 7: Example of an Excerpt from Stimulated-Recall

Interview

(Zoha- First stimulated recall interview)

Researcher: I noticed that you used various methods to explain the word 'Sailor' to students but they did not understand it. Then you used Farsi to explain the meaning of the word. Why did you do that?

Zoha: Yeah, I think it depends on the time actually. When I have time, I explain a difficult in different ways in English. But when I do not have time, I explain in Farsi. I think sometimes there is no need to spend lots of time on trying to explain the meaning of a word as it would be wasting time.

Researcher: Yeah. What about here in this sentence [In the countries, some monkeys work on the farm as farm hands], you corrected it explicitly?

Zoha: Here, because I wanted to draw all the students' attention to the error, in this way, students will pay attention to what is happening in the class. This error shows the student's lack of grammar knowledge, so I have to correct it immediately. Otherwise, these kinds of errors will accumulate.

Researcher: Aha. You mean the error stays with them if it is not corrected?

Zoha: Yeah, once the students have recognised the error, and I have corrected it, it is necessary to repeat the rules once more; otherwise, they will repeat the error.

Researcher: You were doing a very detailed grammar lesson, using a lot of metalanguage and involving nothing except explanation and drilling.

Zoha: I know that this is not the best way to teach.

Researcher: But why do you teach that way if you feel that this is not the way you prefer to teach?

Zoha: They have to be ready for the exam and this is the quickest way to do it. So I have to constantly tell them what to do and explaining everything over and over again.

APPENDIX 8: Examples of Coding the Pre-active Interview Data

Teacher: Nasim

<p>Predefined Categories:</p> <p>Teacher beliefs about grammar teaching</p> <p>Teacher beliefs about error correction</p> <p>Teacher beliefs about use of L1 teaching</p> <p>Teacher beliefs about teacher's role</p> <p>Teacher beliefs about learner-centred teaching</p>

Transcription	Codes
<p>R: What do you recall about your experiences learning English at secondary school? Can you give me an example of a good language teacher that you had? What did you like about her teaching methods?</p> <p>N: I really loved my English teacher at junior high school. I loved her character. She used to teach very nicely - her way of teaching was very good - she used to explain everything clearly and use the blackboard well. She motivated me to learn English. She was so kind. This interest stayed with me until high school. Although, I didn't like very much my teachers in senior high school, I think that the love of my first English teacher stayed with me and I believe it affected my decision to study English at the university and at last I became an English teacher.</p>	<p>Experience of language learning as student</p> <p>secondary schooling experience as a negative model</p>
<p>R: Could you describe your English class when you were a student at secondary school? What was the teaching like?</p> <p>N: It was a normal class, with mixed ability students in a senior high school. The teachers only taught based on the textbook. They were teaching in a traditional way, for example, teaching grammar explicitly, and using Farsi to explain everything, like translating every sentence. So I went to private institute because English lessons at school were very simple to me. I couldn't learn a lot from school. The teacher took up a lot of the time with classroom management; the class was boring for me. But, the teacher taught grammar and pronunciation very well, so I think it built the foundations of my grammar and pronunciation. I learnt other skills, such as speaking and listening from my private lessons.</p>	<p>Traditional language teaching</p> <p>Apprenticeship of observation</p>
<p>R: Tell me about your formal pre- or in-service teacher training experiences. How does your professional training influence your teaching practice?</p> <p>N: I think professional training is necessary, but nowadays the MOE's programmes do not always meet my needs. For teachers like me who have taught for many years, we can handle classes very well. What I need is more active and fun teaching, with some teachers sharing their experiences, tips of teaching the four skills, grouping, awarding, etc.</p>	<p>The need for professional teacher training</p> <p>Creating enjoyable atmosphere</p> <p>Teacher collaboration</p>

<p>R: So you would be willing to attend under those circumstances? N: Yes, I am willing to attend sessions where other experienced teachers share some information, experience and tips. As teachers we need to sit and discuss things together, but usually there is no time for us. But when you attend these kinds of in-service trainings, they don't provide you with sufficient knowledge how to conduct the class. I think apart from training, we teachers should be given some trial period before we started any reform. I believe at first the ministry or the department should give us some trial period maybe six months...conduct the training, so we have the trial, we can try the skill. Then we can gather back and give them some of our experience, reflections on what we have done. Then we can start with the improved one.</p>	<p>Teacher collaboration</p> <p>Professional development</p>
<p>R: So do you think that the way the training was conducted was not effective? N: Yes. There was so many input in a very little time...everything was cramped in a short training course. I think it should be a hands-on experience for the teachers to try to use the ideas of the reform first. So instead of a one or a two days training where you explain what and how, there should be a progressive one...professional development, an extra trainings because as teachers we need to reflect on how we feel and to give somebody our input. It's now like you are left just like that and you yourself have no idea whether you are doing the right thing or not...whether you are doing what the curriculum required you to do.</p>	<p>Inadequate teacher training program</p> <p>Professional development</p>
<p>R: Please tell me which aspect of English as a subject do you think is the most important for secondary school students to learn? N: I think to get them interested in English, basic communication abilities, and grammar concepts. I think teachers should have sense of humour and let students have some fun in order to make them like English. So, they have to enjoy the lesson first. In addition, negotiating and deciding on teaching activities together with the students make them enjoy learning English.</p>	<p>Making teaching interesting</p> <p>Make active and enjoyable atmosphere</p>
<p>R: What kind of teaching method/activities do you believe best helps students to achieve the mastery of English? N: I prefer collaborative types of activities for developing both linguistic and communicative skills in my students.</p>	<p>Collaborative activities</p>
<p>R: Based on your teaching experience, what do you find is the best way to help students master the grammatical system of English? What do you think about the role of explicit grammar instruction? N: In my opinion traditional teaching method focuses on grammar rules and disregards the needs of the students to use these rules in real contexts. I prefer not to teach grammar in a traditional way that focuses on theory and repetitive practice, like the way some of my teachers used to teach in my secondary school. I believe grammar should be taught in context with the help of real-life examples and communicative activities. So I think if I use too much grammar explanation or grammatical terminology, it would simply make the learning experience</p>	<p>Students needs</p> <p>Avoid traditional grammar teaching</p> <p>Contextualised grammar teaching</p> <p>Avoiding too much grammar explanation</p>

tedious for students.

R: I see. So what do you think is the best way to teach grammar?

N: You know there is a **gap between students' levels** in our classes. Therefore, sometimes I **have to follow form-focused instruction and explain grammar in Farsi**. I think the **form and forms are both important** so I'd **mix them because students have to be prepared for the exams**.

R: What is your philosophy about error correction?

N: I think **errors are natural** in the process of language learning and I usually **ignore students' errors in their oral practice** and teachers should be **tolerant towards learners' errors** if they could make themselves understood. Previously **I used to correct student's grammatical errors directly**, but then I decided to **correct their errors by repeating the correct ones without telling them explicitly** what is wrong. I believe if we **allow the conversation flow without error correction, it pulls the students out of their shell and lets them communicate**.

R: What kind of errors do you correct, how and when?

N: As I said, I used to correct student's grammatical errors directly earlier in my career, but later I decided to **correct their errors by just repeating the correct ones**. When I feel that **error correction** is going to hinder them, or it's going to make them **feel less confident**, or it's going to **make them worry about making mistakes**, then I hold back. I think we should let the conversation flow and we should **not correct their errors**. **I think this is the best way, to correct students' grammatical errors in an implicit way**.

R: How do you do that?

N: From my personal opinion, the most important factors to consider when providing error correction are the **students' personalities and level of communicative ability**. **I usually try to pay careful attention to balancing the students' confidence level and the frequency of error correction**. **I try to avoid excessive correction** because I want my students to feel relaxed and free and confident in their speaking.

R: You mean for you fluency is more important than accuracy?

N: Based on my personal experience, if I want to conduct an activity to liven up the classroom atmosphere or **to motivate the students to speak, I would focus on fluency**. **But I can say that the proportion of fluency and accuracy is determined by the purpose of the activity**. I know that the communicative approach stresses language fluency. So, I primarily **focus on fluency to promote students' motivation**.

R: Based on your experiences as a teacher, what do you think about the use of L1 (Farsi)?

N: I think that **English should dominate classroom interaction** when teaching English. I always **encourage groups to discuss**,

Students' mixed level

Focus on form & forms

Exam preparation

Errors are natural

Ignoring students' errors

Implicit error correction

Motivation

Increasing students confidence

Implicit error correction

Increasing students confidence

Avoiding excessive correction

Focus on fluency to motivate students

Importance of fluency

Encouraging L1 use for interaction

<p>using as much English as possible. I prefer not to use Farsi and always try to teach English through English and encourage my students to speak English to get use to it. I will let them to talk, to speak, to use the language. But I need to keep reminding them don't speak Farsi. Some students don't speak English or they speak very quietly, very passive. I think being passive is the biggest problem.</p>	<p>More use of target language</p> <p>Passive students</p>
<p>R: In what activities they are going to use their first language? N: Maybe some sort of like role-play, group discussion. I give them some space to speak Farsi but I always tell them everything must be in English.</p>	<p>Encouraging group activity</p> <p>Minimum use of L1</p>
<p>R: How do you describe your role in the classroom as an EFL teacher? N: I think teachers should have facilitating role which means involving students and participating in their learning activities. I consider myself as a facilitator of students' learning, giving them the tools that help them learn. I can say that my role is like an advisor and I think when I put students in groups, it makes them work together in a community with the social interaction roles. Then in case of any problem, as an advisor, I can help them. I think that a good language teacher should be first a guide for the students and then act as a helper.</p>	<p>Facilitating role</p> <p>Students collaboration</p> <p>Teacher as a guide and helper</p>
<p>R: What do you think is the role of the students in your English class? N: The classroom should be a comfortable environment for the students in which they can freely behave without hesitation. Students should be active and independent. They should be responsible for and take decisions about their own learning. If students could do this, I can say that their self-confidence in learning would increase. I think teachers should let students have some fun in order to make them like English. Using interesting activities in the classroom is one way to create motivation.</p>	<p>Creating comfortable atmosphere</p> <p>Giving learners responsibility</p> <p>Motivating student</p> <p>Creating enjoyable atmosphere</p>
<p>R: How far can you adopt these roles in your classrooms? N: In the current classrooms, I try to adopt these roles, but I don't know if I was successful. You know students got used to the traditional roles in which teacher gives, learners take. I'm not the traditional type of teacher and I try to help my students develop their language abilities. I want my class to have a team like atmosphere. I think over these years of experience, I have developed a kind of less severe- more kindly approach in managing the classroom and giving responsibility to students.</p>	<p>Developing Student's language ability</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Learners responsibility</p>
<p>R: You talked about motivation, what do you do to motivate your students? N: I am sure having a sense of humour, giving supportive feedback, and building a good relationship increase the students' motivation. I think learning will be more fun when you yourself...not only the students will enjoy the lessons but you as a teacher will enjoy the lessons too when you use something that</p>	<p>Creating enjoyable atmosphere</p>

you are very interested in. You know, when the class is against the **students' interest**, they will not follow the lesson after a while and then their minds go elsewhere out of the class. So, I try to retain their attention and look for something that would **make them interested in the topic.**

Students' interest

R: What do you think about teacher-centred and learner-centred teaching?

N: Teaching has to be **interactive, learner-centred and involve active learning. I think learner-centred is the best.** It can **enhance students' confidence** which is essential in the **development of students' communicative competence.** Instruction should be in a way that **students solve problems together, complete tasks, learn from each other and collaborate with each other.** It should be that way for the **students to be eager to learn, to have high motivation,** and not to expect everything from the teacher. I believe that the students can **learn better when the teacher encourages them to speak and engage with the activities.**

Increasing students confidence

collaboration and group work

Motivation

Encouraging learners to engage

R: How do you describe the current teaching approach you use in the classroom? For example, teacher-centred, student-centred, communicative, etc.

N: Well, actually **according to the curriculum we should teach based on learner-centred teaching.** I myself **prefer learner-centred teaching,** but in practice we cannot implement it, sometimes because of the **large number of the students** and also the **different level of the students.** But I have always **tried to have a learner-centred class.** You know students are different. It's very hard to use the active learning and learner centred approach because **they are dependent on teachers.** Some students are very active, they are eager to learn, but some are not. We have to **encourage them to participate in class.**

Creating learner-centred classroom

Students' mixed level

Encouraging dependent students

R: You mean because of passive students you cannot apply learner-centred teaching?

N: Of course, we have some passive students too. I try to involve them. I try to attract them by using various activities and by giving tasks. But we **need to train our students at the very beginning** to get used to it. We have to **start from the primary school** because our **students like getting everything from the teachers.** That's why **when we are doing active learning** and learner-centred teaching in the classroom, they make too much noise. They should **lean to be active participant and be independent learner.**

Engaging passive students

Developing learner autonomy

Students active participation

APPENDIX 9: Demonstration of Coding – Theme: ‘The need to prioritise fluency over accuracy’

Data	Code	Category	Sub-Theme	Theme
<p><i>‘When the students are trying to express their ideas, it would be better not to stop them from making themselves clear. In this situation, the teacher should put emphasis on fluency over accuracy.’ (SPI: 36)</i></p>	<p>Emphasis on fluency</p> <p>Focus of fluency over accuracy</p>	<p>Focus on fluency over accuracy</p>	<p>The need to prioritise fluency over accuracy</p>	<p>Approaches to Error Correction</p>
<p><i>‘The teacher should pay attention to the meaning the students try to convey. For example, when they are talking about their favourable food, I focus on their discussion of food, not the linguistic forms of the sentence they produced.’ (MPI: 36)</i></p>	<p>Meaning is more important than accuracy</p>			
<p><i>‘To over-correct inhibits students and they lose fluency. Based on my experience, I think too much stress on accuracy affects the students’ speaking because they are afraid of making mistakes. I usually pay less attention to accuracy and I focus fluency on developing speaking skills.’ (MPI: 34)</i></p>	<p>Avoiding over-correction</p> <p>Paying less attention to accuracy</p> <p>Developing speaking skills</p>			
<p><i>‘Based on my personal experience, if I want to conduct an activity to liven up the classroom atmosphere or to motivate the students to speak, I would focus on fluency. But I can say that the proportion of fluency and accuracy is determined by the purpose of the activity.’ (NPI: 40)</i></p>	<p>Focus on fluency to motivate students</p>	<p>Importance of fluency to motivate students</p>		
<p><i>‘Based on my experience, I don’t correct the students’ errors when they are doing communicative activities because I don’t want to interrupt them or discourage them. I would assess their errors and remind them of the errors after the activities.’ (API: 38)</i></p>	<p>Focus on accuracy discourages students</p>			

APPENDIX 10: Demonstration of Coding – Theme: ‘Contextual Factors’

Codes	Categories	Sub-Themes	Theme
Personal preferences	Teacher-related factors	Classroom context factors	Contextual factors influencing teachers’ beliefs and practices
Teaching preparation			
Teacher/student relationship			
Lack of reform experience			
Student proficiency level	Students-related factors		
Individual differences			
Students’ needs and expectations			
Classroom management			
Time constraints	Workplace conditions		
Large student number			
Traditional classroom layout			
The textbooks and supplementary books			
In-service training	School requirements	School context factors	
Teachers’ collaboration			
The examinations	Educational policies	Policy context factors	
The curriculum			
Lack of EFL environment	Social setting		

APPENDIX 11: Sample of Lesson Observation Transcription

Teacher: Matin

Time: 9: 30-10:45

School: D

Grade: 2rd

Code: T: Teacher; Ss: Students; sentences in *italics* are my translation when the teacher or students speak Farsi, [] square bracket means the explanation of the event, ... inaudible or omitted words.

T: So how's everything today? Do we have absent today?

Ss: Nobody.

T: Let's begin with our new lesson today. Please, one of you read the paragraph and the other pay attention, and if you think it is necessary I explain the meaning of the word or expression to you, let me know. Ok, please read it aloud. Everybody could hear you. Look at the heading 'The value of the education'. Some of the benefits that your education can provide as well as the joy it can bring to each of us. You know the meaning of benefit. Benefit means?

Ss: advantageous.

T: Yes, advantageous. And also you know the meaning of 'provide'. Provide?

S1: Give.

T: Yes, give. What's the meaning of 'as well as' in this sentence?

Ss: And, also.

T: Yes, very good, 'and', 'also', and you know the meaning of the joy.

S2: Happiness.

T: Yes, so, as you know we have a lot of reasons, but here I have gathered just 10 reasons in order to know that why we should be educated. S4, please, read paragraph number 1.

[Student reads paragraph No.1]

T: I am going to mention the meaning of some of the word before talking about this paragraph. Many employers... what's the meaning of employer?

Ss: Work.

T: Yes. You know we have employer as a verb and we have employment, employer and employee, all of them are nouns. 'employment' (in Farsi) < *employment* >. Or we can say Job, (in Farsi) < *Job* >. Two different names. Employer as she said a

person tries to employ. (in Farsi) < *employee*>, and employee, for example I am an employee,...

S4: (in Farsi) < *employee*>.

T: Yes, (in Farsi) < *employee*>. So then we have the word 'require'. You know the meaning of 'require'.

S5: Need.

T: Yes, need. What's the meaning of 'fulfil'?

S6: Carry out.

T: Yes, carry out or complete or do. 'Certain' here means? Here it means specific.

S: Needs

T: Yes, needs. And what's the meaning of 'hire'?

Ss: Rent

T: No, not here. It means rent, but here you should say that it means 'employ', you can say it is the opposite of 'fire'. What is the meaning of 'fire'?

Ss: (in Farsi) < *fire*>.

T: Yes, exactly; hire and fire. And now 'training'?

Ss: Teaching.

T: Yes.... 'in order to', what's the meaning of 'in order to'?

Ss: To.

T: Yes, exactly, 'To', or you can say 'so as to', (in Farsi) < *in order to*>. Progress through your carrier. What does 'progress' means?

S: Improvement.

T: Yes, 'Improvement', 'become better'. So one of you tell me the main idea just in one sentence (in Farsi) < *What does this paragraph wants to say*>?

S7: If you want to have a good career you should have a high education.

T: Yes, exactly, higher education, higher job, clap for her, thank you very much very good Samin, thank you. Ok, paragraph number 2. No question about this paragraph.

Ss: No.

APPENDIX12: Example of Coding Lesson Observation Transcript

Pre-defined Categories:

Grammar teaching; Error correction; Use of L1 teaching

Teacher's role; Learner-centred teaching

Transcription	Codes	Field notes
<p>T: If you remember from last session we were talking about professions. Today we want to talk about why we should educate. For example, I want to be educated, what should I do? I should read, study educational books or I should listen to educational CDs, or I should watch educational films. So can you tell me what your aim is? Why do you want to be educated? What's your aim of education?</p> <p>S1: I have always want to be an astronaut.</p> <p>T: Wanted to be an astronaut? You should say I have always 'wanted' to be or become an astronaut. Ok what else?</p> <p>S2: I want to be engineer.</p> <p>T: Be an engineer. (In Farsi) < Don't forget to put 'an' before engineer. > Don't forget an article. Ok, you want to be an engineer. Do you want to be an engineer because other people in the society look at you and tell you: (In Farsi) < Miss Engineer ></p> <p>S2: I want help people and building tower and make our city beautiful.</p> <p>T: To help. You should say 'I want to help'...and 'build' not 'building'...</p>	<p>Building and referring to previous learning</p> <p>Explicit error correction</p> <p>Explicit grammar instruction</p> <p>She explains the activity in Farsi and then in English</p> <p>Use of Metalanguage</p> <p>Explicit error correction</p>	<p>The lesson is very much teacher-led.</p> <p>All activities to be presented to the students, who complete tasks.</p> <p>The teacher so far has made extensive use of L1 to translate the TL.</p> <p>A lot of instructions in L1 on every aspect of the lesson.</p> <p>She is providing students with vocabulary. She is also correcting student's spelling and pronunciation.</p> <p>Teacher writing on the board: Your homework?</p>

APPENDIX 13: Example of Coding Stimulated Recall Interview

Transcript	Code
<p>Researcher: I noticed that you used various methods to explain the word ‘Sailor’ to students but they did not understand it. Then you used Farsi to explain the meaning of the word. Why did you do that?</p>	
<p>Zoha: Yeah, I think it depends on the time actually. When I have time, I explain a difficult in different ways in English. But when I do not have time, I explain in Farsi. I think sometimes there is no need to spend lots of time on trying to explain the meaning of a word as it would be wasting time.</p>	<p>Time limitation</p> <p>Use L1 to explain words</p>
<p>Researcher: Yeah. What about here in this sentence [In the countries, some monkeys work on the farm as farm hands], you corrected it explicitly?</p>	
<p>Zoha: Here, because I wanted to draw all the students’ attention to the error, in this way, students will pay attention to what is happening in the class. This error shows the student’s lack of grammar knowledge, so I have to correct it immediately. Otherwise, these kinds of errors will accumulate.</p>	<p>Instant errors correction</p> <p>lack of grammar knowledge</p>
<p>Researcher: Aha. You mean the error stays with them if it is not corrected?</p>	
<p>Zoha: Yeah, once the students have recognised the error, and I have corrected it, it is necessary to repeat the rules once more; otherwise, they will repeat the error.</p>	<p>Error should be corrected</p> <p>Reviewing grammar rules</p>
<p>Researcher: You were doing a very detailed grammar lesson, using a lot of metalanguage and involving nothing except explanation and drilling.</p>	
<p>Zoha: I know that this is not the best way to teach. But this is what the students want me to do. Explaining all the grammar point.</p>	<p>Students’ expectation</p> <p>Explicit grammar instruction</p>
<p>Researcher: But why do you teach that way if you feel that this is not the way you prefer to teach?</p>	
<p>Zoha: They have to be ready for the exam and this is the quickest way to do it. So I have to constantly tell them what to do and explaining everything over and over again.</p>	<p>The role of exam</p>

