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EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

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TEACHER STUDY GROUPS AS A MODEL OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TERTIARY LEVEL EFL TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

SERHAT BAŞAR

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DANIŞMAN
Prof. Dr. Hatice İrem Çomoğlu

İzmir

2023

ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ

Doktora tezi olarak sunduğum "Teacher Study Groups As a Model of Contınuous Professıonal Development for Tertıary Level EFL Teachers: A Case Study" adlı çalışmanın içerdiği fikri izinsiz başka bir yerden almadığımı; çalışmamın hazırlık, veri toplama, analiz ve bilgilerin sunumu olmak üzere tüm aşamalarında ve bölümlerinin yazımında bilimsel etik ilke ve kurallara uygun davrandığımı, tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanan bu çalışmada kullanılan her türlü kaynağa eksiksiz atıf yaptığımı ve bu kaynaklara kaynakçada yer verdiğimi, ayrıca bu çalışmanın Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi tarafından kullanılan bilimsel intihal tespit programıyla tarandığını ve *intihal içermediğini* beyan ederim. Herhangi bir zamanda aksinin ortaya çıkması durumunda her türlü yasal sonuca razı olduğumu bildiririm.

26/12/2023

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ÖZET ix
ABSTRACT xi
CHAPTER I 1
INTRODUCTION 1
1.1. Statement of the Problem 1
1.2. Significance and Purpose of the study 4
1.3. Research Questions 7
1.4. Limitations 7
1.5. Assumptions 8
1.6. Definitions of Terms 9
CHAPTER II 11
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW 11
2.1. Theoretical Framework 11
2.1.1. Sociocultural Theory 11
2.1.1.1. Zone of Proximal Development in Relation to Teacher Education 12
2.1.1.2. Mediation in Relation to Teacher Education 13
2.1.1.3. Obuchenie, Perezhivanie, and Growth Points in Relation to Teacher Education 16
2.1.1.4. Interthinking and the Intermental Development Zone in Relation to Teacher Education 17
2.1.1.5. Objectives of a Teacher Education Based on Sociocultural Perspective for Teachers 18
2.1.1.6. Tools for a Sociocultural Teacher Education 23
2.1.2. Critical Pedagogy 26
2.1.2.1. The Rationale Behind Critical Teacher Education 27

2.1.2.2. Objectives of a Teacher Education Based on Critical Pedagogy for Teachers 30
2.1.2.3. Tools for a Critical Teacher Education 36
2.2. Literature Review 39
2.2.1. Teacher Professional Development 39
2.2.2. EFL Teachers' PD Needs and Expectations 41
2.2.3. Teacher Professional Development Policies in Türkiye 44
2.2.4. Teacher Collaboration and Teacher Study Groups 46
2.2.5. A Review of Previous Research On Teacher Study Groups and Teacher Collaboration 52
2.2.6. TSG Tools 58
2.2.6.1. Action Research (AR) 59
2.2.6.2. Reflective Practice 65
2.2.6.3. The Place of Technology in Language Teacher Professional Development 68
2.2.7. Summary 70
CHAPTER III 71
METHODOLOGY 71
3.1. Research Design 71
3.1.1. Qualitative research paradigm 71
3.1.2. Researcher's personal stance 76
3.1.3. Research methodology: Case study 77
3.1.4. Ethical concerns 79
3.1.5. Researcher's reflexivity and positioning 80
3.1.6. Credibility and Validity 83
3.2. Research Context 85
3.2.1. Macro-level context (Türkiye) 85

3.2.2. Meso-level context (University) 87
3.2.3. Micro-level context (Research site: School of Foreign Languages) 88
3.3. Participants 89
3.4. Research and Data Collection Process 93
3.5. Data Collection Tools 96
3.5.2. Field notes 98
3.5.3. Semi-structured interviews 98
3.5.4. Stimulated recalls 99
3.5.5. Reflective teacher journals 100
3.5.6. Researcher journal 100
3.5.7. Online discussion board 101
3.6. Data Analysis 101
CHAPTER IV 105
FINDINGS 105
4.1. Teachers' background and PD perspectives before the TSG program 105
4.1.1. Inadequate pre-service teacher education 106
4.1.2. Learner-centred teaching 108
4.1.3. Inadequate institutional PD 111
4.1.4. Practice -oriented collaborative PD expectations 114
4.2. The TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective 117
4.2.1. Forming true concepts through mediation means 117
4.2.2. Developing the teacher self through knowledge generation 123
4.2.3. Developing a critical stance toward the teacher self through reflective practice 126
4.2.4. Collaborative professional learning through inter-thinking 128
4.2.5. Teacher wellbeing: Transformation from interpsychological to intrapsychological form 132

4.3. The TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective 135
4.3.1. Teacher empowerment through critical tools 136
4.3.2. Learner empowerment through transformed pedagogies 141
4.3.3. Transformed PD perspectives 147
4.3.4. Social change: Projections for sustainability and impediments 152
CHAPTER V 160
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS 160
5.1. Discussion 160
5.1.1. How do TSG teachers describe their current teaching philosophies, PD perspectives, and expectations? 160
5.1.2. What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective? 166
5.1.3. What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective? 176
5.1.4. The Place of the TSG in Light of Previous Studies 189
5.1.4.1. The discussion of the TSG in relation to other collaborative teacher groups 189
5.1.4.2. The discussion of the TSG in relation to other TSGs 192
5.1.4.3. The unique role of the TSG case 199
5.2. Conclusion and Implications 205
REFERENCES 213
APPENDICES 254
APPENDIX 1. 254
APPENDIX 2. 256
APPENDIX 3. 258
APPENDIX 4. 259
APPENDIX 5. 260
APPENDIX 6. 261

APPENDIX 7. 263
APPENDIX 8. 265
APPENDIX 9. 270
APPENDIX 10. 271
APPENDIX 11. 272

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Demographic and academic profiles of the TSG members…….91

Table 2 Timeline for TSG process……..94

Table 3 Summary of data collection methods and methodological aims of the use…96

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Objectives of a teacher education based on sociocultural perspective for teachers……...18

Figure 2. Tools for a sociocultural teacher education…….23

Figure 3. Objectives of a teacher education based on critical pedagogy for teachers..30

Figure 4. Tools for a critical teacher education……36

Figure 5. Overview of the theoretical frameworks and takeaways of the TSG……...205

ÖZET

YÜKSEKÖĞRETİM KURUMLARINDAKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN SÜREKLİ MESLEKİ GELİŞİMİ İÇİN BİR MODEL OLARAK ÖĞRETMEN ÇALIŞMA GRUPLARI: BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

Günümüzün sürekli gelişen eğitim ekosistemlerinin koşullarına, öğretmenlerin inanışlarının, bilgilerinin ve bilişlerinin karmaşıklığına ve mesleki gelişimlerine (MG) yönelik teorik ve pratik ihtiyaçlara rağmen, İngilizce öğretmenlerine yaşam boyu ve sürdürülebilir öğrenme perspektifleri kazandırabilecek işbirliğine dayalı ve dönüştürücü MG programlarına dahil olmaları için yeterli fırsatlar sunulmamaktadır. Kısa vadeli/tek seferlik MG etkinliklerinin bağlamdan arındırılmış doğası yabancı dil öğretmenleri için bağlamsal ve sürdürülebilir öğrenme yollarına yer vermediğinden, bu çalışma hizmet içi İngilizce öğretmenlerinin gelişimini ve güçlendirilmesini teşvik etmek için işbirliğine dayalı, araştırmaya yönelik ve yansıtıcı uygulamalara öncelik veren bir sürekli mesleki gelişim (SMG) programı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu anlamda, sosyokültürel teori (SKT) ve eleştirel pedagoji (EP) ile desteklenen mevcut çalışma, bir SMG aracı olarak öğretmen çalışma grubunun (ÖÇG) yükseköğretim İngilizce öğretmenleri tarafından nasıl uygulandığını araştırmayı ve bir dönemlik mesleki gelişim programı boyunca ÖÇG bünyesinde gerçekleştirilen eylem araştırması (EA), öğretmen işbirliği ve yansıtıcı uygulamalara ilişkin içgörüler sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. ÖÇG'yi işbirliğine dayalı ve özgürleştirici bir aşağıdan yukarıya SMG modeli olarak kullanan bu çalışma aynı zamanda (1) öğretmenlerin mevcut pedagojileri ve MG perspektifleri ışığında programa ilişkin görüşlerini, (2) SKT ve (3) EP perspektiflerinden programın çıkarımlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu tezde, nitel bir araştırma paradigması benimsenmiş ve araştırma tasarımı için nitel bir içsel durum çalışması kullanılmıştır. Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinin yabancı diller yüksekokulundan yükseköğretim düzeyindeki altı İngilizce öğretmeni bu çalışmaya katılmaya gönüllü olmuştur. Araştırma 2021-2022 eğitim-öğretim yılının bahar döneminde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, gözlem alan notları, uyarılmış geri çağırmalar, ÖÇG toplantılarının video kayıtları, yansıtıcı günlükler, araştırmacı günlüğü ve çalışma materyalleri gibi çeşitli yöntemlerle elde edilmiş ve veri analizi için sürekli karşılaştırmalı yöntem kullanılmıştır. Katılımcılarla, pedagojilerini, ihtiyaçlarını ve MG programından beklentilerini incelemek için görüşmeler yapılıp ve onlara SKT, EP ve EA ile

ilgili teorik okuma metinleri verilmiştir. ÖÇG süreci, okumalar üzerine tartışmalarla başlayıp, ardından sınıf uygulamaları ve EA planları üzerinde iş birliği yapmak üzere düzenli ÖÇG toplantıları ve uzman konuşmaları dizisi ile devam etmiştir. Program, ÖÇG öğretmenlerinin EA projelerini üniversitenin diğer paydaşlarıyla yaygınlaştırdığı EA semineri etkinliğiyle sona ermiştir.

Çalışma bulguları göstermiştir ki, (1) daha önceki hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi eğitim uygulamalarının öğrenci ve öğretmen otonomisini engelleyen yetersizliği göz önüne alındığında, ÖÇG öğretmenlerin ihtiyaç ve beklentilerini karşılamada uyumlu bir model işlevi görmüş, (2) MG programının sosyokültürel tasarımı, öğretmenlerin bilgi üretmek, yansıtıcı düşünmek ve işbirliği yapmak için aracılık uygulamaları yoluyla gerçek kavramları, öğretmen benliğini, eleştirel duruşunu, karşılıklı düşünme uygulamalarını ve öğretmen zindeliğini geliştirmelerine olanak tanıyan sosyal öğrenme ortamları sağlamış, (3) ÖÇG'ye entegre edilen eleştirel boyut öğretmenler ve öğrencileri güçlendirmiş, MG perspektiflerini ve pedagojilerini dönüştürmüş ve bilgi üretmek, işbirliği yapmak ve kimlikleri yeniden inşa etmek için özgürleştirici araçlar sunarak sosyal değişim için potansiyeller yaratmıştır. Öğretmenlerin kararlılığını engelleyen kurumsal ve ulusal faktörlerden kaynaklanan zorluklara rağmen, onların mesleki dayanışması ve acil ihtiyaçlarına yönelik proaktif tepkisel arabuluculuk, çalışma boyunca kavramsal öğrenmeye, teorik zenginleşmeye ve öğretmen zindeliğine katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu bulguların ışığında, yükseköğretim düzeyinde çalışan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin mesleki gelişimi için çıkarımlar ve gelecekteki araştırma önerileri tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Öğretmen çalışma grubu, eylem araştırması, İngilizce öğretmenleri, mesleki gelişim, sosyokültürel teori, eleştirel pedagoji.

ABSTRACT

TEACHER STUDY GROUPS AS A MODEL OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TERTIARY LEVEL EFL TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

Despite today's ever-evolving conditions of educational ecosystems, the complexity of teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and cognition, and the theoretical and practical needs for their professional development (PD), EFL teachers are not offered enough opportunities to get involved in collaborative and transformative PD programs that can equip teachers with lifelong and sustainable learning perspectives. As the decontextualized nature of short-term/one-shot PD activities does not lead to contextual and sustainable learning trajectories for EFL teachers, this study intends to offer a continuous professional development (CPD) program prioritizing collaborative, inquiry-oriented, and reflective practices to promote the development and empowerment of in-service EFL teachers.

In this sense, the current study, informed by sociocultural theory (SCT) and critical pedagogy (CP), aims to investigate how teacher study group (TSG) as a CPD tool is practised by tertiary-level EFL teachers and provide insights into the practices of action research (AR), teacher collaboration, and reflection, carried out within the TSG throughout one – semester PD program. Using the TSG as a collaborative and emancipatory bottom-up CPD model, this study also seeks to investigate (1) the teachers' insights into the program in light of their existing pedagogies/PD perspectives and takeaways of the program from the (2) SCT, and (3) CP perspectives.

In this dissertation, a qualitative research paradigm is adopted, and a qualitative intrinsic case study is utilized for the research design. Six tertiary-level EFL teachers from the school of foreign languages at a state university in Türkiye volunteered to participate in this study. The study was conducted in the spring term of the 2021-2022 academic year. The data were obtained through a variety of methods, including semi-structured interviews, observation field notes, stimulated recalls, video recordings of TSG meetings, reflective journals, and researcher's journal, and constant comparative method was utilized for the data analysis. After the interviews were conducted to examine the participant teachers' pedagogies, needs, and expectations from the PD program, they were assigned theoretical readings on SCT, CP, and AR. The TSG process started with discussions on the readings, followed by regular TSG

meetings and expert talk series to collaborate on classroom practices and AR plans, which was finalized with the AR seminar event where the TSG teachers disseminated their AR projects with other university stakeholders.

The findings revealed that (1) the TSG functioned as a compatible model to meet the needs and expectations of the teachers considering the insufficiency of previous pre-service and in-service education practices hindering learner and teacher autonomy, (2) the sociocultural design of this PD program provided social learning environments enabling the teachers to develop true concepts, teacher self, critical stance, inter-thinking practices and teacher wellbeing through mediational practices to generate knowledge, reflect and collaborate, (3) the critical dimension integrated into the TSG empowered teachers and learners, transformed PD perspectives and pedagogies, and created potentialities for social change by offering the emancipatory tools to generate knowledge, collaborate, and reconstruct identities. Despite the impediments stemming from institutional and national factors that inhibited the perseverance of the teachers, their collegiality and responsive mediation proactive to their emergent needs contributed to conceptual learning, theoretical enrichment, and teacher wellbeing throughout the study. In light of these findings, the implications and future research suggestions for tertiary-level in-service EFL teacher professional development are discussed.

Keywords: Teacher study group, action research, in-service EFL teachers, professional development, sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Tertiary-level English language instructors working at the Department of School of Foreign Languages at a variety of private or state universities in Türkiye have a pivotal role in language learning/teaching practices in higher education. These instructors graduate from undergraduate majors such as English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, American Culture and Literature, Linguistics and Translation and Interpretation Studies, and teach English at English preparatory or undergraduate levels. Based on today's ever-evolving dynamics and conditions, this group of professionals is expected to develop professionally in their fields and offer more effective learning and teaching opportunities to their students. For this purpose, their institutions offer some Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities.

At the same time, instructors, who can also be considered teachers, have a complex system of knowledge, belief and cognition (Borg, 2006). In relation to this reality, Teacher Study Groups (TSG), as a collaborative model based on inquiry, identify teachers' class-based problems. It enables teachers to collectively and critically review their past and present practices and acquire new approaches to transform themselves (Francis et al., 1994). TSGs aim to empower teachers by allowing them to pioneer instructional, social, and contextual changes in their classroom practices through collaborative studies and action research practices (Little, 1984; 1990; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; 1994). TSGs, with their continuous and long-term structure, have the potential to pave the way for transformative changes by offering a perspective that could help teachers to conceptualize learning-to-teach as a life-long activity that can be integrated into everyday practices (Burns, 1999).

Even though there have been plenty of studies on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Critical Friends Groups (CFGs), which are similar in concept to TSGs, the number of studies focusing on TSGs is very limited in the field. The current studies have also focused on English teachers generally working at primary schools, high schools, and private language courses. For example, Huang (2007) found that the TSG formed by English teachers working at a high school in Taiwan contributed to teachers' Professional Development (PD). Similarly, it was noted that the TSG that Hung and Yeh (2013) formed with English teachers working in primary education in Taiwan and the TSG formed by Álvarez (2020) with English teachers working in a private language course in Colombia successfully contributed to the teachers'

PD. Likewise, a TSG consisting of English teachers studying at a state university in Colombia and working part-time at the same time made significant contributions to PD, research skills, and critical thinking (Piedrahita, 2007). Another TSG model with English teachers working at public schools in the USA yielded transformative outcomes regarding PD (Clair, 1998). Again, in the USA context, a TSG program, which was formed with non-US English teacher candidates, was found to be effective in reducing teachers' anxiety and confusion about the future (Yeh, 2005).

Considering global and national scientific publications (research articles, doctoral dissertations, and master's thesis), the originality of this study is based on the fact that it has not been studied comprehensively, neither in the world nor in our country. Searching for other studies in the literature by using the keywords "teacher study groups" and "teacher study groups" in the database of the YÖK Thesis Centre revealed that there is no doctoral dissertation similar to my current study. As for the relevant master's studies, I found a thesis by Nadire Arıkan, which was conducted to examine teachers' attitudes at the first stages of teacher study groups in 2002. However, the fact that this study is only based on the first stages of group formation and does not offer a technology-supported program for teachers as theoretical content and collaborative action research practices show that this thesis is quite different from my current study. In addition, searches made on Google Scholar and ERIC database by adding "Turkey" or "Türkiye" to the aforementioned keywords revealed that there are no similar studies in the literature, which indicates the originality of this case study in English Language Teaching within the context of Türkiye.

The rationale behind my study is categorically based on four main reasons. First, this study informs that transforming teachers' learning and teaching practices into pedagogically, contemporarily, and technologically more effective forms prominently depends on teachers' continuous professional development. This model, which is based upon an inquiry-based collaborative study enhanced with technology-mediated tools, intends to contribute to having more contemporary and context-sensitive teaching/learning practices by helping teachers reconstruct their pedagogical content knowledge, internalize their current practical knowledge based on experience with new theoretical knowledge, and transform their perspectives (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). The second reason is based on the need to support teachers to have cognitively and practically more consistent beliefs and practices by integrating their experiential knowledge into the theoretical knowledge and research in the field of English Language Teaching and bridging the gap between theory and practice (Sanchez & Borg, 2014), which can empower teachers to lead the change by re-positioning themselves in terms

of access to information, knowledge construction and instructional implications (Freire, 1970). Thirdly, this study aims to introduce this model to administrators and policymakers who have authority in language education to encourage them to implement it with institutional and/or inter-institutional cooperation and benefit from the outputs of this model in policy-making processes. Finally, this doctoral study aims to contribute to the literature to pave the way for future research in the field of CPD and teacher empowerment and increase the contextual richness in this field.

CPD is of great importance due to the difficulties experienced by the teachers in applying the theoretical knowledge acquired in pre-service English language education and the lack of theoretical knowledge of the teachers who graduated from a different department where there was no pre-service education (Atay, 2008). The fact that CPD training provided by universities is mostly traditional, knowledge transmission-based, and one-shot seminars that do not offer a long-term program (Johnson, 2009), and employment of top-down decision-making processes for CPD policies by administrators without considering the needs of teachers (Chang, 1998) make it essential to consider alternative CPD models. TSG is a bottom-up and needs-driven model (Uysal, 2012), and it is conceptualized as a process-oriented model (Crandall, 2000; Dönük, 2010) rather than a product-oriented one.

With this CPD model, teachers are expected to be able to foster their cognitive skills, such as conceptual development, reconstruction of knowledge and perspective transformations, by questioning their theoretical beliefs and instructional practices and discussing new approaches and theories with each other. Based on the collective construction of knowledge from the perspective of Sociocultural Theory (Johnson, 2009) and empowerment of disadvantaged groups within the scope of Critical Pedagogy (Freire, 1970), the TSG model has PD potential for instructors. In addition, using technology increases students' motivation and participation in the lesson by providing them with opportunities to evaluate themselves, get feedback and foster their autonomy, showing that technology is an indispensable component of teacher education (González, 2006). For this reason, this study aims to make learning and teacher practice more effective by ensuring the continuous professional development of teachers in a technology-supported way; to help teachers reconstruct their experiential knowledge with the theoretical knowledge that they can acquire through working collaboratively and getting involved in action research; to encourage alternative CPD models for higher education administrators and policymakers; and to contribute to the literature in the implementation of this model in the context of Türkiye.

1.2. Significance and Purpose of the study

The significance and purpose of the study with the potential innovations can be discussed in terms of contribution to the literature, sample selection, research method and implementation-oriented results. Besides, the theoretical significance of this study is discussed because the current study is built on two theoretical frameworks: sociocultural theory (SCT) and critical pedagogy (CP). Hence, the theoretical aspect of the study has a vital role in shaping the purpose of the study in addition to the practical innovations.

First of all, it is seen that the training models that have been used predominantly in the literature of PD and, more recently, CPD, offered to the instructors of the School of Foreign Languages (SoFL) of universities, are one-shot seminars and workshops (Aktekin, 2019). Existing PD trainings are not long-term, and it is obvious that they are insufficient and systematically lacking in promoting collaboration among teachers, meeting the professional needs of teachers, and creating opportunities for feedback (Özen, 2004; Bayrakcı, 2009). Studies on this issue mostly examine the CPD policies of these higher education institutions and the perceptions of the instructors at these institutions on the policies and training (Korkmazgil & Seferoğlu, 2013; Uysal, 2012; Uztosun, 2018). However, although some CPD activities that are process-oriented, needs-driven, inquiry and collaboration-based, and context-sensitive are conducted in some higher education contexts, they do not meet the expectations considering today's needs (Aktekin, 2019; Atay, 2008; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016; Yılmaz & Arıkan, 2019). There is a lack of data on a long-term TSG program and the outcomes of this program, which is why this study can make significant contributions to the literature on CPD.

Secondly, this study aims to contribute to the PD of instructors working at SoFL in higher education institutions through TSG, a CPD model that has yet to be studied sufficiently. This sample selection offers an opportunity for the instructors working at SoFL departments of around 200 universities in Türkiye to foster their professional growth theoretically and practically through their first-hand experiences with inquiry-oriented learning and collaboration with their peers. (Borg, 2015). This potential professional growth in learning-to-teach practices may also turn into some gains for students because it was revealed that CPD programs provided in higher education institutions are inadequate and ineffective from the perspective of teachers (Hos & Topal, 2013; Koç, 2016; Uysal, 2012). The negative attitudes are attributed to time constraints, lack of needs analysis, and top-down decision-making processes employed by administrators (Hos & Topal, 2013). From this point of view, it can be

said that this research is built on a program contemplated within the consideration of criticism against the existing PD models currently being implemented in higher education.

As mentioned earlier, another significance of this study is related to the research method planned for data collection. This TSG model lasts one academic semester and is supported by various qualitative research methods (such as observation, group discussions, semi-structured individual interviews, reflective journal writing and document analysis). In addition, it aims to explore the long-term contributions of a new model to teachers by making them the stakeholders of the process in contrast to existing CPD studies that are only based on teachers' reported needs and perceptions.

Finally, this study intends to bring a new dimension to CPD policies in higher education institutions with the aim of making active use of the inquiry-oriented and technology-supported TSG model; making it a lifelong learning and interaction tool; and offering teachers more responsibility, autonomy and active participation in learning processes. With this model, teachers are expected to build and internalize their knowledge in a collaborative way by practising the new theoretical knowledge acquired through TSG interactions and action research in the classroom atmosphere and share their action research in an event named "AR Seminar Day" at the university that was planned to be organized at the end of this process. This event is organized based on the teachers' instructional practices at their institution. AR Seminar Day event aims to inspire other instructors working at SoFL to conduct similar studies based on their academic and pedagogical work, which can lead to transformational change to bridge the gap between theory and practice. In addition, it is a technology-supported model, and implementing CPD with the help of technological tools can contribute to teachers' autonomy and collaboration skills (Kessler, 2012). Considering the role of technology-supported programs in teacher education, teachers can utilize this model to have better practice in following their students' learning progress, providing individualized feedback, and raising student autonomy (Hubbard, 2013), which is why this model can also be considered as a contemporary CPD model.

When it comes to the study's theoretical significance, the scope of this study overlaps with the English Language Teaching and Teacher Education disciplines. This study also approaches these disciplines from the perspectives of SCT (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) and CP (Freire, 1970). Considering the insufficiency of the CPD programs delivered by higher education institutions in Türkiye, this study aims to transform teachers' knowledge, learning, and teaching practices in line with their needs by providing process-oriented and lifelong learning skills (Richards & Farrell, 2005). It can be said that the study corresponds with both

English Language Teaching and Teacher Education disciplines in terms of the scope and learning outcomes because the transformation in learning/teaching practices (in addition to a conceptual development that teachers can experience through the TSG) might foster teacher education. This improvement in teacher education can be positively projected on students' learning processes.

In addition, looking at these disciplines from the perspective of SCT indicates that teacher education enables teachers to integrate new theoretical knowledge with existing experiential knowledge and internalize this new kind of concept as a result of collaboration and dialogic mediation (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). When a learning process constructed in this way is transferred to the teaching practices with a similar approach with the help of action research practices, it can yield more effective language learning outcomes for students. Similarly, the fact that traditional PD is organized top-down without considering teachers' needs, expectations and their active involvement in this process situates teachers in a weak position in learning and teaching processes. This study, which can also be considered from the perspective of CP, intends to empower teachers' position and increase their self-confidence in lifelong learning by placing teachers at the centre of the CPD program as stakeholders in decision-making processes rather than passive participants (Freire, 1970).

Considering the aforementioned problem statement, significance and purposes of the current study, I aimed to form a TSG and carry out a PD program with the instructors who want to participate voluntarily after the program was introduced in detail in the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year at a tertiary-level school of foreign languages (SoFL) of a university in Türkiye. Within the scope of this study, a one-semester PD program was offered to teachers, and the research was carried out through a variety of data collection tools, including semi-structured individual interviews, TSG meetings, expert talk series, reflective journal writing, unstructured observation, and document analysis, which is explained in detail in chapter three. With this program, the participant teachers were expected to collaborate with peers, experts, and the researcher to learn and discuss the theoretical and practical issues offered by the program based on their needs. In this sense, the current TSG aimed to familiarize the teachers with the CPD tools (collaborative professional learning, reflective practice, and action research). Besides, this program aimed to maximize the professional growth of SoFL teachers and create a whole-school change by supporting the participants to share their action research projects with other stakeholders through a research seminar open to all members of the educational setting. By offering the collaborative space

and support to adopt these CPD tools, this TSG study intended to open new horizons for the continuous learning of EFL teachers at the SoFL.

1.3. Research Questions

This study aims to proceed by focusing on research problems rather than pre-determined research hypotheses because a qualitative research paradigm is used in this study. Qualitative research is based on analyzing and interpreting patterns in textual data to understand the relationships in social sciences better. In this sense, qualitative research can shed light on complex situations within a broad perspective, considering the learning context's multi-layered aspect (Heigham & Croker, 2009). This method requires the research and the researcher to be resourceful, flexible and multi-tasking (Saldaña, 2018). The case study model, one of the qualitative research methodologies, is used for this study. The case study explores an existing social phenomenon in depth in the real context within which the situation and context are bounded (Yin, 2018). The reason for conducting a case study is the need to create meaning through inductive research and obtain detailed descriptive and interpretative findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As this study is purely qualitative in nature, there was no need to formulate a hypothesis, sub-hypotheses, and sub-problems. However, sub-problems were found and stated in the thesis after the data collection and analysis process. In order not to limit the scope and depth of the study, three research questions were determined in light of the aforementioned stated problem, significance, and purpose of the study:

- How do the TSG teachers describe their current teaching philosophies and PD perspectives and expectations?
- What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective?
- What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective?

1.4. Limitations

The methodological framework and the tight schedule of the participant teachers are two considerable limitations of the current study. As this study is based on a qualitative research paradigm, it is crucial to note that the study's findings cannot be generalized without including a quantitative perspective that could contribute to the validity and generalizability

of the findings statistically (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). Even though the lack of quantitative methods prevents this study from making statistical generalizations, this limitation does not annotate a weakness of the current study. As I conducted this study from qualitative lenses and based it on the theoretical frameworks aligned with the qualitative perspective, the qualitative design inherently framed the scope of the study in line with these theoretical frameworks. Employing a qualitative paradigm provided a space for the multivocality of human perspectives to uncover the complex social realities bounded by various dimensions that must be analyzed pluralistically. Hence, although I believe the qualitative perspective allowed me to conduct a study in line with my research philosophy and intended objectives, the lack of quantitative tools such as experiment design, questionnaires, and pre/post tests can be regarded as a limitation for the generalizability of the current study.

The other limitation of the study stems from the tight working schedules of the participant teachers. Even though I could complete all the TSG meetings, observation sessions, and expert talk series at the end of the program, it took much work to update the meeting dates because of the workload of the participants. The duties assigned to them, exam weeks, feedback sessions for students, and their course load made me constantly revise the plans. It would have been more effective to be able to organize more TSG meetings and expert talks to create a sustainable collaborative space. However, the obligatory circumstances did not allow for more time for PD.

1.5. Assumptions

Working as an English instructor at the SoFL, where I conducted the current study, I realized that the instructors need more bottom-up PD practices to promote their professional growth. Being part of one-shot PD events organized by publishing houses or school administration in a top-down way did not have a long-term impact on the professional careers of the instructors. Witnessing the instructors' willingness for professional learning and betterment, a sustainable perspective in PD that fosters collaboration and research could serve the instructors a platform where they can generate their own knowledge continuously. As it would not be probable to make an impact on all the instructors at the SoFL (more than forty instructors), the TSG as a CPD model could be a preliminary step to plant a transformative perspective on teacher learning, which could be maintained and sustained by other teachers by forming small teacher groups in a continuous cycle. Based on this assumption, I started constructing a PD program and made it the focus of this dissertation.

Based on my first assumption, this study would change teacher perspectives and pedagogies because SCT and CP are transformative frameworks aiming to impact teachers' professional lives. However, a transformation in the individual pathways of the teachers would not satisfy me professionally because I believe individual changes should be supplemented with a broader social change to create a sustainable educational ecology for teachers and learners. For this reason, my second assumption was to create a social change at SoFL by transforming the perspectives of all stakeholders who did not participate in the TSG. Hence, I integrated an AR Seminar Day event where the TSG members could disseminate their takeaways and plant new insights to all members of the educational ecosystem, which was assumed to be a new potential for future social change.

1.6. Definitions of Terms

Teacher study groups (TSG): TSG is a collaborative, inquiry-based, and school-based PD model that seeks to promote opportunities to identify and study problems of practice together (Francis et al., 1994). This form of community of practice is based on teachers' collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based practices to transform their educational settings (Carroll, 2005; Francis et al., 1994).

Action Research (AR): AR is an inquiry-based research helping people to make meaning out of a social situation and to improve their relations and actions in this context (Burns, 2005). If conducted for instructional purposes, AR enables teachers to generate their own practical knowledge out of inquiry.

Reflective Practice: Reflective practice is the act of careful and conscious consideration and questioning of any forms of existing beliefs, knowledge, and approaches (Dewey, 1933). Reflective practice intends to merge learning and thinking by encouraging individuals to emphasize their retrospective and introspective thinking to reframe their prospective thoughts in light of the learning outcomes from the thinking process (Moon, 2013).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD): CPD refers to the PD perspective aiming to transform teachers and their students into lifelong learners (Day, 1999; Jasper, 2006). Unlike traditional PD activities that are generally transmission-based, trainer-oriented, and top-down, CPD activities prioritize more teacher-oriented activities, and they aim to make contributions to reconstruction of identity in a collaborative manner (Dikilitaş, 2015; Johnson, 2009).

Sociocultural Theory (SCT): SCT is a learning theory claiming that individual learners engaging in social activities reconstruct and transform their self, practices, and resources that are responsive to the local and individual needs since the development occurs as a result of social interaction and internalization of what is learnt through social interaction. (Johnson, 2009).

Critical Pedagogy (CP): CP is a transformative education that is based on developing dialogue between teachers and learners with the aim of unravelling real-life problems and improving the world by promoting learners' personal development and social equity unlike the banking education that is based on the transfer of knowledge from teachers' minds to students' minds (Freire, 1970).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two theoretical frameworks: sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy. First, I introduce the sociocultural theory by presenting the core principles, constructs and objectives in relation to language teacher education. Then critical pedagogy is presented together with basic principles, constructs, and objectives for language teacher education.

2.1.1. Sociocultural Theory

Human cognition is shaped through engaging in social activities since knowledge is socially co-constructed (Lantolf et al., 2015). Socially mediated activities provide a progressive movement towards internal mediational controls by individuals (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). As human cognitive development is achieved through cultural practices and circumstances of the community, Sociocultural Theory (SCT) claims that individual learners engaging in social activities reconstruct and transform their self, practices, and resources that are responsive to the local and individual needs (Johnson, 2009).

SCT is based on the notion that the development of human cognition is inherently social because development occurs as a result of social interaction and internalization of what is learnt through social interaction. This cognitive transformation from external (interpsychological) to internal (intrapsychological) forms emerges through mediation, which requires dialogic interactions with experts, peers or objects (Vygotsky, 1978, 1981, 1986). Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective assumes that active engagement in social interactions enables individuals to shape the cognitive development of others in addition to being shaped by the social situations within the group. This social process of shaping and being shaped is assumed to end up with differentiated outcomes for individuals in accordance with their unique experiences (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

From a sociocultural perspective, teacher education can be regarded as a social activity that can develop human cognition. Considering the social aspect of human cognition, teacher education should be based on a systematic, intentional and goal-directed agenda to pave the way for more effective theoretical and pedagogical practices with the help of the expertise of teacher educators (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Teachers' failure to make changes in their practices after pre-service or in-service education and reliance on their apprenticeship cause

them to teach the language as they learned without transformative changes in practice (Ball & Forzani, 2010; Cochran-Smith et al., 2008). Teacher education based on a sociocultural framework can lead to expertise in teaching on the condition that teachers participate in teacher education systematically and regularly (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). This kind of participation can equip teachers with transformative skills. In this sense, sociocultural theory relies on some key constructs that have a pivotal role in shaping language teacher education practices, which is presented in detail in the following part.

2.1.1.1. Zone of Proximal Development in Relation to Teacher Education

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1986), learners internalize concepts through three stages of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is described as a dynamic critical period during which a transformation can happen from what individuals can perform with assistance to what they can perform individually without assistance (Vygotsky, 1988). The sociocultural perspective in Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE) highlights the integration between everyday concepts and scientific concepts through internalization and making explicit and concrete associations between these two concepts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). The role of strategic mediation that can help teachers socially reconstruct their knowledge is significant in SLTE. In this sense, ZPD is a concept that defines the transition from existing individual capacities towards the ultimate potential of the practices through socially mediated assistance (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

ZPD refers to the potential of learners regarding their ultimate achievement with systematic and developmental assistance. The performative stage requires learners to observe the expected practice, the interactive stage allows learners to perform with the assistance of an expert, and finally, novice learners can perform independently in an emergent stage. Likewise, teachers are expected to go through a similar social process for conceptual development. There are two types of concepts. While everyday concepts are about concrete activities performed in social contexts, scientific concepts are acquired through theoretical investigation (Johnson, 2009).

As teachers need scientific concepts to be interrelated and reflected with everyday concepts, they should go through a socially mediated process to reconstruct their conceptual development by internalizing the concepts, not the content (Johnson, 2009). In this sense, cultural artifacts, concepts, and social relations are the tools to socially mediate the activities in PD. To scaffold the teachers in PD, teachers can be provided with scientific concepts (apprenticeship), they can attend joint activities (guided participation), and finally, they can

perform alone (appropriation) (Rogoff, 1995). Additionally, teachers can benefit from peer interaction for cooperative development and reconstruction of their conceptualization through narrative inquiries (Boshell, 2002).

Contrary to traditional schooling practices based on the notion that instructions should follow learner development, ZPD is a concept that highlights the role of effectively organized and mediated instruction that can lead to cognitive development in learners (Vygotsky, 1986). As for the role of ZPD in L2 teacher education, teachers may experience cognitive or emotional dissonance between their everyday concepts (learning/teaching experiences) and academic concepts to which they are exposed in teacher education programs. In case of such contradictions between what was experienced before and what has been learnt recently, ZPD can function as a space where teacher educators mediate teachers to reach true concepts and undergo a qualitative transformation (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). With the assistance of teacher educators, ZPD provides teachers with a space to reconstruct their identities. Teacher educators are expected to make use of some mediational tools such as instructions, discussion questions, and collaboration in accordance with each teacher's potential (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Hence, teacher educators have an essential role in monitoring teachers' progress and finding out the ZPD to appropriate the right tools and activities to help teachers internalize them, which may gradually result in less control over the teacher's performance (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

2.1.1.2. Mediation in Relation to Teacher Education

Mediation that emerges from social practices of teacher education is needed to accomplish conceptual development. Mediation is a key construct in Sociocultural Theory because development occurs through the mediation of others (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In this sense, Vygotsky suggests that "through others, we become ourselves" (1931/1997, p. 105). How mediation occurs within the activity can impact the quality of learning. Mediation of others (experts, peers, objects) is essential for L2 teachers to learn how to teach (Vygotsky, 1931; 1937). In addition to mediation, contextual factors related to schools and schooling experiences (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) may influence the quality of teacher education. The factors related to the contextual reality may affect teachers' willingness, motivation, and attitudes towards learning to teach. Henceforth, considering contextual realities is essential to have a better understanding of the dialogic interactions emerging from teacher education practices in a particular context (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

In sociocultural theory, the development of human cognition is highly associated with effective responsive mediation, which is sensitive to emerging needs, contextual dynamics, and personal expectations (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). As the relationship between humans and the world is not direct (Vygotsky, 1978), there is a definite need for mediation between them. Mediation helps individuals to acquire psychological tools including "cultural artifacts, activities, concepts, social relations, literacy etc.", which are "mediational means culturally/historically shaped, passed on, and adapted by successive generations in response to individual and community needs" (Johnson & Golombek, 2016, p.22). Through mediation, humans are able to internalize and use these psychological tools to transform themselves cognitively and improve their mental processes (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

In order to internalize psychological tools, individuals are expected to carry out a process transforming from external to internal processes. Mediation helps individuals to transform through external social interactions in joint activities, which end up with internalized cognitive processes (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In this sense, teacher educators are expected to introduce the psychological tools externally through mediation in joint activities such as journal writing mediated with the educator's comments that can foster the learning process of academic concepts and internalization of these tools to be implemented in other activity systems (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Mediation can be achieved through mediational means such as artifacts, activities, concepts, and social relations (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). According to Johnson and Golombek (2016), cultural artifacts (language) can be used to transform individuals' mental processes; concepts that can be instructed in locally appropriate activities are useful to mediate teachers' internalization of academic concepts and accessing true concepts to regulate and reconstruct their cognition and practices**.** Social relations can contribute to the knowledge construction between teacher educators and teachers.

As a Vygotskian concept, mediation has been interpreted in multiple ways: explicit/implicit mediation, strategic mediation, cognitive/metacognitive mediation, mediation as co-regulation during ZPD activity, human and symbolic mediation, and responsive mediation. Wertsch (2007) points out that explicit mediation is based on conventional formal schooling instruction in that teachers are provided with psychological tools such as pedagogical strategies explicitly, and they are expected to integrate these tools (academic concepts) into their activity system (teaching) with the assistance of teacher educators. On the other hand, implicit mediation is based upon dialogic interactions between teachers and teacher educators, which can lead to social and inner speech that can mediate mental

processing and result in transformation (Wertsch, 2007). In addition, strategic mediation, described as cognitive assistance provided in case of an emergent need, aims to transform teachers' cognition rather than behaviours (Wertsch, 1985). As strategic mediation is more concerned with cognitive transformation, regulated assistance is needed rather than too much control over the teacher to provide some space for teacher agency (Wertsch, 1985).

Another interpretation of Vygotskian mediation is metacognitive mediation, which focuses on equipping individuals with some psychological tools mediated by teacher educators to have control over thinking and regulate their higher mental processing (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). However, cognitive mediation is described as a process through which teachers learn how to mediate their practices to solve problems in their activity system by employing the psychological tools (academic concepts) internalized in teacher education (Karpov & Haywood, 1998). As for the mediation as co-regulation in ZPD activity, it is based on the cooperation between the teacher educator and teacher in co-regulating the learning by considering the needs emerging from the interaction between them (Fogel, 1991). Similar to the concept of responsive mediation (Johnson & Golombek, 2016), mediation as co-regulation intends to be responsive to the learner's needs and expectations by assigning a dynamic role to the teacher educator to mediate the interaction in accordance with contextual needs, which can enable teachers to develop their self-regulation skills. That is why teacher educators are expected to stay attuned to both explicit and implicit responses from teachers (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In this sense, mediation as co-regulation cannot be seen as a method to be implemented prescriptively, yet a dynamic process requiring being alert to the dynamics of the interaction and acting accordingly, which resembles the dynamic assessment concept of sociocultural theory in that dynamic assessment necessitates continuous assessment of learners to maximize learning by implementing necessary tools (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014).

Human and symbolic mediation is based on the principle that symbolic tools and human mediation are interrelated (Kozulin, 2003). Symbolic mediation requires using tools such as signs and artifacts, which can improve learning. Human mediation is about the dialogic interaction between the learner and the expert. Integration of symbols and human mediation can yield effective learning outcomes since mediation provides a vast range of cognitive strategies to exploit the symbols with the help of the expert view (Kozulin, 2003). Finally, responsive mediation is built upon a broader perspective encompassing emergent dynamics of dialogic interactions between teacher educators and teachers rather than prescriptively described mediation categories or techniques (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In other words, responsive mediation can be conceived as a vivid framework that evolves non-linearly and

encourages educators and teachers to pay attention to the needs emerging from the interactions and to negotiate the steps to be taken responsively (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Essential to responsive mediation is the idea that individuals vary from one another in terms of their cognition and emotions, which repositions teacher educators by urging them to be more attentive to moment-to-moment responses given by teachers. Thus, assisting teachers in transforming the way they think and do depends on to what extent teacher educators are capable of offering multidirectional and context-sensitive support to teachers in accordance with their potentiality within the ZPD (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

2.1.1.3. Obuchenie, Perezhivanie, and Growth Points in Relation to Teacher Education

The sociocultural perspective in teacher education foregrounds the role of responsive mediation. Responsive mediation can take place by considering three key constructs highlighted by Vygotsky (1987): obuchenie, perezhivanie, and growth points. Obuchenie is related to school teaching/learning while perezhivanie refers to emotional experiences. As for the growth point, it is described as a space where cognitive and emotional contradictions emerge, which leads to potential growth in human cognition and practices on the condition that mediation is provided responsively.

Sociocultural theory emerges as a criticism against conventional obuchenie (schooling experience), which is based on the instruction following the cognitive development of humans. The rationale behind Vygotskian obuchenie is that schooling experiences (teaching and learning) should lead to cognitive development. This kind of learning can occur in teacher education when teachers' everyday concepts are integrated into the academic concepts introduced by teacher educators in a goal-directed activity (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). If teachers are provided with sign forms (psychological tools offered by the educator) such as language, theory, and concept, they can transform them into sign meanings (theoretical and pedagogical tools interpreted and used by the teacher) such as change and new interpretations through explicit mediation and social interactions including reflection and discussion (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 2007). Such a relationship between what is presented (sign forms) and what is interpreted and internalized (sign meanings) can yield a better understanding of academic concepts and more prominent changes in cognition and practice if teachers and teacher educators are able to sustain a prolonged interaction enhanced by responsive mediation (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

The second construct essential to teacher education is teachers' emotional experiences (perezhivanie). Perezhivanie is based on the fact that teachers who interact with teacher

educators bring different emotions and identities into the activity system (Vygotsky, 1987). Henceforth, not only teachers' prior experiences and emotions but also how they are feeling during their interactions with teacher educators should be taken into account to provide relevant and effective responsive mediation (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). As teaching itself is a practice that includes emotions (Denzin, 1984; Hargreaves, 2000), the PD of teachers should be based on the acceptance of these emotions and the implementation of mediation that is responsive to the emotional needs of teachers. Teachers have their beliefs, experiences, and identities bound to the context where they learned to teach or are teaching (Cross, 2010). For this reason, teacher educators should be aware of this rich resource while making decisions on their education and providing responsive mediation. As teachers may experience potential contradictions between what they bring to learning-to-site and what they are exposed to, teacher educators are expected to be sensitive to this kind of incongruence (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Cognitive/emotional dissonance experienced by teachers in learning-to-teach activities is a potential growth point since it might bring about new learnings (Vygotsky, 1987). With the help of responsive mediation, teachers can take advantage of the contradiction between their existing concepts and the new concepts introduced to them by teacher educators (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Both teachers and teacher educators should stay attuned to any dissonance that may take place during the interaction in order to exploit learning opportunities (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

2.1.1.4. Interthinking and the Intermental Development Zone in Relation to Teacher Education

In line with sociocultural theory, inter-thinking is described as a concept assisting individuals in intellectually making sense of their experiences through language in a joint activity, yielding more profound sense-making than individuals can independently (Littleton & Mercer, 2013). The ability to inter-think can foster individuals' cognitive skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and reasoning (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). According to Mercer (2000), language functions as a cultural and psychological tool, aligning with sociocultural theory. While the cultural function of language helps individuals build relationships by creating cultural knowledge, the psychological function of language makes individuals think individually because of the relationship between language and thought (Mercer, 2000). Considering the essential role of language in individual and collective sense-making, inter-thinking equips individuals with new understandings as a result of collective

work on language and thought. However, conventional roles assigned to teacher educators could make teachers expect them to have a more dominant role in terms of transmitting knowledge and assessing teachers' performance, which requires teacher educators to reset these conventional roles to establish new conversational ground rules that can promote more room for inter-thinking (Mercer, 2000). To accomplish this transformation in teacher educator-teacher interactions, teacher educators need to pay attention to the activity type, shared goals of the activity, and contextual factors. Such a transformation in interaction can also bring about a fruitful atmosphere for responsive mediation (Mercer, 2000).

Intermental Development Zone (IDZ) refers to the phase where teachers and teacher educators can customize their knowledge and sense-making according to the emergent dialogues, enabling teacher educators to be more attentive to teachers' emotions and act accordingly (Mercer, 2000). IDZ differs from ZPD because it is based on mutual adjustments in a more dialogic and emergent joint activity. Teacher educators' success in attuning their knowledge to support teachers' professional growth can pave the way for ZPD, which can be followed by internalization. As teachers' previous knowledge may not be enough for mediation, IDZ offers a dialogic space where teacher educators can set the ground to contribute to teachers' conceptual development by providing pro-longed and customized support to them (Miller, 2011).

2.1.1.5. Objectives of a Teacher Education Based on Sociocultural Perspective for Teachers

A sociocultural perspective to language teacher education offers a variety of objectives that can be fulfilled through sociocultural learning practices (Figure 1).

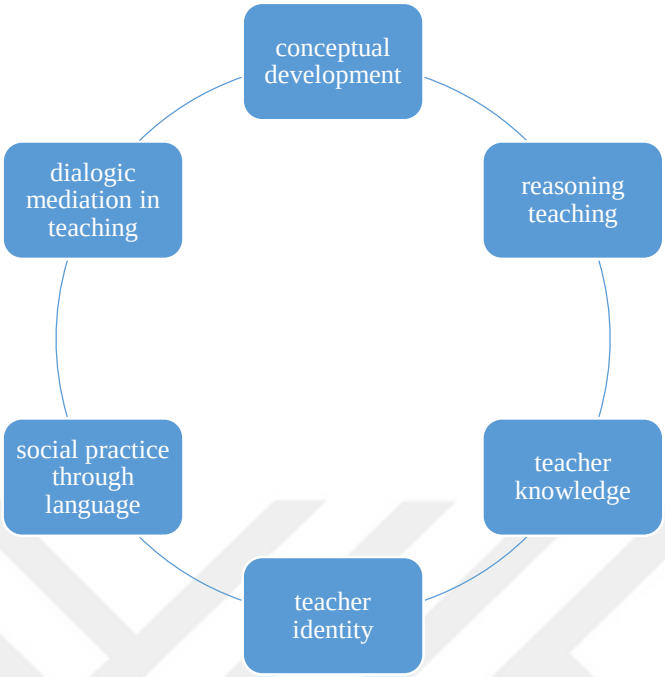

Figure 1: Objectives of a teacher education based on sociocultural perspective for teachers

First**,** one transformation that teachers can experience is conceptual development, which is based on the idea of integrating teachers' everyday (experiential) concepts that take their roots from classroom practices and beliefs with academic (scientific concepts) that relies on research and theory (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; 2016). Building teaching practices solely on everyday concepts might leave out the theoretical richness of L2 teaching. Likewise, restricting knowledge only to academic concepts may lead to empty verbalism, which defines the accumulation of knowledge without the chance to implement it (Vygotsky, 1986). Nevertheless, integrating both concepts and obtaining "true concepts" at the end of this process can help teachers reconstruct their existing knowledge with the help of mediation in social practices of teacher education. Having true concepts can enable teachers to use them as psychological tools and make changes in their teaching practices accordingly (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). True concepts can function as a tool to reconstruct everyday practices and yield teaching expertise since teachers can make meaningful connections between everyday concepts and academic concepts (Kennedy, 1999). Positioning teachers in a more active role to generate knowledge rather than to consume it passively empowers them to contextualize what they have learnt (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

One of the detrimental factors influencing teacher education negatively is frontloading pre-service teachers with theoretical knowledge, which brings about a failure in developing

conceptual thinking. (Freeman, 1993). The dichotomy of language and literature is reflected in further teaching practices. Literature learnt during pre-service education is not considered a component of language learning, which is against the nature of interrelatedness among language, culture, and literature (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). This gap between language instruction and literacy-based teaching can be revitalized through a conceptual development process whereby language teachers participate in dialogic mediation, scaffolded learning, and assisted performance with peers and experts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Second, the sociocultural perspective on teacher education also prioritizes the development of reasoning teaching, which is defined as "the complex ways in which teachers figure out how to teach a particular topic, with a particular group of students, at a particular time, in a particular classroom, within a particular school" (Johnson, 1999, p.1). Likewise, teacherly thinking (Johnson & Golombek, 2016) highlights the significance of making context-sensitive decisions depending on the situational circumstances. Another objective of the sociocultural theory is to promote "resourceful teaching for resourceful learning" (Edwards, 2010, p.72). In addition to conceptual development, enabling teachers to adapt their resources in order to make more context-sensitive and pedagogically effective decisions through mediational practices is an essential component of sociocultural theory. However, teachers need to expand their knowledge to foster conceptual development and reasoning teaching skills, which can also increase teacher agency (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Third, teacher knowledge can be constructed and promoted through sociocultural learning. Teacher knowledge can be categorized into three bases: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. The sociocultural perspective on L2 teacher education emphasizes the need to develop these knowledge types through mediational practices such as synchronous social interactions and asynchronous activities (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In this sense, teacher education is built upon three focal areas

- The content of the program (for the development of content knowledge)
- The pedagogies that can help teachers know how to teach (for the development of pedagogical knowledge)
- The forms of instruction bridging the content and pedagogy (for the development of pedagogical content knowledge)

Increasing teachers' awareness about Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) can be useful in making connections between a particular content and relevant pedagogy to promote student learning. Helping teachers foster their PCK also requires educators to consider the contextual realities of the setting where teacher education is implemented. A program that

aligns with context-sensitive needs and expectations can result in more effective teacher learning (Johnson, 2006). For this reason, PCK is not a pack of knowledge that can be acquired and transferred to the classroom directly without considering the complex dynamics of PCK that are bounded by time, person, and context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teacher education programs based on a sociocultural framework aim to promote conceptual development by introducing and relating academic concepts to experiential concepts. In this regard, offering the above-mentioned knowledge types to teachers and providing them with the opportunities to relate them to their experiential knowledge can foster their learning-to-teach progress. PCK is also essential for students because it can make the content more relevant and learnable (Shulman, 1987). Shulman (1987) states that PCK can be fostered through teaching activities or dialogic interactions. Therefore, creating a mediational space where teachers can get involved in dialogic interactions and transform their PCK is significant. Teacher education activities designed within inquiry-based PD forms, such as TSGs and lesson study, can cause teachers to express their PCK explicitly and transform them with the help of new academic concepts and collaborative dialogic interactions (Johnson, 2009).

Fourth, integrating a sociocultural perspective into a teacher education program can develop teacher identity since teacher identity informs teachers' beliefs and practices (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Teacher identity is a dynamic construct defined as "being in continuous becoming" by Roth (2003, p.8). Identity-in-activity is used as a construct in sociocultural teacher education to characterize teacher identities in activity systems/instructional contexts (micro-level) and larger social, cultural, and historical systems (macro-level) dualistically (Cross & Gearon, 2007). As teacher identities can be shaped by the effects of both micro and macro-level systems, it is vital to analyze their identities in relation to these systems. Likewise, tensions and contradictions between teacher identities and activity systems (teaching in the classroom, learning to teach in a PD program) may emerge because the activity systems that teachers face may contain plenty of different values (Engeström, 1987). As identity is a dynamic construct that can be at odds with both micro and macro-level systems, there might be contradictions even within a single activity system (Dang, 2013). Making use of mediation in teacher education programs can help teachers to have more consistent beliefs and practices and less contradictions between their identities and activity systems since mediation can provide new identities through conceptual development or it can enable teachers to come up with new activities that are in line with their identities (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Teacher education programs focusing on mediating teachers to develop more empowered identities also promote the adoption of liberating identities through readings, inquiry-oriented activities,

and academic concepts so that teachers can feel more empowered against the dominant conceptualization of idealized L2 teachers (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Henceforth, some activities that can foster alignment between teacher identity and activity system should be included in teacher education programs, which is a prerequisite for transforming teacher identity (Lave, 1996).

From the perspective of sociocultural theory, this feature assigns a comprehensive role to language teachers by expecting them to facilitate and encourage their learners to be able to construct various roles and identities regarding the cultural diversity that they may experience (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Learners can be prepared for this kind of encounter, and teachers can support the identities of their learners to make them feel comfortable with who they are and make them aware of possible cultural exchanges that can contribute to their identity construction (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Fifth, the sociocultural perspective conceives language as a social practice, so it is claimed that teacher education should not be confined to disciplinary/theoretical knowledge since teacher education requires social practices implemented through the language. Pedagogical content knowledge is also needed to be aware of how language is taught in accordance with social settings and local needs (Johnson, 2009). Language is seen as a social construct of culture, so languaculture is a concept to be internalized by teachers, which leads teachers to have roles as language users, analysts, and learners (Johnson, 2009). Learning is conceived as a social process, and classrooms are suited to foster learning. Therefore, learners' actual achievement is not solely a reflection of individual ability but also the effectiveness of the communication between teachers and learners (Mercer, 1995).

Finally, the sociocultural theory aims to amend dialogic mediation in teaching. Hence, the SCT offers an alternative to the traditional teacher-centred transmission view and unstructured student-centred discovery learning by including a dialogic process of reconceptualizing and recontextualizing as teachers and students engage in activities together in a formal schooling context (Karpov, 2003; Kozulin, 2003). This dialogic process is based on strategic mediation, which refers to getting responsive and proportionate to learners' varying needs.

For this reason, the development of conceptual thinking has a substantive role in teacher education. Teachers are expected to serve scientific concepts to students, assist them in making everyday concepts explicit, and use them to internalize scientific concepts. These dialogic processes can pave the way for reconceptualization of everyday concepts. This process can be followed by an extensive group discussion mediated by the teacher. The exact

process can be conducted as a means of professional development through which teachers come together and internalize scientific concepts by relating them to their everyday concepts and organize a lesson after the group discussion to examine the effectiveness of this dialogic mediation. This process reveals that the construction of knowledge and concept development is a joint rather than independent achievement (Wood et al., 1976).

2.1.1.6. Tools for a Sociocultural Teacher Education

To achieve sociocultural objectives in language teacher education practices, the SCT offers various tools to be integrated into learning practices constructed based on the sociocultural principles (Figure 2).

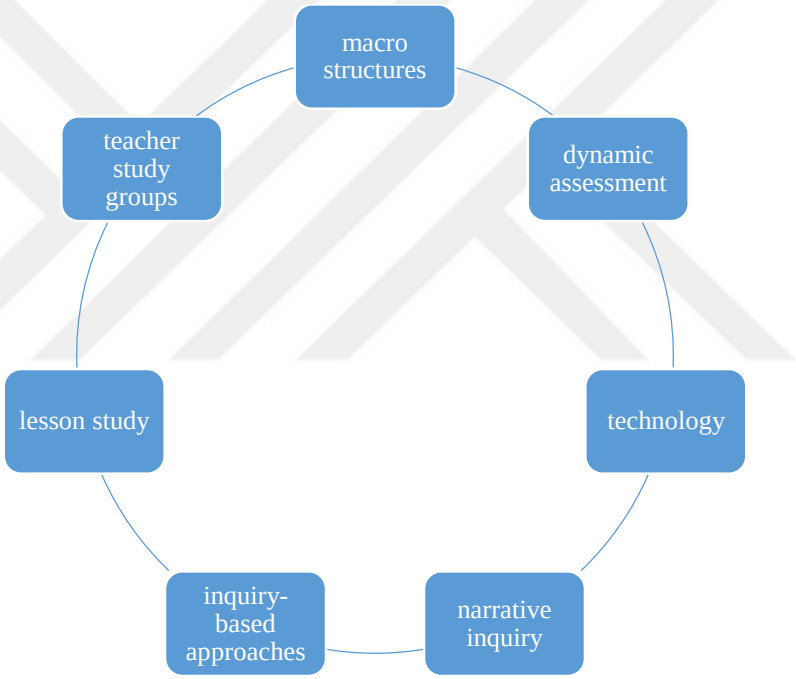

Figure 2: Tools for a sociocultural teacher education

First, introducing macro structures and alternative PD can be a preliminary tool to be integrated into language teacher education practices. Individual activities shape and are shaped by social, cultural, historical, and economic macro-structures constituting the skeleton of the professional world. This dynamic interdependence between individuals and society makes it clear that individuals' personal histories, the community's values, beliefs, norms, and physical and symbolic artifacts impact teaching and learning processes (Johnson, 2009).

In this regard, teacher education programs and PD activities should inform teachers about these factors to prepare them to resist global education top-down policies and curricular mandates by coming up with educationally sound and contextually appropriate decisions and

practices to meet the local needs (Johnson, 2009). Educational reforms and high-stakes exams are macro-structures that can influence the role of teachers. PD can assist teachers in having fluid roles in accordance with contextual necessities. PD can reveal teachers' inner contradictions, which can change one dimension, causing contradictions.

Second tool is dynamic assessment. SLTE is not based on teachers' prior language learning experience and is also conceptualized as an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975). SLTE prioritizes the essence of expertizing to be expert teachers. One way to ensure this component is using dynamic assessment (DA), which can be considered a tool that facilitates teacher learning through collaboration with peers and experts and teacher retrospective assessment of their practices since practice itself is not an indicator of high-quality teaching. Socially mediated discussions and personal elaborative retrospection on video-recorded lessons (dialogic video protocols) can pave the way for better teacher learning. DA is a beneficial tool for learner teachers since they can externalize their cognition by being conscious of what they believe and discuss not only problematic aspects of their teaching but also alternative practices and perspectives that might be integrated into future lessons.

Third, technology can be used as a mediational space. In many countries, EFL teachers are strictly expected to fulfil the objectives of the curriculum and educational reforms initiated by ministries of education or administrative boards. This necessity leads to a perception of curriculum as a powerful artifact shaping the teachers and what they practise in their classes. Alternative approaches in PD from the sociocultural perspective highlight the role of tools such as Moodle and Edmodo to create a new space to link the experiential concepts to new scientific concepts and reconstruct the identity through conceptual development and dialogic mediation (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Through this space mediation, teachers can evaluate themselves retrospectively, introspectively, and prospectively through dialogic mediation provided by concept development and social learning opportunities. Acquiring a metacognitive awareness, teachers can critically evaluate their development as well, which can be sustained as a life-long learning perspective. Awareness of self-learning can pave the way for internalization, providing psychological tools for classroom use (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Fourth, narrative inquires can also be utilised to empower teachers against disempowering perceptions and practices. To exemplify, one issue hindering social practice through language is the lack of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) awareness in teaching practices. Even though non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) constitute the majority of teachers of English, they may hesitate to assert that they have a legitimate identity

as a result of the native speaker myth (Canagarajah, 1999) rather than being aware of the asymmetrical power distance and fight oppression (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). SCT suggests that the reconstruction of teacher identity through narrative inquiry can play a vital role in sociocultural PD to deconstruct the myths disempowering teachers (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Through narrative inquiries, teachers can re-tell their stories and become aware of the dialectic mediation between society and themselves in terms of power distribution, which can lead to identity reconstruction and repositioning to be more willing to take up instructional and philosophical changes in education after teachers experience a shift in their cognition (Johnson & Golombek, 2011).

Fifth, inquiry-based approaches (IBA) to professional development are alternatives to traditional PD practices based on knowledge transmission. Alternative PD approaches from a sociocultural perspective conceive PD as something done by teachers on their own rather than something done by others for teachers, so alternative approaches are mostly self-directed, collaborative, reflective, ongoing, in-depth, systematic, and inquiry-based in accordance with the realities of teachers' classrooms (Johsnon, 2009). Inquiry-based approaches are significant in that they pay close attention to the narrative of teachers' classroom experience (Bruner, 2006; Elbaz, 1991), the school context and culture in which teachers work (Little, 2003; 2007), robust linkages between theory and practices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Simon, 1992; Walker, 2003), and ZPD as a mediational space created in PD. Using these tools in teacher education can empower teachers to resist macro-structures that may have a detrimental effect on their teaching practices.

Sixth, lesson study can be considered an alternative model to promote sociocultural learning in SLTE. Lesson study is a Japanese CPD model that includes collaboration, reflection and engagement of teachers in order to prepare a lesson and carry out further steps to analyze and improve this lesson collaboratively to provide better student learning (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002; Lewis & Hurd, 2011). It is a kind of classroom action research aiming to improve teacher knowledge and provide effective lessons for students (Austin, 2017). Teachers work collaboratively to design a lesson, which is followed by execution of this lesson, observation, reflection, analysis and re-teaching the lesson in the second cycle (Bayram & Bıkmaz, 2021). In this sense, Lesson Study is an effective and empowering CPD model that teachers can use sustainably because it enables teachers to raise their agency and reflect on their practices (Uştuk & Çomoğlu, 2019).

Finally, teacher study groups can offer a sociocultural learning space for mediation and dialogic practices as an alternative model. Teacher study groups (TSG) is a collaborative,

inquiry-based, and school-based PD model that seeks to promote opportunities to identify and study problems of practice together (Francis et al., 1994). This model is similar to professional learning communities (PLCs) and critical friends groups (CFGs) in that all these models aim to foster teacher learning through collaboration, reflection, and reconceptualization. Classrooms have a substantial role in PD since they can function as a path to empowerment, and teachers can be involved in teacher or action research to start a social, organizational, and instructional change in educational practices (Little, 1984; 1990; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; 1994). Getting involved in action research as a collaborative work through TSG can help teachers to examine their own educational practices and discuss the possible opportunities to improve. This collaborative work yields renewing concepts, reconstructing knowledge and transforming perspectives. Additionally, collaborative action research among teachers can impact whole-school changes (Burns, 1999). Implementations of TSG through action research revealed that teachers thought independently, trusted their colleagues' expertise, and valued the merits of sustained school-based PD. However, they felt powerless and had difficulty facing complex problems stemming from macro-structures (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

2.1.2. Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy takes roots from Freire's (1970) studies with villagers in Brazil, which reveals that education has a pivotal role in changing society and empowering individuals. Giroux (1983) first used critical pedagogy to criticize the positivist educational policies during the Reagan period in the USA. Horkheimer (1972), a critical theorist from the Frankfurt School, Apple (1979), and Shor (1980) shaped the idea of critical pedagogy as a framework in contemporary terms. Freire (1970) claims that there are two types of education: banking education and transformative education. While the former is based on the transfer of knowledge from teachers' minds to students' minds, the latter, which is aligned with critical pedagogy, is based on developing dialogue between teachers and learners with the aim of unravelling real-life problems and improving the world by promoting learners' personal development.

Teachers are assumed to have a progressive role in social reconstruction by touching upon social inequities and transforming learners and their schooling experience by raising awareness about them (Groenke, 2009). In this respect, teacher education should be based on a social reconstructionist paradigm to equip teachers with pedagogical tools to change society (Stanley, 1985; Zeichner & Liston, 1990). As educational policies and practices are mostly in line with the interests of neoliberal capitalist views, learning outcomes strengthen this status

quo of privileged groups (Gray, 2019), which urges teachers to transform the school for democratic standards and equality (Stanley, 1985).

The social reconstructionist view, which is in line with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, included several characteristics that should be taken into account by teacher educators. Firstly, anticapitalism is suggested to be a part of schooling since teachers need to raise learners' awareness about the unequal distribution of wealth in society, which can enhance economic and social justice and democratic values (Groenke, 2009). Secondly, they are expected to include indoctrination into their practices to inform learners about social injustice and encourage them to lead societal change (Groenke, 2009). In this sense, critical pedagogy in teacher education has a social reconstructionist view that aims to transform teachers' and students' perspectives and practices to be aware of the power distance in society and initiate a change to empower themselves.

2.1.2.1. The Rationale Behind Critical Teacher Education

Traditional teacher education content has failed to equip teacher candidates with critical skills to cope with the multi-dimensionality and complexity of schooling practices. Additionally, teachers are not equipped with the proper skills to deal with the influence of political obligations and control mechanisms that assign a technician role to teachers (Kirk, 1986). Traditional teacher education programs do not provide insights into the possibilities and objectives of schooling. They do not contribute to teachers' critical awareness, which could help them to be more active in critically and reflectively questioning the problems, engaging in the decision-making process of curriculum design, and contributing to the implementation process (Barrow, 1984). In this sense, neoliberal policies encourage teacher education programs that downgrade the role of teachers in their particular contexts by removing some courses that might have a transformative effect on teachers from teacher education curricula, which aims to recalibrate teacher identity to transform them into useful technicians of educational policies (Gray, 2019).

Kirk (1986) states that teacher education has undergone three significant periods. First, it was traditional and generally based on the socialization and induction of prospective teachers in an apprenticeship program. Master teachers were expected to teach them how to teach. As such an approach lacked scientific rigour and was not based on a positivist view, a rationalist view permeated teacher education. According to this view, teacher education had to be scientific and rigorous to transfer the scientific knowledge that teachers would apply in their classes like technicians. However, teaching is a complex process that requires human consciousness and is a dialogic process. Also, there is no room for teachers to take

responsibility for their decisions or professional growth. Then, the radical approach appeared as a reaction to rationalism, and it was based on the assumption that teacher education programs legitimize the social inequalities in society because teachers do not have enough power to engage in reflective, critical, and reconstructive efforts. However, Kirk (1986) claims that all three approaches fail to meet the requirements of critical pedagogy in teacher education since they disregard the role of the historical background of the society and social pressures, obligations of the educational system, and strict administration policies. These detrimental issues hinder the effectiveness of theoretical discourse provided in teacher education.

According to Barrow (1984), teachers are not equipped with adequate skills and awareness to have an impact on curriculum and decision-making processes in educational settings. Traditional teacher education programs do not provide insights into the possibilities and objectives of schooling. They do not contribute to teachers' critical awareness, which could help them to be more active in critically and reflectively questioning the problems, engaging in the decision-making process of curriculum design, and contributing to the implementation process (Barrow, 1984).

When teachers do not have enough skills to use reflective and critical thinking, they risk having a low professional status, making them susceptible to political and institutional manipulations (Kirk, 1986). Critical pedagogy can enable teachers to turn into intellectual practitioners who can take their own responsibility for using reflective and critical thinking for their professional growth in order to reconstruct and liberate schooling practices (Kirk, 1986).

Considering the role of professional development corporations with capital interests and their roles in teacher education, the social reconstructionist view advocates a teacher education aiming to help teachers to empower themselves and promote their professional growth to lead the change in the schooling experience of learners, which later may turn into a milestone for a democratic society (Groenke, 2009). According to Freire (1998a; 1998b), teachers should be aware of the inequalities among certain groups of people and act accordingly in order to create educational contexts where the schooling experience can be more context-sensitive, empowering, and psychologically and culturally effective.

There is a tendency to decontextualize the problems of schooling and learners by blaming individuals for not acting appropriately. Even though many problems in education are socially constructed, these problems are attributed to individual failures rather than the larger social, cultural, political, and economic context (Kincheloe, 2009). Thus, critical theory in teacher education aims to create awareness about the role of historical, social, and political

aspects in schooling practices critically and to find strategies that can change both the educational context and society (Pennycook, 1990).

According to Kincheloe (2011a), to cultivate people who can be utilized to make more money and power, education is an effective tool to tailor people to be able to serve privileged groups. Students are taught to be dehumanized through external motivation tools since their emotions, affective states, and critical expressions are disregarded (Kincheloe, 2011a). Schooling does not empower individuals to reshape their identities, but it aims to tailor particular personality types that can serve better for privileged groups (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c). The optimistic view of positivism dehumanizes and pacifies teachers since they transmit the prescribed knowledge in the curriculum. They do not inform learners about how knowledge is constructed within a process and how it is related to our lives in a meaningful and contextualized way, which results in a lack of critical thinking and a fragmented society whose members are alienated from each other (Kincheloe, 2011a).

As teaching is pedagogically a complex activity, teachers should inform other parties, such as people and policymakers, about this complexity. It is considered a must to maintain pedagogically efficient teacher education programs. Teacher education programs offered by universities need to take this complexity into account and provide a program that can raise teachers' awareness about the complexity of teaching, which can lead to more democratic and socially just learning/teaching practices (Kincheloe, 2011a). It is crucial for teachers to be aware of learners' individual and collective needs, which requires a critical teacher education focusing not only on subject matter or pedagogical knowledge but also on how social, cultural, political and economic factors affected past and present societies (Kincheloe, 2011a).

Kirk (1986) states that several factors need to be considered for critical teacher education. Firstly, the collective consciousness of institutionalized teacher education turns into strict principles that can hinder change or transformation in teacher education. Secondly, the history of the subjects in a curriculum can offer comprehensive data about the priorities and objectives of macro structures so that we can have an idea about what is aimed in a teacher education program and how it is constrained by the policies set by these macro structures. Also, there is a lack of conceptual framework in teacher education to transmit classroom knowledge critically, which hinders the reconstruction of schooling. Furthermore, as teaching is a lived experience, experienced teachers can be better at creating innovative actions to resolve potential conflicts in the class; however, these skills cannot be acquired through pre-service education. Finally, teacher education is not independent of the influence of interest groups such as governments and the private education sector because these groups, as

employers, have a pervasive impact on teacher education programs through which they can tailor the qualifications expected from prospective employees.

2.1.2.2. Objectives of a Teacher Education Based on Critical Pedagogy for Teachers

Critical pedagogy aims to achieve emancipatory objectives in learning practices. In line with this intention, it offers various objectives to be achieved in a critical teacher education practice (Figure 3).

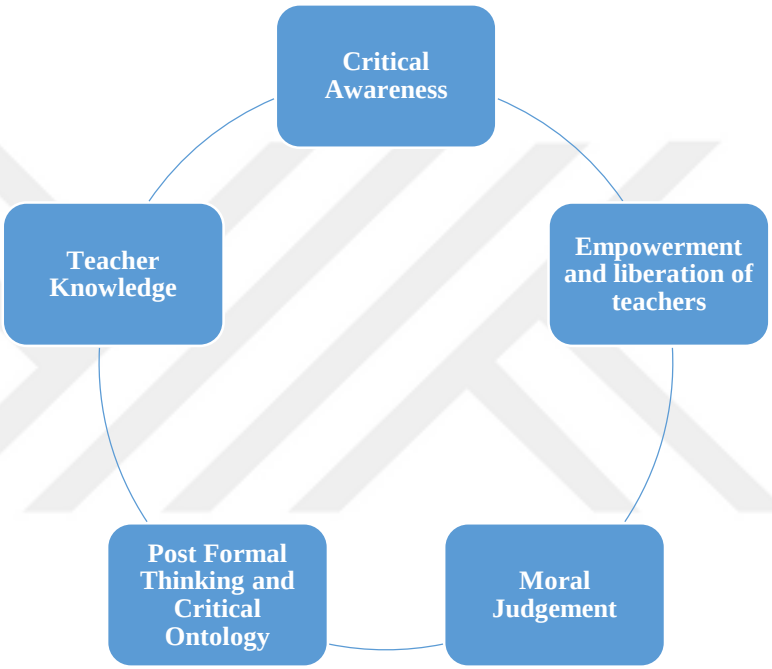

Figure 3: Objectives of a teacher education based on critical pedagogy for teachers

First, critical pedagogy aims to offer the opportunities to develop critical awareness. Critical pedagogy is based upon the idea that teacher education should empower and professionalize teachers so that they can lead a social change in learners' socioeconomic conditions by revealing how social, cultural, political, and economic systems have a role in educational practices (Kincheloe, 2009). For this reason, teachers are also expected to conduct research and design curricula to familiarize with the role of these systems in educational dynamics of teaching and learning practices and make students familiar with these systems by showing how these macro systems are reflected in their micro situations in daily life (Kincheloe, 2009). In this sense, critical teacher education offers an egalitarian education aiming to empower the schooling experience through dialogic teaching, cross-cultural communication, and critical literacy (Shor, 1986).

When teachers come together with this motivation, they can build a community and interact with individuals from other fields to lead a change in society by generating knowledge and applying it (Kincheloe, 2009). This motivation for change can enable teachers to cultivate their professional skills and knowledge by continuously learning and applying what is learnt (Kincheloe, 2009). In this sense, critical teacher educators should transform prospective teachers by challenging their ways of thinking about how ideology and power are related in educational practices (Bartolomé, 2004). Critical teachers should be able to question their own beliefs and assumptions that might have been built on the ideology of hegemonic groups in power (Bartolomé, 2004). Teachers' power can yield more democratic and just schooling practices if critical pedagogical strategies are integrated into teacher education programs (Bartolomé, 2004).

People can liberate themselves from their unquestioned histories and backgrounds, constructed with powerful groups' social, cultural, political, and economic forces, and reconstruct their identities and shape society (Kincheloe, 2011a; Gray, 2019). A teacher education relying on equipping teachers with technical requirements by neglecting the role of larger macro systems' role in their lives positions teachers as passive receivers and transmitters of information in teaching contexts, so teachers should be trained to prioritize social betterment and infuse this idea into their learners to create a world whose members struggle to contribute to each other's life (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c).

As the English language has a significant value in the world, nativeness or native-likeness is one of the tools to have power and become a member of privileged groups (Richards, 2008). As English has a political status because of the excessive demand for it, how it is taught to enhance the position of privileged groups, maintain inequality, and promote the image of native teachers can be considered from the perspective of critical pedagogy. According to Richards (2008), teachers are expected to unravel the ideological forces influencing the structure of societies and make use of language to equip students with critical skills that can make a change in their perceptions and actions. Teachers can design the curriculum and materials to promote critical awareness, contributing to students' evaluation of social, political, and ethical problems (Richards, 2008).

Hawkins and Norton (2009) state that language is interrelated to culture and identity. Critical language teachers should inform their learners about how language can be used to get privileged or marginalized, how majority and minority speakers are positioned in society, and how the majority language can be spoken in a diverse way, which will raise students' awareness about the power distance in the world. Hawkins and Norton (2009) claim that

critical teacher education should transform teachers by helping them to be aware of how power distance has an impact on social structure and how historical, social, and political factors influence the inequalities in education. Self-reflective activities requiring a critical stance on how teachers are positioned in society can be effective in critical teacher education (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Likewise, teachers can reflect on how their identities are constructed and how they hinder their teaching capabilities, which may yield the reconstruction of identities. So, a critical perspective can motivate teachers to develop themselves to provide a better learning environment for students (Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

EFL teachers are not encouraged to address socio-political issues (Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Critical pedagogy in EFL/ESL is based on the improvement of communicative skills and the application of these skills in order to create critical awareness about real-world issues and to find ways to improve the world (Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Critical pedagogy should be handled as a social and educational process rather than a set of pedagogical practices that can be applied concretely (Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Integrating critical pedagogy into language teaching is not mainly related to the ways to teach language, yet it is concerned with the effective use of critical thinking and the possible effects of language on individual and social change (Crookes & Lehner, 1998).

Second, empowerment and liberation of teachers is a key issue in critical pedagogy, and it can be achieved on the condition that teachers can build meaningful relationships between what they acquire in teacher education and what they have experienced so far as a practitioner (Kirk, 1986). Such progress can contribute to improving schooling and society because teachers can reconstruct themselves by making meaning and raising their awareness about real-world issues. Even though many social and political influences constrain teacher education and teaching, critical pedagogy can contribute to teachers' awareness to initiate a change in schooling for the benefit of learners and societies (Kirk, 1986).

Third, CP aims to contribute to moral judgement of humans. According to Liston and Zeichner (1987), critical pedagogy in teacher education can liberate teachers in that they can reflect on themselves, improve their moral and intellectual abilities autonomously, and care for other people to make a contribution to society. Their approach to teacher education is based on problems such as social injustice, powerless teachers, and the role of schooling to legitimize the macro-level policies of privileged groups. However, teachers should be provided with moral education rather than inculcation of certain moral notions so that teachers can deliberately choose the moral option that they would like to adopt. By questioning and

reasoning the existing circumstances, teachers can make their own moral decisions, which is empowering and liberating.

Teachers should position themselves as an educator rather than a political activist since having a political activism perspective may not liberate students but hinder their autonomous decision-making skills. Therefore, teachers are expected to help their learners raise their awareness critically, improve their moral judgement, and develop their critical thinking by providing a variety of options impartially. Both teachers and students have the freedom to believe what they want. Teachers should develop their identities and provide opportunities for their students to develop their identities considering the plurality of their values without coercing them to adopt a specific ideology, a prerequisite to freedom (Liston & Zeichner, 1987).

According to Liston and Zeichner (1987, p.129), teachers can make use of five strategies to integrate critical pedagogy into their schooling experience: "action research, ethnographic studies, journal writing, curriculum analysis and development, and supervisory approaches". However, it is pointed out that these approaches must be used to investigate how moral and political influences of macro structures affect schooling, taking various teacher roles and identities into account and analyzing the schooling factors that hinder moral education (Liston & Zeichner, 1987).

Fourth, CP aims to activate a post-formal thinking and a critical ontology perspective in language teacher education. Post-formal thinking is defined as a way of thinking differing from cognitive thinking in that it encapsulates how hidden social relationships of power affect our lives (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). Relating postmodernism that is based on the uncertainty of single truths and the significance of diversity of truths, and critical theory that is based on the effects of power distance on our daily practices; post-formal thinking points out a need for a more socio-cognitive way to look at the way we think (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). This view prioritizes that individuals should reflect on existing knowledge and produce their own knowledge from a critical perspective. Teachers are expected to undergo such a process to acquire a critical perspective towards existing knowledge and help their learners generate new meanings out of what is presented. To foster such a way of thinking, Kincheloe and Steinberg (2011) recommend that four components of thinking should be integrated into our thinking practices. Firstly, etymology is needed because it is vital to know how knowledge originated and how culturally constructed knowledge takes its roots from the past. Secondly, the pattern that can be seen among the daily practices of today's world should be delineated. The process is the third component that should be applied to the new ways to conceptualize

and make meaning out of the world. Finally, individuals need to contextualize their thinking to be aware of how knowledge is related to various forces (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011).

As teacher education does not have much to offer about the ways that shape identity and consciousness, critical ontology is coined as a term that informs about what they think about their thinking as teachers, how social, cultural, political and economic forces affect the way they think, what they do to learn for their professional development, how they reproduce their identities for personal and social betterment (Kincheloe, 2011d). Critical teacher education aiming to foster critical ontology is bound to have a prominent effect on identity reconstruction.

Fifth, CP aims to emancipate teachers through fostering the opportunities to construct teacher knowledge. According to Kincheloe (2011b), critical complex teaching entails a meta-epistemological perspective, which consists of a set of skills to base education knowledge on rather than the sum of diverse knowledge types. In this perspective, teachers are expected to acquire a variety of knowledge types and base their education knowledge on these types to employ various ways of teaching and learning. These knowledge types include "empirical, experiential, normative, critical, ontological, and reflective-synthetic domains" (Kincheloe, 2011b, p. 52)

Critical complex empiricism entails a more interpretative look at the knowledge obtained from a research study in that it includes multidimensional aspects of reality (Kincheloe, 2011b). Unlike the positivist approach, this perspective reveals that even a single case is open to a variety of interpretations depending on the situational realities of the case. This critical look at epistemology considers political, social, cultural and economic forces shaping the reality within a context (Kincheloe, 2011b). Attaching importance to experiential knowledge of practitioners to build their own knowledge in addition to the empirical knowledge in the field is more empowering, and it can yield more context-sensitive approaches to problems. In this sense, connecting knowledge types with one another might enable teachers to construct meaning from their experience (Day, 1996; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy claims that we should realize how normative knowledge, the knowledge of what should be done ethically and morally in education, permeates mainstream education. Mainstream positivist teacher education programs lack contextualized components that induce a depoliticized perspective on education by disregarding the effects of social, cultural, political and economic forces on education (Kincheloe, 2011b). Lacking a critical look at relationships prevents individuals from recognizing how their gender, race, religion, and social class might be discriminated against

in favour of the privileged class. This normative mindset integrated into all stages of the curriculum forces teachers to align with the positivist perspective and produce knowledge that aligns with the normative knowledge exposed by policymakers (Kincheloe, 2011b). So, there is a need to employ a more critical perspective towards normative knowledge in schooling practices and policies in teacher education to be more aware of social injustice and to rely on other types of knowledge to transform education (Kincheloe, 2011b).

Critical knowledge about teacher education acknowledges that the curriculum prepared for student learning or teacher learning is crucially related to the normative knowledge set and social/political factors shaping the study (Kincheloe, 2011b). Attempting to have critical knowledge about teacher education requires uncovering how teacher education programs and students' curricula are designed in accordance with the interests of the privileged groups who are in charge politically and economically (Kincheloe, 2011b). Adopting this perspective towards critical knowledge can enable teachers to recognize how many people are marginalized by the people in power, which might lead to a more diverse perspective towards people from various backgrounds. As teachers respect all diversities, they can make better judgements and decisions regarding student learning, assessment, instructional practices, and social justice in the classroom (Kincheloe, 2011b).

Ontological knowledge in teacher education relates to how teachers perceive themselves as learners, what they think about how they can learn for their profession, how they can learn, and how their identities are shaped by all these factors (Kincheloe, 2011b; 2011d). Teacher thinking is not the focus of teacher education programs, especially about their identities. Besides, a lack of consciousness about the social, cultural, political, and economic influences on education induces an inability to transform identities (Kincheloe, 2011b). Positivist approaches to teacher education disregard all knowledge types, which leaves no room for teacher autonomy. Thereby, teachers are expected to position themselves as technicians responsible for conveying what is prescriptively determined in the curriculum prepared by policymakers, which hinders investment in identity and the construction of teacher identity (Kincheloe, 2011b).

Experiential knowledge, also defined as knowledge of practice by Kincheloe (2011b), about instructional practices has a pivotal role in education. This type of knowledge is as important as other types. Even though knowledge of practice is not confined to classroom practices, it is generally conceived as an aspect of classroom practices. According to Kincheloe (2011b), there are many forms of educational practices, including knowledge production, teacher education, policy-making, administration, and activism. Considering the complex

aspect of practice, Schön (1995) argues that reflection-in-action can enable teachers to consciously recognize what they do and think about a particular practice. The way teachers produce knowledge through such a reflection provides insights into each practice's complex and unique aspects. From the perspective of a critical complex paradigm, gaining experiential knowledge is also interrelated to other types of knowledge, which promotes professional development in a multidimensional way (Kincheloe, 2011b).

From the perspective of the critical complex teacher education paradigm, reflective-synthetic knowledge is the knowledge that teachers should acquire by reflecting and analyzing all knowledge types (Kincheloe, 2011b). It requires teachers to think about their roles in line with these diverse knowledge types and to come up with particular practices to implement what they have acquired to create a more democratic and ethical atmosphere in their particular context (Kincheloe, 2011b). Unlike transmission-based models of training that focus on the positivist and validated contents to stick to the standardization of all particular settings, the critical complex paradigm in teacher education advocates that teachers should equip themselves with diverse knowledge bases to uncover the inequalities and recognize the complex aspect of practice to improve it.

Finally, a critical perspective can also be implemented in classrooms by making links between classroom practices and sociocultural theory since sociocultural theory is based on co-construction and communication, making students central to schooling practices (Gray, 2019). Providing a liberating teaching-learning environment less susceptible to power inequalities depends on learners' centralized roles in their schooling experiences.

2.1.2.3. Tools for a Critical Teacher Education

In line with the critical objectives, CP also offers the emancipatory tools to promote critical teacher learning (Figure 4).

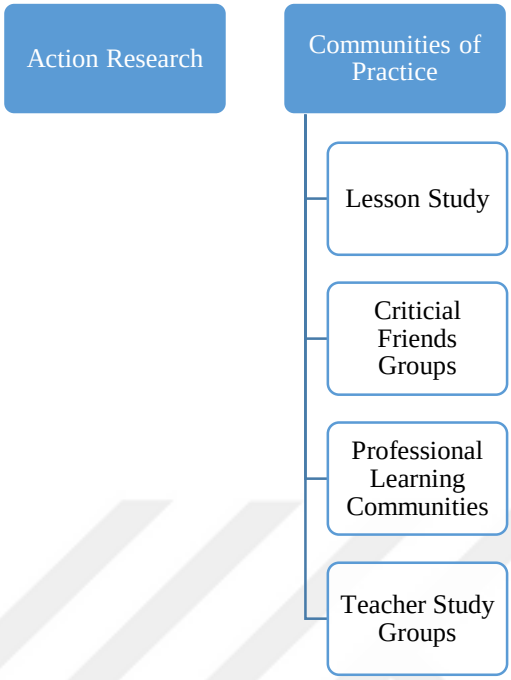

Figure 4: Tools for a critical teacher education

First, action research is regarded as a transformative and emancipatory tool for teacher education. From the perspective of critical theory, action research is considered a tool enabling teachers to pursue democratic and reflective practices through interrogation. Action research is a part of the qualitative paradigm that emerged as a reaction to the positivist approach in social science, and developments in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and critical theory (Foucault, 1970) highly influenced the participatory and interpretive aspects of the action research (Burns, 2005). Teachers applying action research can understand their own practices, go through a conceptual change, and be aware of social forces affecting the school, which is generally not integrated into teacher education programs (Kincheloe, 2011c). Critical action research also helps teachers to be a part of the researchers' community, which can pave the way for more empowered identities and educational betterment in teaching/learning practices. Being a part of such a community can enhance reflective and collaborative inquiry skills and be a turning point for social change (Kincheloe, 2011c). Another significance that can be attributed to critical action research is that it enhances a democratic way to produce and use knowledge for the benefit of teachers and learners (Kincheloe, 2011c). In this sense, the importance attached to action research is in line with how Burns (2010) describes action research: "The teacher becomes an investigator or explorer of his or her personal teaching context, while at the same time being one of the participants in it" (p.2). Likewise, Dikilitaş and Griffiths (2017) touch upon how action research enables teachers to develop their

awareness and autonomy in professional development. Action research contributes to teachers' professional growth since teachers can adopt a bottom-up approach to identify critical issues in their teaching in a contextualized way by monitoring the whole process and outcomes, which raises their ownership and agency in the PD process and fosters the liberation of teachers (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017).

Considering the role of knowledge to have power (Foucault, 1970), teachers can empower themselves through action research; otherwise, they may lack knowledge because of insufficient teacher education programs. As teachers engage more in sense-making and re-interpreting the realities they have been exposed to for many years, they may have a chance to reposition themselves as knowledge producers (Kincheloe, 2011c). The role of critical action research in changing an educational setting in the short run and then society in the long run informs about the transformational aspect of action research (Kincheloe, 2011c). Likewise, teachers can share what they have found with other people, which has the potential to yield more questioning and create a more collective change in education (Kincheloe, 2011c). Also, teachers who engage in research in their settings can empower themselves and their students by creating a chance to reconstruct their identities, making meaning out of the multi-layered reality of their settings, and raising their awareness reflexively in an autonomous way (Kincheloe, 2003; 2011c). As theory and practice are not contrastive but dialectical, teachers can use action research to relate their practical knowledge to empirical knowledge in a reflective way, enabling them to take responsibility for their professional learning (Kirk, 1986).

Second, communities of practice (LS, CFG, PLC, TSG) can also function as an empowering mechanism for teachers in that they can collaborate with one another to educate the public for a more transformative and democratic education (Edwards, 2001). According to Kincheloe (2011b), a critical complex teaching perspective enables teachers to generate knowledge and progress their intellectual development. Communities of practice are convenient to accomplish this goal since such communities do not only aim to help teachers but also the public to raise people's awareness about the role of education in life. Communities of practice can also function as a community defending social justice by ensuring that people from all backgrounds are given the right to be educated (Horn, 2000; Smyth, 2001). In this perspective, the CPD models based on the philosophy of communities of practice are Lesson Study (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002; Lewis & Hurd, 2011), Critical Friends Groups (Curry, 2008), Professional Learning Communities (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008), and Teacher

Study Groups (Francis et al., 1994), and these models can be utilized to provide critical teacher education.

From the perspective of critical pedagogy, teachers are responsible for equipping students with the qualifications required to be a democratic society and democratic individuals, which is only possible with lifelong learning. The gap between policymakers and practitioners stems from policymakers' lack of on-site practice and their ignorance of on-site concerns. It makes it necessary for teachers to have a voice in decision-making for a democratic society where education is transformative and empowering (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c). In this regard, communities of practice can offer the chance to transform and empower teachers.

2.2. Literature Review

2.2.1. Teacher Professional Development

Professional Development (PD) is a term used to describe any actions teachers take to improve their careers after graduation from pre-service education (Richards & Farrell, 2011). The need for professional development stems from pre-service language teacher education failing to make teachers adapt and improve their knowledge and practice, leaving them behind the era's needs and expectations (Hayes & Chang, 2012). PD is a multidimensional concept that includes objectives for teachers and learners since it aims to contribute to teachers' existing knowledge, skills, and practice and eventually improve students' learning opportunities (Alfaki, 2014; Guskey, 2000). PD plays a critical role in education since successful learning outcomes for students highly depend on the quality of teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The consequences of PD programs after pre-service education for teachers are likely to be beneficial in that they can sustain their professional growth (Desimone et al., 2002). There is a variety of PD practices depending on the program length determined by teacher educators. Traditional PD activities are not based on a long-term plan because these activities are generally one-shot workshops, seminars, or conferences; however, alternative PD activities aim to profoundly affect lifelong teaching and learning practices in the long run (Desimone et al., 2002). These alternative PD activities are generally conceptualized as Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and the main goal of CPD is to transform teachers and their students into lifelong learners (Day, 1999; Jasper, 2006).

Unlike traditional PD activities that are generally transmission-based and trainer-oriented, which means trainers have an expert role and are responsible for transmitting knowledge through one-shot activities such as workshops and seminars, alternative CPD

activities prioritize more teacher-oriented activities, and they aim to make contributions to reconstruction of identity in a collaborative manner (Dikilitaş, 2015; Johnson, 2009). Traditional PD activities are inherently top-down (Chang, 1998) and product-oriented since the authority determines the content of the knowledge and how it is delivered. Teachers have a passive role in their learning (Kasi, 2010). Teachers are not actively integrated into these traditional, top-down activities, which results in no significant effects on teacher autonomy and collaboration skills (Gándara et al., 2005; Atay, 2006). Traditional PD approaches fail to help teachers improve their teaching skills fruitfully because what teachers need is not considered while designing these activities (Fiszer, 2004). Also, traditional PD fails to offer sustainable outcomes for teachers since it does not provide follow-up activities and opportunities for teachers to observe and get feedback from their peers or trainers (Bayram & Bıkmaz, 2021).

Failures in traditional and top-down PD models brought about a need for transformation: a tendency for more process-oriented and bottom-up CPD models (Crandall, 2000). This transformation in perspective from PD to CPD enabled teachers to equip themselves with more contemporary skills to catch up with the new expectations and needs of the era (Dikilitaş, 2015). According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), an effective PD should include a content-based approach, active engagement of teachers, collaboration, reflective practices, feedback opportunities, and expert support within a continuous period. In this sense, alternative CPD models are based on a process-oriented, bottom-up, and teacher-oriented structure, and teacher needs and expectations are integrated into the program, designed in line with recent technological and instructional approaches in a collaborative way (Dikilitaş, 2015). In bottom-up CPD models, teachers have a say in their learning process because they are encouraged to continuously assess their learning progress by criticizing and reflecting on their practices (Uysal, 2012; Macias, 2017; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

In this regard, there is a variety of CPD models that can be utilized for teachers' professional growth. As highlighted in the theoretical framework part, narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, 2011), lesson study (Fernandez & Chokshi, 2002), action research (Burns, 2005; Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017), reflective practice (Burns & Richards, 2009; Farrell, 2016), and collective teacher groups such as critical friends groups (Curry, 2008), communities of practice (Edwards, 2001), and teacher study groups (Francis et al., 1994) can be used as CPD models. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, CDP offers many activities that can be sustained and utilized within the models. These activities include reflective teacher journals, audio/video dairies of the classroom (Richards & Farrell, 2011); teacher portfolios including lesson plans, student

assessment, and other materials to review (Nodoushan, 2010); peer observation/mentoring (Murray, 2010); and peer coaching (Hismanoglu, 2010). Being a part of ongoing in-service practices can enable teachers to update themselves with the recent approaches so that they cannot fall behind the era (Richards & Farrell, 2005). For this reason, CPD models and activities are of great importance, and institutions should provide a flexible atmosphere to let teachers have the freedom to decide on their needs collaboratively and ask for relevant CPD activities for their professional growth (Khan, 2009; Kabilan et al., 2011; Hung, 2016).

In this study, three of these CPD models (teacher study group, action research, and reflective practice) were integrated to create an environment where teachers could collaborate to foster teacher knowledge and conduct research to improve the effectiveness of instructional practices with the help of some CPD activities including reflective journal, peer observation, and collaborative feedback.

2.2.2. EFL Teachers' PD Needs and Expectations

Regarding the potentialities that CPD tools offer for the PD of EFL teachers, it is vital to shed light on the actual needs and expectations of EFL teachers to grasp how the affordances of CPD tools (TSG, AR, reflective practice) compromise with what teachers need and expect. This part of the literature review focuses on international and national studies on teachers' perceptions of their PD needs and expectations. There is plenty of research on how teachers perceive PD and evaluate the PD opportunities their institutions offer. The following studies conducted in various contexts help identify tertiary-level EFL teachers' preferences and expectations from PD.

Meng and Tajaroensuk (2013) aimed to reveal what tertiary-level EFL instructors teaching at a university in China think about the problems in their in-service education and what they suggest to enhance the PD activities offered to them. The results show that the instructors find these activities need to be revised in scope and relevant to their needs. The teachers also state that the programs are not continuous. What they suggest for a better PD program is the integration of more collaborative activities so that they can collaborate with their colleagues and learn together.

Alfaki (2014) also investigated teacher perceptions regarding professional development in Sudan. The study shows that secondary-level teachers mostly have positive attitudes towards professional development, and they shed light on the role of collaboration and reflective actions. However, teachers also point out that they need to be responsible for their professional growth, so they emphasize the necessity to be included in decision-making

processes (for professional development) employed by Institutional administration or government.

Al Asmari (2016) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia with 121 English language teachers from various countries who had varied educational and academic experiences participated in the survey. The survey included items regarding learning approaches, the concept of professional development, perceptions and feedback on CPD. Findings show that the teachers support lifelong and experiential learning, leading towards a learner-centred approach. The teachers believe that CPD challenges their existing knowledge and classroom practice. However, they expressed needing more localized CPD activities, institutional support in classroom activities, and follow-up activities.

A study carried out with 70 Thai tertiary-level EFL teachers by Syamananda (2017) to investigate the factors motivating and demotivating the teachers in terms of professional satisfaction revealed that the teachers expect to get involved in interpersonal interactions with their colleagues and learners to share their experiences and knowledge. The teachers reported that being in a collegial interaction motivates them professionally. However, external factors, such as their profession's workload and financial status, demotivate them, resulting in lower professional satisfaction.

Likewise, Al-Bakri and Troudi (2020) conducted a study with 11 tertiary-level EFL teachers teaching in Oman. They explored the EFL teachers' perceptions of PD and the effectiveness of PD activities on their teaching. The findings show that even though the teachers know that PD is an integral part of their teaching, they have concerns about taking action or getting involved in PD activities. These concerns are mainly related to workload, financial concerns, and lack of institutional support to encourage teachers to engage in PD activities.

When it comes to the tertiary-level PD context in Türkiye, Çelik et al. (2013) investigated how important PD is to university-level EFL instructors in Türkiye, whether they take part in any PD activities voluntarily, and how effective they find these activities. Conducting a cross-sectional survey with 42 EFL instructors, Çelik et al. (2013) revealed that although EFL instructors find PD necessary for their professional growth, they often do not engage in voluntary PD activities because of the lack of financial/institutional support and workload. Çelik et al. (2013) also state that EFL instructors think the PD activities that they took part in before did not have a significant effect on their practices because they were mostly irrelevant to their needs. Finally, according to Çelik et al. (2013), while teachers are willing to

participate in PD activities that enable them to try new ideas in their classes, they are not keen on participating in peer observation through which they can evaluate one another.

Hismanoglu (2010) investigated what professional development strategies tertiary-level EFL teachers prefer to use in North Cyprus. For this purpose, the researcher conducted an open-ended questionnaire with 50 ELT teachers. Before presenting the findings, Hismanoglu (2010) provides a literature review consisting of several professional development strategies such as peer coaching, study groups, mentoring, action research, teaching portfolios, in-service training, and team teaching. The findings indicate that most ELT teachers believe professional development is necessary for their careers. However, only 30% of the teachers reported using strategies such as participatory practitioner research, professional development portfolios, and study groups for their professional growth. Teachers were observed to neglect more collaborative professional development strategies, which reveals a need to encourage ELT teachers to participate in more effective professional development strategies that foster collaboration, interaction, and communication.

Mahmoudi and Özkan (2015) carried out a study based on a possible assumption that experienced and novice teachers may differ from one another in terms of the way they benefit from professional development activities. The study aimed to reveal the differences between experienced and novice teachers regarding their perceptions towards PD and PD activities in a Turkish context. The data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, 60 EFL teachers at a tertiary level answered a questionnaire adapted from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2010). Then, 12 (six experienced and six novice) participated in a focused group interview. The results show that the themes from the qualitative data are highly correlated with the quantitative data. Even though all teachers find PD beneficial, novice and experienced teachers differ in their PD preferences. Experienced teachers preferred mentoring/peer observation and coaching, reading professional literature, education conferences or seminars, and observation visits to other schools/institutes, respectively. However, novice teachers preferred courses/workshops, a network of teachers formed particularly for the professional development of teachers, reading professional literature, and engaging in informal dialogue with their colleagues on how to improve their teaching.

Çelik et al. (2013) conducted a cross-sectional survey with tertiary-level Turkish and Lithuanian EFL instructors to compare the attitudes of two groups of teachers working in different countries towards PD activities they attended. The results show that while Lithuanian instructors are content with the activities held by their institute, Turkish EFL instructors find

these activities irrelevant to their actual needs. In addition, Lithuanian instructors think financial issues might prevent them from participating in PD activities; however, Turkish instructors find excessive workload as a detrimental factor inhibiting their willingness to pursue professional growth.

The studies conducted in Turkish contexts show that various external factors inhibit tertiary-level EFL teachers' willingness to participate in PD activities. The teachers' lack of motivation for PD is also attributed to time limitations, lack of needs analysis, and the institutions' top-down nature of PD programs (Hos & Topal, 2013). Besides, EFL teachers may expect their institutions to take action to initiate PD programs for them, which disregards the teachers' initiative role in taking responsibility for their PD (Yurtsever, 2013). According to Yurtsever (2013), this expectation may stem from teachers' not feeling free to take action for their PD. Hence, administrators' institutional support and supportive leadership are vital in shaping new PD approaches, which focus more on collaboration, collegiality and reflection, in line with teachers' needs and expectations (Yılmaz, 2016). In this regard, administrators are also expected to consider teachers' voices for new programs and perspectives in PD (Arıkan, 2006).

2.2.3. Teacher Professional Development Policies in Türkiye

Official teacher education in Türkiye started with the foundation of Darülmuallimin (Teacher's School) in İstanbul on March 16, 1948 (Aydın, 2007). Gazi Teacher School in Ankara, founded in 1926, also had an essential role in training teacher candidates to meet teachers' needs in the country (Demircan, 1991). Even though this institute used to offer only pedagogy instruction, an English language department was started in 1941 (Demircan, 1991). Inıtially, a three-year program was provided for English teacher candidates at Gazi Institute of Education in 1967, but it was turned into a four-year program in 1978 (Nergis, 2011). After 1965, additional English language departments were founded, and after 1975, the number of students admitted to these institutes was increased to train more teachers; however, the quality of education did not meet the expectations due to unplanned policies for language teacher education (Demircan, 1988; 1991). According to Altundiş (2006), the policies that were put into effect between 1940 and 1980 by the governments were based on increasing the number of courses and departments to train more teachers; however, the teacher candidates admitted to these programs were not qualified in pedagogy, which resulted in a failure in language teaching in Türkiye. To standardize teacher education programs, all teacher education institutes were transferred to universities as faculties of education after The Higher Education

Institution Law passed in 1982 (Öztürk, 2005). In 1989, the duration of teacher education programs was determined to be four years in all branches (Nergis, 2011), and the content of these programs was redesigned in order to integrate more practice and professional knowledge for teacher candidates (Sağlam & Kürüm, 2005).

Even though there have been many efforts to increase the opportunities to train English teachers, many learners do not achieve to reach the expected proficiency level in Türkiye (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2007). One of the reasons for this failure is attributed to the ineffective performance of language teachers (Seferoğlu, 1996; Büyükkantarcıoğlu, 2004). For this reason, there have been many attempts to improve pre-service education (Seferoğlu, 1996; Yavuz, 2011); however, Özer (2005) states that the role of in-service teacher education should also be taken into account to increase the quality of language education in Türkiye.

English language teachers were trained by the Ministry of National Education (MONE)until 1981. After YÖK was founded in 1981, foreign language education emerged as a department taught at universities (Guven, 2008; Çakır, 2017). This change was carried out to promote the quality of teacher education programs (Tercanlıoğlu, 2004). At these ELT departments, pre-service EFL teachers have to study for four years if they are not required to have a one-year English preparatory class. ELT departments offer some compulsory and elective courses from other departments (Karakas, 2012). Even though the current ELT departments are more convenient than the former versions, reforms initiated by YÖK have generally been about the quantitative aspects of development, such as duration and the quote of the programs, which shows that there is a need for qualitative developments in ELT programs for more effective teacher education (Köksal & Ulum, 2018).

In-service teacher education is provided by MONE through the Chair of In-Service Training (INSET) for primary and secondary school teachers (Şahin, 2006). Even though PD programs determined by INSET are under the official control of the government, primarily non-public organizations design the content of these programs rather than academic institutions, which results in efficiency problems (Işık, 2008). Moreover, PD policies and practices implemented by INSET are neither stable nor sustainable since the policy-makers in these positions are generally replaced with new ones, and the political agenda of governments continuously shapes the policies to be implemented (Işık, 2008). In this sense, it can be said that INSET policies and practices do not bring about a qualitative shift in professional development, and the number of teachers benefiting from these practices is dramatically lower than expected (Nergis, 2011).

As for the tertiary level EFL teachers, no official institute or foundation is responsible for their professional growth. Some universities have their own professional development programs, and some seminars and workshops are held for teachers (Özer, 2005). Lack of sufficient and adequate CPD activities causes many instructors to take responsibility to search for recent approaches to stay updated in their teaching practices (Daloglu, 2004; Altan, 2006). Daloglu (2004) also reminds us that most of the activities organized by universities do not meet the needs and expectations of the instructors since these activities are generally irrelevant and determined by the administration in a top-down manner (Çelik et al., 2013). Even though many instructors want to be involved in CPD activities voluntarily, they cannot achieve their goals because their excessive workload, the financial burden of these activities, and the lack of support from their institutes prevent them from participating in these activities (Seferoğlu, 1996). Besides, Çelik (2011) points out that teachers lack motivation to maintain CPD activities because they think that their passive role in the education system does not allow them to take the initiative to lead a change in their context.

As it can be deduced from this short history of foreign language teacher education in Türkiye, one reason why teacher education is not as effective as expected is that there is a lack of coordination between MONE and YÖK, which results in fragmented and inconclusive teacher education policies and practices (Seferoğlu, 2004). Besides, policies determined by these institutes are generally affected by the political agenda of governments, and these policies are not based on a well-planned and long-term philosophy (Nergis, 2011).

Considering the PD policies at tertiary-level educational contexts and the studies revealing teachers' needs, expectations, and impediments concerning their professional growth, collaborative PD activities depending on actual needs and a bottom-up perspective can be seen as an essential step to teacher development. In this sense, teacher study groups (TSG) can function as a CPD model serving the needs of in-service EFL teachers since TSG can offer a new perspective to take the responsibility to tailor the PD activities in line with what teachers need and expect to develop professionally.

2.2.4. Teacher Collaboration and Teacher Study Groups

Based on teachers' needs and expectations, language teachers do not have enough access to collaborative and contextually relevant PD activities. The need for re-thinking existing teaching practices in order to transform these practices into more contemporary and effective tools for student achievement requires a new approach to Professional Development through which teachers can both learn and teach and acquire new perspectives towards their

pedagogical knowledge and instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). In this regard, collaborative learning communities built upon reflective practice (Farrell, 2014) have been a prominent aspect of PD (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Cochran-Smith, 2004). There are some model names in PD based on this perspective. These Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998), which is a term to encompass all teacher groups that are based on reflective practice, are Professional Learning Communities (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), Critical Friends Groups originating from the National School Reform Faculty in the US (Snow-Gerono, 2005), Reflective Practice Groups (Distad et al., 2000), Lesson Study (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004), and Teacher Study Groups (Francis et al., 1994). These communities have similar goals and values towards PD, such as collaboration, inquiry-based activities, and reflection with a systematic and continuous stance (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Communities of practices inherently aim to foster teacher and student learning through teachers' collaborative practices (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Despite varying models and structures of teachers' collaborative practices, communities of practice are generally formed to transform the educational context by sharing teaching experiences and strengthening the sense of belonging among colleagues (Servage, 2008). Professional Learning Communities have been the most common label describing this kind of PD group. Teacher Study Groups (TSGs) are a Professional Learning Community (PLC) specifically for teachers. While there might be many PLCs in various sectors, TSGs are unique to teachers. Even though these two models are quite similar in concept, TSG was chosen as a name for this study to emphasize the community of teachers (Firestone et al., 2023). For this reason, the background history of TSGs is related chiefly to PLCs and other communities of practice, and they have a lot in common.

PLC in teacher education is described as a group of teachers who share some common goals, values, and beliefs, have a strong desire to learn, and act on their learning in a systematic and continuous way (Hord, 1997). The main objective of this community of practice is to increase the effectiveness of teaching practices and enhance student learning in a sustainable way (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Besides, PLCs aim to create a culture of collaboration through communities (Thompson et al., 2004). PLC can yield enhanced professional growth for teachers if they can collaborate with other members of PLC, reflect on their teaching practices, and employ inquiry-based activities to recognize whether their practices lead to effective learning outcomes (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Sense of belonging, sharing responsibility collaboratively, a sense of community, and transforming the context based on democratic values (Servage, 2008) are the fundamental essentials of communities of practice, such as

PLCs and TSGs. According to Snow-Gerono (2005), PLCs are successful in PD because these groups value collaboration and provide a comfortable environment for teachers to discuss their concerns about uncertainties in their practices, which fosters teachers' willingness to have an inquiry-oriented approach to their teaching.

Similarly, CFG is a community of practice based on the principles of sociocultural learning theory because it is assumed that an individual's role in shaping society is as important as the society's role in shaping the individual (Van Lare & Brazer, 2013). Differing from TSG, CFG is formed and implemented as a community of practice by 5 to 12 participants, and the interactions are structured based on pre-planned protocols (NSRF, 2014). CFG mainly aims for teacher development by providing reflective and collaborative teaching practices to transform teaching practices in a reflective and democratic way (Snow-Gerono, 2005; Vo & Nguyen, 2010). Critical friendships within the group are expected to help teachers create spaces for exchanging thoughts and experiences and giving and receiving feedback to tune teaching practices (NSRF, 2014). Using various protocols, CFG members can work collaboratively on student work, teachers' questions, research articles, and execute peer observations to enrich teaching quality (Aktekin, 2019). In this sense, a CFG can function as a community where teachers can plan and guide their conversations, reflections, and discussions regarding their beliefs and practices. By doing so, teachers can feel better and prepared to engage in their profession since CFG helps them work collaboratively, touch upon classroom dilemmas, focus on teaching and learning specific academic content, and establish strong relationships (Aktekin, 2019).

Considering the essential role of collaboration in performing reflective practice, RPGs, as a community of practice, offer a social platform for teachers to integrate reflective and collaborative practices in a supportive environment that can foster personal and professional growth (Distad et al., 2000). Differing from TSGs, RFGs mainly emphasize revealing teachers' challenges and analyzing them in a supportive and collegial environment (Distad & Brownstein, 2004). As a CPD tool, RFG encourages teachers to collaboratively reflect on their previous and existing practices to build transformative future practices (Distad & Brownstein, 2004). Providing a socially constructive and democratic environment for teachers, an RFG aims to increase teacher efficacy since teachers can end up with improved teacher knowledge, diversified perspectives, and professional satisfaction, which might result in a sound betterment in classroom practices (Distad & Brownstein, 2004). Hence, an RPG can be regarded as a contemporary and continuous PD tool that could foster teachers' collegiality and

pedagogical richness because of the role of collaborative, reflective practices in psychological well-being and improved teacher knowledge (Aydın, 2020).

Lesson study (LS), as another form of community of practice, takes its roots in Japanese educational contexts. LS offers a Japanese approach to teacher development (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). Unlike TSG, LS is based on a pre-planned and well-structured procedure that must be followed step by step. As an inquiry-based community of practice (Johnson, 2009), LS aims to offer a long-term and transformative PD perspective that can engage teachers in a collaborative and reflective learning cycle within which they can use their practical knowledge to improve their teaching and their students' learning (Cheng, 2019). In an LS group, teachers are procedurally expected to co-plan, carry out and discuss a model lesson. Then, teachers are advised to revise the model lesson according to discussion outcomes and re-teach the reconstructed lesson, followed by a collaborative reflection on the revised form (Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). In this regard, LS can function as a transformative PD tool to contribute to teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, individual and collaborative reflective practices, reflexive professional learning, and sociocultural learning practices in goal-oriented teacher groups (Uştuk, 2020).

As for the TSG, this form of community of practice is based on teachers' collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based practices to transform their educational settings (Carroll, 2005; Francis et al., 1994). Considering the critical role of collaborative action research on teachers and institutes where they teach (Burns, 1999), TSGs are also defined as one of the inquiry-based approaches for PD of teachers (Johnson, 2009). In addition to providing a convenient context for collaborative action research, TSGs enable teachers to explore better teaching and learning practices together (Clair, 1998). Teachers in TSGs can engage in interactive talk and create new ideas collaboratively (Carroll, 2005). TSGs also serve as a tool for inquiry-oriented activities and practice-based analysis (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). TSG is accepted as a professional learning community through which teachers set collective goals for their PD and meet regularly and systematically to achieve them (Ermeling, 2010; Lambson, 2010). In this sense, TSGs are inquiry-based collaborative models that require teachers to critically reflect on their practices collaboratively with the aim of transforming their actions (Francis et al., 1994). This transformation is assumed to be the basis of instructional and institutional change eventually, which shows that teachers can empower themselves by leading the change (Little, 1984; 1990; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1993; 1994). One aspect of TSGs that can liberate teachers is that TSGs do not mandate a strict protocol to be followed (Clair, 1998).

Instead, TSGs allow teachers to decide on the content and the process of the study in accordance with their needs and expectations (Clair, 1998).

TSGs have three main objectives that can benefit teachers' professional growth (Clair, 1998). Firstly, TSGs aim to transform teachers' perspectives towards access to knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). First, this CPD model has the potential to encourage teachers to think independently and take responsibility to access knowledge rather than taking part in transmission-based PD models based on receiving information from the expert, which is a transformative approach that can foster teachers' ownership in PD (Clair, 1998). Secondly, TSGs can function as a transformative means to change teachers' perceptions of PD by addressing how teachers can take control of their PD through this model (Clair, 1998). Thirdly, TSGs can build on the collective power of teachers by showing that they can identify and solve their instructional practices, and they can minimize the inequities in the classroom by maximizing the learning opportunities (Clair, 1998), which is aligned with what is intended within the framework of critical pedagogy. Besides, teachers can also adopt new teaching skills based on their practices in TSGs and transfer these skills into their classroom so that learners can also make use of some essentials of TSGS, such as collaboration and reflection on performance (Fullan, 1991), which is one of the underlying features of sociocultural theory.

The CPD model implemented in this study is quite similar to the inquiry-oriented professional learning communities defined by Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008). Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) make a distinction among the terms "knowledge for practice" (describes the knowledge provided through traditional PD activities that are mostly one-shot; "knowledge in practice", which refers to the implementation of the knowledge acquired through the PD, and a new type of knowledge "knowledge of practice", which is gained through systematic inquiry when teachers raise questions on their own teaching. Regarding these three types of knowledge, there is a need for a comprehensive CPD model that can acknowledge all three types of knowledge. In this sense, a CPD model including two driving forces, action research and TSGs, can help teachers learn in multiple ways and change their practices. Developing an inquiry-oriented perspective on teaching through action research and empowering teachers and their collaborative growth through TSGs can lead to more powerful effects on social change, social justice, and teaching practices.

According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008), there are ten requirements for a well-functioning inquiry-oriented teacher collaboration:

1. Establish a vision creating momentum for the work (community building, creating a vision for the process, identification of the school improvement goals and dilemmas,

choosing the proper protocols for discussion, determining a shared focus for the group)

2. Build trust among group members (improving the quality of in-group relationships, developing trust and compassion within the group, establishing goals and ground rules collaboratively, using trust-building activities)
3. Pay attention to the ways power can influence group dynamics (defining/analyzing/building power, self-assessing and monitoring to prevent the misuse of the power, expressing collective wisdom about power to feel more empowered)
4. Understand and embrace collaboration (the key role of collaboration for the culture of inquiry, setting up critically reflective processes and norms that can guide the group, the role of team-building activities and peer observation)
5. Encourage, recognize, and appreciate diversity within the group (acknowledging diverse values, beliefs, knowledge, skills, and philosophies; generating energy to change, unproductivity of homogeneity; developing critical friendship)
6. Promote the development of critical friends (the role of individuals who can critically reflect on their own thinking to learn more, engaging in essential talks that carefully confront and inquire into the issues being explored)
7. Hold the group accountable for and document learning (the role of the coach to document the collective work of the group, to support the members to document their own work, to use of action research and reflective journals to document learning)
8. Understand change and acknowledge the discomfort it may bring to some PLC members (developing a learning process encouraging the members to get out of their comfort zones and have insights into the areas in which they may experience more difficulty)
9. Have a comprehensive view of what constitutes data and are willing to consider all types of data throughout the group work (the role of student data acquired through action research, bringing data from the class to the meetings)
10. Work with building administrators (the important role of administrators; their success, patience, desire for change; support from administrators)

TSG, as a CPD model, requires teachers to create a wondering that can lead to subsequent steps of a teacher inquiry. According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008), there are both individual and collective wonderings. While the former emerges from issues, tensions, and dilemmas that teachers face with the complexity of teaching, the latter emerges

from commonly felt- difficulties or as a reaction to whole-school data. In both cases, wonderings do not appear instantly because they require teachers to deal with problems and questions through brainstorming (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). For this reason, coaches are expected to establish a playground where teachers can discuss and reflect on their felt difficulties in order to create an atmosphere that can lead to collective wonderings in the group. After the wondering is ignited, the coach of the group is expected to support teachers in developing an action research plan that will be used both for group discussions and classroom practice (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008).

All in all, TSG is regarded as an effective PD tool that can increase the quality of collaborative inquiry practices of teachers and yield opportunities to re/co-construct teachers' knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Teachers' engagement in collaborative inquiry practices within a TSG can enable them to improve their pedagogies by sharing their practical knowledge, co-constructing new knowledge, and reflectively co-evaluating their progress (Hung & Yeh, 2013). The flexible aspect of TSGs allows teachers to work on a variety of issues from diverse perspectives in line with their contextual routines and needs (Ermeling, 2010).

2.2.5. A Review of Previous Research On Teacher Study Groups and Teacher Collaboration

Several TSG studies are conducted in various contexts with teachers from various levels. The main objective of these studies was to implement a program encouraging teachers to work together for collaborative learning and transformative changes in teaching practices. The following studies show how participating in a TSG contributed to teachers' professional growth. However, as the number of studies on TSGs is limited, relevant studies based on other communities of practice and teacher collaboration are also included in this review to provide a holistic view of the literature. Hence, the studies concerning other forms of collaboration are presented after previous TSG studies are introduced and analyzed.

Hung and Yeh (2013) attempted to explore how teacher study groups encouraged teachers to make changes in their professional lives through a model, "The Interconnected Model of Teacher Professional Growth", introduced by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002). As this model elaborates on four major domains of "teacher change", it provides a comprehensive theoretical framework to evaluate teacher change after teachers get involved in a collaborative inquiry. The model is based on the External Domain (ED, external source of information), Personal Domain (PD, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), Domain of

Practice (DP, professional experimentation), and Domain of Consequence (DC, salient outcomes). Enactment and reflection practices of teachers are also integrated into this model. While the former refers to the practical actions teachers employ as a result of "teacher change", the latter is about how teachers evaluate this action in learning outcomes. The study revealed that the teachers were engaged in interactive reflection on their enactive practices: (*1) sharing practical knowledge, (2) co-designing teaching activities, and (3) self-appraising classroom teaching* throughout the process of the teacher study group. The teachers were most concerned with their own teaching experiences in the classroom. The findings also revealed three prominent patterns of teacher change: change sequence I (ED to DP), change sequence II (ED to DP to PD), and change sequence III (ED to DP to DC). These change sequences were mediated by the teachers' enactment and reflection, which shows how teacher change occurred and evolved in the teacher study group. The emerging interactional patterns from the conceptual lens of the Interconnected Model make it easier to analyze "teacher change" and "group learning process" in a comprehensive way.

Along the same lines, Li and Jones (2019) also conducted a TSG intervention program with three EFL teachers working at the tertiary level in China based on a model. This intervention program was based on Desimone's (2009) PD model, highlighting five key components that should be considered to make a PD program more effective: content focus, duration, collective participation, active learning and coherence. The other model on which this PD program was designed is the MUSIC model of motivation by Jones (2009). This model is the acronym for empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring (Jones, 2009). The intervention program aimed to reveal what teachers and students needed for a better teaching and learning experience through surveys with teachers and students and interviews with teachers. Based on the findings, teachers were encouraged to implement a one-semester presentation group activity in the class to foster learners' interest and collaborative skills. Final surveys and interviews revealed that both teachers and students found this intervention beneficial for their teaching and learning progress (Li & Jones, 2019).

To trace changes in teachers' knowledge, Álvarez (2020) investigated how teacher study groups helped 3 EFL teachers reconstruct their beliefs and practices regarding intercultural communicative competence. The teachers participated in a collective case study and were expected to complete face-to-face interviews, study group sessions, and reflective logs at the end. The teachers were also expected to actively participate in study groups to critically discuss materials that include cultural biases and gain intercultural communicative competence. The study revealed that the teachers had a chance to reconstruct their identities

through critical discussions, reflections, and professional change. The teachers could leave their mainstream-oriented communicative beliefs behind and adopt a perspective that can meet the requirements of an intertwined world. The teachers also raised their awareness about cross-cultural knowledge in order to rely on a more dynamic aspect of culture rather than a stereotyped perspective, which paved the way for a need to make pedagogical changes to increase learners' intercultural awareness, too.

In addition to intercultural awareness, TSGs can play a significant role in promoting teachers' pedagogical knowledge. In this sense, Huang (2007) conducted a study based on a teacher study group whose members came together to improve their English and foster their professional skills in Taiwan. The study was conducted with eight secondary-level teachers (5 English teachers and three teachers from other subjects), and the data were collected through observation sessions, focus group interviews, individual semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The teachers were expected to come together and discuss the assigned reading of the week. The study revealed that English teachers benefited from group discussions to strengthen their instructions and methodologies. As the teachers could exchange their experiences based on the readings, they could contribute to their content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Considering the sustainability of TSGs, Clair (1998) conducted a one-year TSG program with two groups of teachers (elementary and primary-level ESL teachers) in the US. The program outputs revealed that all teachers substantially utilized the TSG model since they had the chance to reflect on their practices collaboratively and deepen their understanding, resulting in better student learning outcomes. However, Clair (1998) also reminds us that there is a need for more practices and examples of TSGs to implement this CPD model better.

Another TSG study conducted by Carroll (2005) with elementary-level teachers and teacher candidates at this level revealed that TSGs provide a chance for teachers to maintain interactive talk and lead to the co-construction of ideas for new teaching skills, emphasizing the sustainability of TSGs.

Differing from previous studies, Lambson (2010) conducted a TSG program as a community of practice to bring experienced and novice teachers together. Findings obtained from ten primary school teachers (three of them were novice teachers) revealed that experienced teachers mediated the interactions and helped novice teachers participate more often. Both experienced and novice teachers expressed that the model helped them to create better teaching practices.

In contrast to previous studies, Ermeling (2010) employed a TSG with four high school teachers teaching different subjects. Designing an inquiry-oriented program, Ermeling (2010) assisted teachers in identifying problems, planning the action, implementing the action, and assessing the results on teacher and student learning. The study revealed that teachers were able to create an innovation in their classrooms through this CPD model.

Differing from the other studies, Echeverri Sucerquia and Pérez Restrepo (2014) employed a critical perspective on teacher study groups in a Colombian context. In this sense, they investigated how an EFL TSG, which was formed to learn to teach the language from a critical perspective, experienced CP. A TSG comprising two teacher educators and three undergraduate and two graduate teachers engaged in collaborative learning practices based on CP readings, discussions, and classroom-based sharing. Based on the findings, Echeverri Sucerquia and Pérez Restrepo (2014) address that individual conceptualization of CP can be facilitated through collaborative learning practices, which enables teachers to have a better understanding of CP. Also, varying degrees of power familiarity with the CP within the study group are regarded to have a facilitative role in PD.

Likewise, basing the TSG on CP principles, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) aimed to investigate how a social justice language teacher education program can impact nine in-service teachers' developing a political perspective toward their work and leading a change inside and outside their school contexts. Based on a social justice education-based PD program by the teacher educator, the participant teachers worked in a study group, attended the workshops by the teacher educator, and discussed their practices and perspectives collaboratively. According to Sierra Piedrahita (2016), collaborative work with colleagues and students, in addition to reflections, helped the teachers to adopt a more conscious perspective towards social inequalities; however, the teachers' position as agents of change at their school could not affect the larger community due to time constraints.

The number of studies on TSGs is relatively limited since it takes a long time to create a TSG and maintain a program based on a well-documented plan. However, existing studies above broadly show that TSGs bring about transformative changes in teachers' professional lives by promoting their knowledge, awareness, and practice quality.

Regarding the limited number of TSG studies, I intended to make a holistic and comprehensive review of the literature by shedding light on other forms of communities of practice apart from TSGs. In this sense, I review previous studies implementing one of the forms of communities of practice (PLC, CFG, RPG, LS) or teacher collaboration for PD purposes.

The studies conducted on the effectiveness of PLCs revealed that integration of PLCs into PD practices of teachers enhanced teachers' pedagogical knowledge and improved their teaching skills (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). PLCs at schools also paved the way for more successful student learning (Wiley, 2001; Phillips, 2003; Berry et al., 2005). PLCs also contribute to teachers' collective efficacy (Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). Besides, an overview of previous studies mostly conducted in the US and UK contexts revealed that a successfully implemented PLC could result in substantial progress in teachers' performance and students' learning achievement (Vescio et al., 2008).

To document the improvement in teachers' practical knowledge, Aktekin (2019) started a CFG based on a need for university-level Turkish EFL teachers who need help bridging the gap between theoretical information provided through short-term workshops and practical knowledge to be used in the class. Six teachers worked together based on a protocol that helped them to plan and guide their conversations, reflections, and discussions regarding their beliefs and practices, which enabled the teachers to feel more satisfied and prepared for their profession since CFG helped them to work collaboratively, touch upon classroom dilemmas, focus on teaching and learning of specific academic content, and establish strong relationships among themselves (Aktekin, 2019). Likewise, Aydın (2020) investigated the developmental effect of an RPG formed with five tertiary-level Turkish EFL teachers. The teachers engaged in a nine-week reflective practice, including reflective writing and group meetings for reflection. The teachers' insights and experiences throughout the process revealed that the RFG was beneficial to the teachers in that they could develop their teacher selves, professional growth, and classroom pedagogies. The study also shows that the RPG can function as a CPD tool enacting high collectivity among colleagues and reflective learning in a collaborative cycle (Aydın, 2020). Another study was carried out by Uştuk (2020) to explore the PD practices of five tertiary-level EFL teachers through LS. The researcher collaborated with the teachers to conduct a one-semester LS program, including collaboration, reflection, learning-teaching cycles, and in-class implementations. The findings revealed that the LS contributed to the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, individual and collaborative reflective practices, reflexive PD perspectives, and collaborative and emancipatory learning practices within a community of practice (Uştuk, 2020).

When it comes to other forms of teacher collaboration apart from the models of communities of practice, these studies also document similar procedures and takeaways regarding teacher development. Abednia and Crookes (2019) formed an online community, including assigned readings, articles, videos, CP-informed ELT activities, and synchronous

and synchronous discussions, for seven in-service EFL teachers to construct and implement CP in Iran. Abednia and Crookes (2019) found that despite the contextual challenges of CP considering the social realities, the teachers focused on minimizing these challenges by collaborating through sharing-based learning practices, increasing their agency, criticizing the status quo, and uncovering their potential. Likewise, Ahmadian et al. (2021) explored how critical discussion circles as a PD tool impact 13 Iranian EFL in-service teachers' criticality, reflectivity, and professionality through a 12-week critical discussion circle through which the participants exchanged teaching practices, got feedback and discussed the reading materials collaboratively. By initiating the discussion circles, actively participating in the collaboration, and collaboratively reflecting on the discussion, the teachers could contribute to their self-growth and professional development (Ahmadian et al., 2021).

Apart from introducing new frameworks to teachers through teacher collaboration, some collaborative teacher groups focused on more particular subjects, such as social, political, and historical realities, to be studied within the group. For instance, Yeh (2005) explored shared learning practices of a teacher inquiry group and how Western-oriented teaching practices and theories are transferred to the Asian context through a one-year teacher inquiry group implementing group meetings, reflective journals, and e-mail dialogues. The inquiry group revealed that dialogic practices among group members led to the co-reconstruction of teacher positioning and transformative knowledge considering the cross-cultural multi-realities (Yeh, 2005). Similarly, Torres-Rocha (2023) examined how the professional identities of 5 tertiary-level EFL teachers who participated in a collaborative AR group evolved through reflective and collaborative practices considering Colombia's social and political realities. Based on the takeaways of the collaborative and reflective practices, Torres-Rocha (2023) addresses that the teachers have transformed their professional identities at varying degrees in relation to their individual experiences and positioning. Also, Kim et al. (2020) analyzed how the enactment of Critical Multiliteracies Pedagogy (CMP) through an international PD promotes 20 Korean EFL in-service teachers' meaning-based language and literacy practices. One-month international PD program, including a workshop with US peers and teacher educators and the design and implementation of one lesson with the US partner, PD led the teachers to adopt a critical perspective to read the world since they could transform their perspective towards their teaching practices and student identities as a result of their collaborative work.

Some collaborative studies also focused on the pedagogical investment for EFL teachers. In this sense, Shin (2008) investigated how an asynchronous online community of

inquiry can be formed by analyzing the interactions among teachers and their level of cognitive, social and teaching presence. Two implementations of a one-semester online PD course (with three instructional strategies to increase participation) with 61 EFL teachers from 29 Muslim-populated countries revealed that the online community contributed to the sense of community and social bonding. Also, including instructional strategies (word limit, formulated instructions, and modelling) increased the teachers' teaching, social and cognitive presence (Shin, 2008). Likewise, Pineda and Frodden (2008) formed a collaborative research group comprising four teachers and one teacher educator to solve the problems after implementing a new teaching policy in a bi-national centre teaching English. Based on the pedagogical takeaways of this group, Pineda and Frodden (2008) reported that collaborative and reflective actions enabled the novice teacher who participated in the research group to foster her autonomy, adopt new understandings, and create new ways to solve problems from a critical perspective.

To summarize, the review of the relevant literature shows that even though the number of TSG studies is limited, similar studies implemented in other forms of community of practice provide a comprehensive look into the nature of teacher collaboration and the role of teacher collaboration in PD of EFL teachers. Previous TSG studies document that teachers' collaborative and reflective practices in a study group substantially make them more motivated and prepared for PD, which results in increased collegiality, pedagogical improvement, better classroom learning and professional satisfaction. Similar collaborative groups have much in common with TSGs in that they also show that teachers' dialogic interactions within a community foster the professional, individual and social aspects of their lives.

2.2.6. TSG Tools

TSG, as a continuous PD model, aim to enrich teacher collaboration through inquiry-based approaches and reflective practices (Francis et al., 1994). Considering the professional objectives of a TSG, a variety of PD tools can be implemented in a TSG for professional growth. In this sense, to foster teacher collaboration and the professional growth of the teachers, I utilized several tools within the TSG process. I designed the PD program by using AR to offer an inquiry-based approach, and I used reflective practice to enable the teachers to reflect and co-reflect on their learning and AR process (Burns, 1999). To achieve the collaborative, inquiry-oriented, and reflective goals of the TSG, I also utilized some technological tools to provide a medium for collaboration and reflection. Hence, the following part of the literature review focuses on the TSG tools integrated into this PD program. AR,

reflective practice, and technology as PD tools and the interplay between these tools and the objectives of TSG are reviewed accordingly.

2.2.6.1. Action Research (AR)

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) point out that the history of teacher inquiry is based on three main research traditions: process-product research, qualitative paradigm, and teacher inquiry. The first is process-product research, which is directed from university research to classroom practices. Teachers do not have an active role because the research procedure is mostly executed by the university researcher (Shulman, 1986). The second research type is the qualitative paradigm, which acknowledges that teaching is complex and that researchers should explore teachers' experiences and practices in depth (Clark, 1995). Contrary to the passive participant roles attributed to teachers in the first two research traditions, teacher inquiry, as a third way, positions teachers as insider researchers by enabling them to reconstruct their knowledge, experiences, and beliefs, which can pave the way for changes in teachers' classroom practices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; 2005), and lead a social change in the long run (Kemmis, 1993). In this sense, teacher inquiry, teacher research, classroom research, action research and practitioner inquiry are used interchangeably to refer to the same paradigm (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Burns (2005) defines action research as a broad concept that helps people to make meaning out of a social situation and to improve their relations and actions in this context. As teachers have a more active role in identifying their own problems and pursuing changes in accordance with their needs, they can feel more motivated and empowered in their teaching sites. In this sense, action research enables teachers to generate their own practical knowledge out of inquiry. This enrichment in knowledge can pave the way for more sustainable and egalitarian relationships between teachers and communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Teachers do not have enough power in decisions and practices since they are expected to meet the expectations of administrators, politicians, and researchers (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). In this sense, action research/teacher inquiry/teacher research aims to transform the teaching profession by helping teachers to resolve the problems stemming from the complexity of teaching, empower them for reform, and transform their perceptions towards teaching (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Action research is also defined as a transformative tool in that it promotes the status of teachers by assigning them an active researcher role rather than making them passive supporters of an expert and outsider researcher (O'Leary, 2017). Action research is described as a process through which teachers can re-conceptualize their

understandings and initiate a social change based on their teacher knowledge, research process skills, context-specific knowledge emerging from research and democratic aspects of action research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). Greenwood and Levin (1998) also posit that action research is a powerful tool for teachers since this research type relies on context-specific issues, collaborative involvement of all parties, diverse dynamics of the group, goals to achieve a social change and deduce new meanings out of this change. Likewise, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) state that action research has a social justice focus to change the status quo while teacher research focuses on how to improve teaching by detecting problems occurring in the classroom. As research might be perceived as an intimidating concept by teachers, teacher inquiry, which is teachers' study of their own practices systematically, was coined as a more plausible construct.

Kolb (1984) also describes action research as a cycle including several stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Likewise, Elliot (1988) pinpoints that action research is based on the cycle of reflection and action:

- Identification of situational needs and problems clearly
- Planning of possible actions to resolve the problems and improve the situation
- Execution of action research plan and evaluation of the outcomes
- Clarification of the end-results (new insights that can be the basis of another cycle or improvement in teaching)

Differing from these two cycles stated above, Burns (2010) suggests that teachers should first reflect on a problem and plan, act, observe, re-reflect, and re-plan the instructional practices based on the findings. More specifically, Dikilitaş and Griffiths (2017) focus on four main stages and sub-components to complete action research: planning the plan for action research, carrying out the research, data analysis, and data interpretation, followed by taking action. Besides, it is generally known that action research is carried out to solve a problem. However, according to Burns and Richards (2012), teachers can employ action research after problematizing an issue rather than an obvious problem in the class. In this sense, action research is not solely solution-oriented; it also aims to equip teachers with new ways of thinking by encouraging them to think about interesting issues in the class and problematize them to start action research (Burns, 2010; 2015).

Along the same lines, O'Leary (2017) acknowledges that action research has three main driving forces. First, action research is grounded in real-life problems and seeks to resolve context-specific problems. Second, action search is a two-stage method to attain knowledge and change successively. The third driving force of action research is associated

with the extent to which practitioners take an active role in designing and implementing their research, which shows the democratic aspect of action research in that it foregrounds the empowerment and liberation of practitioners without subjugating them into the control realm of administrative stakeholders. O'Leary (2017) also touches upon participatory action research to account for the emancipation of practitioners through active engagement and pursuit of creating social change to dissolve social inequities. O'Leary also reminds us that action research is a cycle of observation, reflection, planning, and action, which is repeated in a cyclical way.

Teacher inquiry also originates from what Dewey (1933) defines as "reflective action", which can turn teachers into inquiry-oriented classroom practitioners. Considering the role of teachers in exploring problems and dilemmas about teaching (Schön, 1987), teacher inquiry can function as a tool to contribute to teachers' professional growth and educational reform (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). As teacher inquiry is defined as an intentional and systematic study conducted by teachers based on their own practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hubbard & Power, 1993; Dana et al., 1999), teachers involved in teacher inquiry are capable of taking responsibility for their own learning, reflecting on their teaching, revealing their wonderings, carrying out research requirements (reviewing the literature, collecting and analyzing data), changing their teaching practices accordingly, and sharing their studies with others. In this sense, integrating teacher inquiry into Professional Development (PD) programs prepared for teachers makes these programs quite different from what is offered through traditional PD, which lacks a sense of ownership (Cochran-Smith, 1991). A PD program prioritizing teacher inquiry can yield more consequential changes in teacher practice since what makes a PD program successful depends on to what extent it can make a difference/change in teachers' daily practices and students' learning (Nolan & Huber, 1989). In addition to changes in teaching/learning practices, teachers can have better control over their efforts to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Another aspect of teacher inquiry conducted collaboratively within a learning community is that it can foster teacher collaboration, which might bring about more innovative changes in a particular teaching context (DuFour & DuFour, 2007).

Engagement in teacher inquiry can have powerful effects on the professional growth of teachers, which is also supported by evidence from teacher research and university research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Teacher inquiry can facilitate instruction by providing a variety of options to implement differentiated instruction for students, which fosters individual differences. As mainstream course designs may not be satisfactory for considering individual

differences stemming from learning style, students' needs, interests, and readiness, teacher inquiry can enable teachers to adapt their materials more flexibly by taking into account differentiated problems detected through the inquiry (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2010). It also allows teachers to monitor their students' progress by continuously assessing their learning, exploring the effectiveness of the instruction or materials, setting goals relevant to learner needs, and adapting the materials as needed.

In addition to the enrichment in the curriculum and better learning opportunities for students, action research has a great potential to offer valuable knowledge and insights for teachers, teacher educators, academicians, and policy-makers because what is gained through action research leads to betterment in teaching practices by contributing to teachers' instructional practices and beliefs and the findings of this research process provide context-specific data for teacher educators, academicians and policy-makers (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). Considering the limited effect of academic research on teachers' practical knowledge, action research is also essential in that it plays a critical role in liberating teachers by providing them with the chance to pursue their personal needs autonomously and take action based on complete control over the research process (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). Therefore, action research is regarded as a substantial tool that fosters teacher autonomy and allows teachers to promote their instructional practices (Carr & Cemmis, 1986; Wang & Zhang, 2014).

A teacher inquiry process may result in theoretically sound changes in teachers' beliefs or significant changes in their practices. Reciprocally, these teachers may also contribute to the teacher inquiry by discussing the findings through different lenses or by extending the study with new data and participants (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Small changes initiated by teachers in their classrooms may yield more profound changes in classrooms compared to the effects of top-down policies mandated by the administration (Kincheloe, 1991). Engaging in teacher inquiry or utilizing the implications for classroom practices might be considered an indicator of teacher leadership because teachers take their own responsibility for exploring problems, enhancing their students' learning, and generating knowledge for their own professional growth (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Teachers can also collaboratively conduct action research with their peers and trainers, increasing the diversity of perspectives and a better understanding of issues (Burns, 1999; Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017).

Moreover, teachers can engage in larger groups and communities through action research, and their efforts to generate new meanings and insights out of their inquiry might reveal what is needed in society, which can lead to sound social change (Burns, 2007). A recent study aiming to review the impacts of action research from a holistic perspective by Edwards

(2021), based on the studies conducted on action research so far, addresses that action research has substantial benefits at micro, meso, and macro levels. According to Edwards (2021), micro-level impacts include cognitive development, teacher identity betterment, and instructional and research skills improvement. While meso-level benefits are generally related to the impacts of action research on the institute where teachers work, the macro-level benefits are about how systems and curricula go through a change as a result of action research findings (Edwards, 2021). In this sense, the reason why action research is a crucial tool for CPD is attributed to the opportunities that action research provides, such as collaboration, cooperation with trainers/experts, sharing findings with others, and the chance to reflect on instructional practices (Edwards, 2021).

Action research has been widely studied in language teacher education as a tool for CPD. A growing body of research focuses on various aspects of action research and contributions of action research on teachers' development, identity, skills, beliefs, and knowledge. In general terms, these studies take a process-oriented stance to reveal how teachers go through the cycle of action research.

Banegas et al. (2013), as teacher researchers at the secondary level in Argentina, conducted collaborative action research based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methods. These teachers conducted a cyclical process including issue identification, initial investigation, and action followed by intervention-evaluation-action. The data came from recorded meetings, group and individual interviews, observations, field notes, and student questionnaires. This collaborative action research revealed a growth in professional development and increased teacher motivation and autonomy. The teachers felt empowered after the process of reflection on their beliefs and practices, production of knowledge about their field, and collaboration. It also contributed to student motivation and language development.

As for the implementation of action research with the tertiary level teachers, Atay (2008) conducted a PD program considering the problems EFL teachers had in professional development as a result of their passive role in involvement in PD activities. This need led to the organization of a PD program encapsulating processes of theoretical knowledge, guidance, teacher research, reflection and collaboration with 62 EFL teachers divided into four groups. For each group, the program lasted six weeks (2 weeks for theoretical knowledge about the issues raised by the teachers, two weeks for the investigation of research and PD collaboratively, and two weeks for investigating the classroom and doing research). The data were collected from the narrative essays required from the teachers at the beginning of the

program about their understanding of research and PD in addition to the journals that had to be kept regularly throughout the program. Thematic analysis of the data indicates that the program had a positive effect on helping the teachers solve their instructional problems even though they had difficulty conducting and reporting their research. Collaborative teacher research can foster critical thinking, collaboration, and instructional effectiveness.

Differing from the previous studies, Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016) focused on a more specific area of inquiry and aimed to investigate the effects of action research as a CPD tool on three tertiary-level instructors' self-efficacy skills and how engaging in action research helps teachers to improve their researching skills. The findings revealed that taking part in action research enabled the instructors to promote their self-efficacy and instructional practices. Besides, the instructors improved their self-efficacy beliefs in action research after gaining enough experience.

In another study drawing attention to a specific area of development, Dikiltaş and Yaylı (2018) explored the effects of action research on the professional identity development of 15 EFL teachers working at high school preparatory classes in Türkiye. Four years of engagement in action research revealed that teachers were able to promote their sensitivity to student needs, raise their awareness for more successful teaching practices, become aware of the importance of self-development, and recognize the positive effects of collaboration.

Concerning how traditional PD and action research differ from one another in terms of teacher perceptions, Tanış and Dikilitaş (2018) investigated how nine tertiary-level EFL instructors perceived action research and how the instructors conducting action research for their PD differ from the ones who took part in more traditional PD activities. The findings show that while the instructors engaging in action research prioritize a bottom-up PD model based on life-long learning, collaboration, reflection on practice, and inquiry-based activities, the other group favours top-down PD models, including short-term and transmission-based activities, which have no room for reflection.

The studies generally offer an adequate explanation for how involvement in an action research cycle can create some paths to growth. Given that teachers take an active role in researching, action research is a transformative CPD tool that is likely to enable teachers to empower themselves by gaining insights into their practices and generating knowledge for their personal growth. In this sense, a TSG can function as a collaborative space to promote the collaborative aspect of AR by offering diverse perspectives and better professional outcomes in a collaborative and continuous cycle of learning (Burns, 1999; Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017).

2.2.6.2. Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is first conceptualized by Dewey (1933) as the act of careful and conscious consideration and questioning of any forms of existing beliefs, knowledge, and approaches. A conscious and active questioning of the actions performed by individuals enables them to direct their actions accordingly (Dewey, 1933.). Enacting reflective practice both during and after the action can provide opportunities to reframe the actions in accordance with emerging needs and goals (Schön, 1987). Hence, while reflection-in-action helps individuals to reconstruct their thinking quickly when taking a particular action, reflection-on-action allows the individuals to go through a deeper exploration of the previous action and thinking with the aim of betterment in thought and action (Schön, 1983). Besides, reflection-for-action (Killion & Todnem, 1991) allows individuals to reflect on future actions by anticipating probable actions and problems. Therefore, retrospective, introspective, and prospective dimensions of reflective practice offer a holistic frame to think and learn from thinking.

Considering the need for a continuous approach to language teacher education because of the ineffectiveness of short-term remedies offered through one-shot training and workshops, reflection can be regarded as an essential component of teacher learning in that it can support the continuous professional development of language teachers (Day, 1993). As reflective practice intends to merge learning and thinking by encouraging individuals to emphasize their retrospective and introspective thinking, reflective practices performed by teachers can be expected to enable them to reframe their prospective thoughts in light of the learning outcomes from the thinking process (Moon, 2013). According to Moon (2013), using reflective lenses constantly can offer a continuous perspective on learning since the teachers have the chance to learn from their teaching.

Reflection on teaching is key to the continuity of professional learning (Burns & Richards, 2009). Language teacher education and PD programs based on a stronger emphasis on reflection on teaching practice are considered to be vital in teachers' professional growth (Karakaş &Yükselir, 2020; Turhan & Kırkgöz, 2018). However, due to a lack of reflective practice in language teacher education programs (Akcan, 2010; Burns & Richards, 2009; Ceylan et al., 2017), integration of reflection into PD programs can enable the teachers to reconsider and reconstruct their previously constructed assumptions, beliefs and knowledge, which might lead to transformed perspectives in teaching (Farrell, 2016). Reflective thinking, as a PD tool for language teachers, functions as a mediational tool enacting a better understanding of experiential knowledge and reconceptualization of new academic knowledge

in relation to experiential knowledge (Johnson, 2009). Hence, engaging in reflective practices allows teachers to focus on how they think and teach, which results in reconstructed instructional beliefs and practices (Farrell, 2015). As reflective practice can be adopted as a CPD tool offering a life-long learning cycle (Johnson, 2009), teachers' familiarization with reflection and engagement in systematic reflective practices can enable them to systematize their thinking and develop new ways of thinking about their actions (Murphy, 2014). Hence, contrary to conventional PD tools positioning teachers as passive recipients of knowledge, language teachers can employ reflective practice to discover new thinking pathways that can emancipate their teaching and identities (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Systematicity in reflective practice can promote teacher learning from their thinking since having a well-systematized reflective frame can help teachers systematize their thinking and keep track of their personal progress (Farrell, 2015). Therefore, reflective practice is more effective if it is implemented with the consideration of some principles and frameworks. In terms of the principles, Farrell (2019) proposes that reflective practice should be:

- holistic
- evidence-based
- dialogic
- principally and practically integrated
- inquiring
- way of life

Farrell (2019) puts forward that a holistic perspective to reflection does not confine the reflective practice to classroom-based actions because teachers are expected to reflect on the issues impacting their everyday lives beyond the classroom. While evidence-based reflection allows teachers to make informed decisions in light of the data they collect, the dialogic aspect of reflection helps them to co-reflect on the evidence/data and explore new ways of thinking collaboratively. Farrell (2019) also emphasizes the role of reflection in bridging the gap between teacher beliefs and practices because reflective thinking can offer a compromising space to explore the gaps between teacher principles and actual practices. Reflective practice is also expected to be the driving force for teachers to have an inquiring disposition, enabling having reflective lenses to all practices in a continuous cycle. The final principle of reflective practice shows that reflective thinking should be a life practice since having a reflective perspective can equip individuals to be more aware of their thinking and make more informed decisions on how they think and why they think so throughout their lives.

Likewise, Farrell (2015) suggests a systematic framework for reflection in order to offer a guiding perspective to help teachers systematize their reflection process. According to Farrell (2015), an effective reflection process that can result in an improved and transformed teacher perspective should include five stages:

- philosophy
- principles
- theory
- practice
- beyond practice

While reflection on teachers' philosophy can reveal their overall dispositions and characteristics built since their birth, reflection on principles aims to shed light on teachers' beliefs, assumptions and perceptions regarding their teaching career. The third stage of the reflective practice, theory, allows teachers to build their own personal theories emerging from their reflection on philosophies and principles, which leads to informed and consistent perspectives built upon individual and professional experiences. Having formed their personas theories, teachers are expected to reflect on their teaching practices before, during, and after teaching, enabling teachers to synthesize their personal theories and teaching practices in a reconstructed way. Finally, the reflective process intends to provide teachers with a more comprehensive perspective to reflect beyond instructional actions by considering the macro-level factors influencing their positioning and actions in teaching, such as political, social, and moral issues, which equips teachers with critical reflective stance to the issues surrounding them (Farrell, 2015).

Reflective practice is not limited to individual self-reflection based on teacher thinking or learner data since it can be executed collaboratively to share teaching experiences and co-reflect on them (Murray, 2010). Collaborative reflective practices are essential to initiate professional sharing, create collaborative consciousness about teaching practices, and co-construct new perspectives based on shared experiences (Kraft, 2002). Collaboration to enact reflective thinking is also considered an emancipatory approach to learning new perspectives from others, which otherwise may not be likely to happen individually (Freeman, 1989). Hence, collaborative reflective practice is becoming more prominent in language teacher education. In this sense, reflective practice as a social activity allows teachers to organize meetings to share professional incidents, discuss them collegially, and reflect on their thinking to enrich their professional growth (Greene & Magliaro, 2004). Therefore, a safe and supportive environment is significant in initiating and maintaining collaborative reflection. In

a collegial and supportive context, teachers can feel more confident to critically reflect on their actions collaboratively (Murray, 2015).

Considering the dialogic dimension of an effective reflective practice process, collaboration with colleagues within a teacher group can foster reflective practices (Farrell, 2018). Collaborative practices within a community of practice can lead to reflective and co-reflective learning and improved teacher knowledge (Aydın, 2020; Uştuk, 2020). Besides, engaging in AR within a community of practice can create new opportunities to get involved in a reflective cycle of learning since AR requires critical reflection on learner data and synthesis of the data for teacher progress (Kolb, 1984; Elliot, 1988). Hence, TSG can function as a collaboration space to engage in and engage with reflective practices individually and collaboratively, which makes reflective practice an essential PD component of a TSG for a contemporary and continuous cycle of learning (Farrell, 2014).

2.2.6.3. The Place of Technology in Language Teacher Professional Development

The rapid advancement of technology makes it necessary to integrate it into the curriculum and develop relevant pedagogies to utilize. In this sense, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) teacher education constitutes one of the most prominent aspects of teacher education (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Technology in teacher education can contribute to teachers' self-autonomy, reflection, and collaboration skills (Kessler, 2012). Considering the role of technology-supported programs in teacher education, teachers can utilize this model to better practice following their students' learning progress, providing individualized feedback, and raising student autonomy (Hubbard, 2013).

The need for technology integration has increased the number of studies on CALL teacher education and attempts to build a framework that can constitute the skeleton of the field (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). These attempts revealed that technology-supported teacher education should be delivered through some essential frameworks to integrate technology into the program more efficiently. (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). In this sense, a technology-supported teacher education program should be based on one of the following frameworks:

- project- based (Debski, 2006)
- situated learning (Egbert, 2006)
- reflective learning (Slaouti & Motteram, 2006)
- portfolio- based (van Olphen, 2007)
- mentor- based (Meskill et al., 2006)
- communities of practice (Hanson- Smith, 2006)

In addition, Arnold and Ducate (2015) identified three important themes based on their analysis of previous studies: the impact of different types of CALL teacher education, teacher cognition, and reflective and collaborative practices, which means different types of CALL training (formal and informal) can have unique benefits and constraints; teacher cognition determines how CALL teacher education will lead to changes in teacher, and reflective and collaborative practices taught and used at pre-service and in-service education levels can be beneficial for teachers. In such a rich environment, it is suggested that all practitioners and teacher educators should base their technology-integrated teacher education on some frameworks and standards for ultimate professional growth (Arnold & Ducate, 2015).

Studies conducted within the last twenty years with many participants, including teachers, students, and stakeholders through surveys and interviews, indicate a need to understand the outcomes and process of CALL teacher education (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Findings revealed that there are several shortcomings, including lack of preparation (Kessler, 2006), short duration of education (Peters, 2006), non-contextualized programs (Egbert, 2006), lack of follow-up meetings (Egbert et al., 2002), and lack of formal preparation (Kessler, 2007).

CALL teacher education has been a prominent field of inquiry as a result of the studies revealing that integration of CALL into the curriculum helps learners to increase their motivation and engagement by providing them with multiple opportunities in terms of assessment, feedback, individualized instruction, being monitored for progress by teachers, and autonomy (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Likewise, integration of CALL into teacher education can provide positive outcomes for teachers in terms of providing feedback, observing and monitoring students, reflection and collaboration. Engaging technology-integrated training in pre-service and in-service education and using feedback, observation, monitoring, reflection, and collaboration can equip teachers with invaluable knowledge and insights to develop effective and relevant course designs (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Being exposed to such PD practices might encourage teachers to similarly transfer these skills to their teaching practices.

Teachers who get involved in online environments for their professional growth might also adapt their teaching practices in accordance with the needs and desires of learners. Likewise, teachers who know how to use social tools and re-conceptualize knowledge through collaboration can use these tools to provide a communicative environment that can facilitate communication and collaboration and extend the usage of these tools beyond the classroom (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). Besides, making use of online/distance education for PD provides

flexibility and accessibility in a learner-oriented way for teachers (Salazar et al., 2010). According to Salazar et al. (2010), online education for professional learning communities invokes a new culture of learning by increasing PD's effectiveness, quality, and productivity. By gaining a life-long learner perspective through technology-integrated teacher education, teachers can bring about a change in their class in a similar way by encouraging life-long learning tools and designing lessons to be able to use these tools efficiently.

2.2.7. Summary

Throughout the literature review part, I first set the ground by shedding light on the theoretical frameworks that shaped the underlying principles of the current TSG in this study. As I based the TSG on conceptual frameworks of SCT and CP, I described and analyzed how these frameworks are constructed and what they offer for the continuous PD of in-service EFL teachers. Specifying the sociocultural and critical principles and objectives of PD and the rationale behind these principles and objectives, I presented sociocultural and critical tools that can be utilized for transformative PD programs, which is expected to create a continuous perspective for teacher development. In the second part of the literature review, I first focused on the concept of teachers' PD and how PD perspectives have evolved historically. Then, I presented how teachers perceive PD and what they need and expect from a PD program by analyzing the relevant literature from both international and national educational contexts. Additionally, I briefly summarised PD policies in Türkiye and how these policies have evolved historically in order to provide a holistic evaluation of PD practices in light of PD policies. Regarding these needs/expectations and impediments stemming from PD policies and institutional constraints, I introduced TSG as a teacher collaboration model, followed by the description of integrated TSG tools (AR, reflective practice, and technological tools) used in the current study. By depicting these tools, I aimed to offer a holistic understanding of the TSG affordances from which the participant teachers benefited in their learning process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In this part, I present the research paradigm shaping this study. Then I delve into my personal stance as a researcher in light of the research paradigm, which is followed by the methodology of the research, ethical concerns, my reflexivity and positioning within the scope of the research, and credibility and validity of the study.

3.1.1. Qualitative research paradigm

Earlier studies in the field of language learning and teaching substantially focused on individual learners and their language acquisition and development; however, a conceptual shift has occurred as a result of a need to broaden the perspective of the field by integrating other factors such as social environment, individual differences, teachers, and stakeholders, which has paved the way for a remarkable increase in the use of qualitative research (De Costa et al., 2019). The way researchers perceive the world in terms of their perspectives on reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) determines the research paradigm that they want to employ (Leavy, 2017). While ontology is about the nature of reality and how it occurs, epistemology is related to what researchers accept as knowledge (Leavy, 2017). In this sense, quantitative research is a positivist approach based on the assumption that the reality is predictable, singular, and fixed, and the knowledge that researchers explore has to be universally valid and generalizable to all contexts (Heigham & Croker, 2009). However, new approaches emerged mainly in social sciences after the long domination of positivism in science. These approaches such as constructivism (Merriam & Grenier, 2019), postmodernism (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) and critical theory (Richards, 2003 paved the way for new perspectives on reality and knowledge. These approaches are in common that the reality is not singular and fixed for everybody, and the knowledge cannot be conceptualized as a universally accepted truth. Making a considerable impact on the development of qualitative research, these approaches suggest that individuals make their own meanings out of the world depending on the time, context, situation, and person factors, which induces a wide range of interpretations of the reality on the contrary to what positivists conceptualize as a fixed reality (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Relying on multiple realities, various ways of interpretations of knowledge, the plurality of meanings created by people, and dynamic aspects of the world, sociocultural theory and critical theory (the theoretical frameworks on which this research is based)

constitute a rich theoretical framework to encourage me to adopt a qualitative research paradigm to question all prescribed realities and transform the world by revealing how the reality and knowledge are interpreted in different ways.

In this respect, I employed a qualitative research paradigm in this study since qualitative research is based on analysing and interpreting patterns in textual data to have a better understanding of the relationships in the fields of social science (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Qualitative research mainly focuses on how people lead their lives in their social settings in a natural way by making an emphasis on their words, feelings, practices, and works (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Saldaña and Omasta (2018) also state that qualitative research is essential when there is a need to have insights into the personal and social lives of people and to reveal a deeper understanding and interpretation of these lives since qualitative research enables us to explore people's beliefs, feelings, experiences, and thoughts. In this sense, qualitative research can shed light on complex phenomena in language learning and teaching studies through a broader perspective by considering the multi-layered aspect of the learning context. Qualitative research paradigm offered me some underlying tools that were essential to take into account since what makes a research qualitative broadly depends on whether these tools are available within the research. These tools are mostly related to methodologies, methods, data analysis, and crystallization of the data aspects of the research.

First, qualitative research includes a variety of methodologies to be employed in a research study. These methodologies are narrative inquiry, case study, action research, ethnography, mixed methods, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Second, taking a qualitative stance in research offers various methods used in the research design to collect data. Methods have a substantial role in qualitative studies because it helps researchers to integrate a variety of perspectives to enrich the data, which is in line with the social constructivist and multifaceted aspect of the research paradigm. Besides, a distinction between methodology and method can be made to eliminate misunderstanding. While the former is based on a theoretical framework and consists of several methods (Winke, 2017), the latter is the instrument used to collect data such as observations, interviews, open-ended questionnaires, verbal reports, and discourse analysis (Heigham & Croker, 2009; De Costa et al., 2019). These methods are more or less structured and controlled depending on the researcher’s objectives and research design criterion (Heigham & Croker, 2009). To restrict the probable effect of the researcher on participants and provide more room for the participants during the data collection process, qualitative research offers less structured and less controlled

methods such as observations and interviews, which can lead to a good qualitative research study together with the meticulous implementation of the methods without researcher bias or cognitive dissonance (Saldaña, 2018).

The other prominent component of qualitative research is data analysis and the crystallization of data sources in a relevant way. A data analysis that is nonlinear, iterative, and dynamic can also induce some changes in data collection procedures and research questions, which is a requirement of an influential qualitative study. Patiently working on emergent nodes to obtain patterns and themes is a demanding task that elaborates qualitative research since data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Moreover, examining the data from several perspectives obtained from many methods (De Costa et al., 2019) provides the crystallization of the data, which is indispensable in qualitative research. Such a crystallization can be provided by including emic and etic perspectives (De Costa et al., 2019). The number of participants can be increased for the former while different social groups can be integrated into the study for the latter. In addition, including member-checking by getting participants' opinions can alleviate the data analysis since it will increase the credibility of the research (Barkhuizen, 2018).

In addition to member-checking, qualitative research paradigm offers a variety of tools that can promote the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of a study. In this sense, peer debriefing enables the researcher to engage in extensive discussions with a peer about all the stages of the research, including methodological decisions, data collection, data analysis, and further steps if necessary (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Another tool that can promote the trustworthiness of a study is participant check (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Participant check helps researchers verify the collected data and researcher interpretation by receiving feedback from the participant who provided the data. A thick and rich description of the whole research process is another complementary way to increase the credibility of the research since it makes the research process more transparent and reliable by providing an interpretation of the significance and complexity of participants' actions within the context it occurred (Geertz, 1973). Also, external audits, through which the research process and findings are examined by an external individual (Creswell & Miller, 2000), can help researchers have a better etic perspective.

Even though qualitative research demands improvisation during the whole process of the research if necessary, it does not mean that the essentials of the methodologies are welcome to be violated, which can destroy the validity and reliability of the claims that will be presented

after data analysis (Heigham & Croker, 2009). It is also essential to keep in mind that continuous critical reflection of the procedures of the methodologies in order to prevent researcher bias and increase the reliability (Noble & Smith, 2015). In this sense, I chose to base my study on qualitative paradigm because the qualitative research paradigm depends on several qualities and characteristics that align with my personal stance as a researcher and the purpose of this study.

Firstly, the researcher has an undeniably crucial role in the process of qualitative research in that what makes research qualitative depends on how they perceive and carry out the qualitative research. It may not be possible to analyse the outside without analysis of self (Saldaña, 2018). This crucial role requires researchers to be retrospective to be able to revise and adapt what has been done if necessary; introspective to be entirely aware of what is being done since there are many components even in a single setting to take into account; and prospective to take the initiative to be able to anticipate what is going to be done as this process is quite dynamic and evolving. Furthermore, qualitative researchers are expected to be analytically creative, subjective to an extent, collaborative, critical, metacognitively aware, meticulous, resilient, visionary, wise, responsible, and humble (Saldaña, 2018). These prerequisite skills indicate that a qualitative researcher should be proficient and flexible enough to compromise with qualitative research's process-oriented, constructivist, and dynamic nature. Likewise, researchers bring their multiple identities and positionalities into the qualitative research world, which has substantial potential to shape how the meaning is explored and interpreted (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). The design of the study and the role of the researcher in this TSG as a CPD model required me to enact multiple perspectives throughout the study in a dynamic way. The need to revise and adapt the study in a retrospective, introspective, and prospective way made qualitative paradigm an essential component of this study. Likewise, the need to be responsive to what the instructors need continuously throughout the study made qualitative paradigm a useful and effective way to maintain the study.

Secondly, researchers' attitudes and actions regarding the setting and participants can also influence the quality of qualitative research. Unlike quantitative research, setting and participants are perceived differently. They are taken into account more meticulously since researchers are to be methodical about the setting (Heigham & Croker, 2009) to avoid missing any details that can contribute to the research. The relationship among participants in a setting, the institutional culture of the setting, sensitive issues regarding the setting, and potential

vulnerabilities are essential to the researcher as they can offer fruitful sources of data. Positive rapport with participants can pave the way for more in-depth and authentic data in addition to the active participation of participants in the research process. Concerning the need to maintain continuous and systematic relationships with the instructors to implement the CPD program and the need to provide a thick description of the research site from my own perspective to reveal bounded realities that were available there made qualitative paradigm a convenient tool to adopt.

Thirdly, qualitative research is based on a dynamic, cyclical, and nonlinear process since it requires researchers to be ready to revise the process all the time. Quantitative research is based on a rigid research cycle, which is linear, hierarchical, and sequentially ordered; however, qualitative research process does not have a linear process since it is an open inquiry and is always susceptible to change (Heigham & Croker, 2009). For instance, the research questions are not stable, and they can be continuously restructured iteratively and proactively (Maxwell, 2008). Therefore, researchers are expected to be "multidirectional, multimodal, and multitasking" (Saldaña, 2018, p. 2039) to keep track of emerging changes and adapt to the previous stages accordingly. It is also a must to be sensitive and alert if any unexpected incident occurs. As the main objective of this study was to meet the instructors' expectations responsively and adapt the flow of the research process in accordance with emerging needs, qualitative paradigm provided the essential tools to achieve these objectives.

What is more, having a theoretical framework to be used as the basis of the qualitative research is significant in that this research paradigm itself takes its roots from the open-inquiry aspect of social sciences and postmodern and constructivist approaches that assume the truth is not universally agreed upon, and individuals construct meaning in social settings unlike the positivist paradigm that differs from constructivism both ontologically and epistemologically (Heigham & Croker, 2009). This understanding of truth and meaning differentiates qualitative research from quantitative research that is positivist and based on meaning obtained from numbers. For this reason, qualitative research should be based on a theoretical framework such as sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), critical theory (Richards, 2003), identity theory (De Costa & Norton, 2017), postmodernism, and pragmatism since they all foreground the effect of person, time, and context (Heigham & Croker, 2009) on reality and they avoid sticking to a stable and single truth. Therefore, basing the qualitative research on one of these frameworks can transform the study into a more compatible and thorough piece of research since it meets the criteria of multifaceted aspects of constructivism. Furthermore, De Costa et

al. (2017) suggest that the way reality is investigated (methodology) should be aligned with the epistemological and ontological standpoint of the researcher and the theory on which the research is based. Concerning this aspect of the qualitative paradigm, the use of sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy as the theoretical framework of this study made me carry out the research in qualitative terms and methods in accordance with my epistemological and ontological stance, which enabled me to compromise theory, paradigm, and methodology in a compatible way (De Costa et al., 2017).

3.1.2. Researcher's personal stance

As for my personal perspective, I have always tried to adopt multiple perspectives to perceive the world around me as a researcher. In my view, reality is not simple to detect or understand because too many variables might impact how reality appears within a particular context. Teaching and learning contexts are composed of human relationships. The way these relationships are built among students, teachers, and administrators, and how these relationships influence teaching and learning practices are essential to take into account. Besides, how macro-level systems such as national education policies, the financial status of the country, and culture influence these groups and their performances is another significant issue since a learning context is not in complete isolation. Apart from my opinions about how I perceive reality, it is also essential to understand the world from various perspectives offered by others. To analyse a context-specific problem and offer solutions to it, it is substantial to include all stakeholders' perspectives to have a more comprehensive understanding of the reality. Also, relying on a surface-level understanding is susceptible to misunderstanding the world around us. For this reason, an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon has always been a better way to make meaning for me. In this respect, I believe that the nature of being and reality (ontology) is multifaceted in that the human mind can interpret the reality and nature of being in a wide variety of ways; and the way we know the world, life or the reality in general terms (epistemology) is multiple since how we as human beings experience life may considerably differ from one another. The qualitative research paradigm is considerably compatible with my personal stance concerning how I approach ontology and how I make meaning out of the world through my epistemological lens.

To sum up, even though it is against the rationale behind the qualitative research to prescribe strict rules with the intention of putting them into force to the letter, qualitative research is systematic, which makes it essential to consider a variety of factors to make research qualitative. Considering all the opportunities offered by qualitative research

paradigm, it is in alignment with my personal stance toward reality and the content and objectives of the CPD program I wanted to implement because this study intended to provide a transformative process for the teachers in terms of their understandings, beliefs, concepts, practices, and knowledge. This multi-layered conceptual transformation is not possible to be evaluated solely through statistics, which makes qualitative paradigm essential to adopt.

3.1.3. Research methodology: Case study

In this study, I used the methodology of intrinsic case study to shed light on an educational ecosystem with the intention of having a broader and detailed understanding of the context. Case study, one of the most common qualitative research methodologies, was used in this research. Stake (1995) defines the case as an object to be studied (p.14). Likewise, Merriam (1998) defines the case as a bounded system embodied as a person or entity that needs an in-depth exploration. Boundedness is an essential aspect of case studies since it refers to the complexity of reality and embedded relationships of a variety of variables that constitute reality in a particular context. In general terms, a qualitative case study is defined by Yin (2003) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries and contexts are not evident (p.13). Duff and Anderson (2015) also define case study as an interpretive approach to understand “experiences, features, behaviours, and processes of a bounded unit” (p.112). Also, cases can be adapted to various conditions because the focus of the case study can be either a teacher, a school, or an institution (Chapelle & Duff, 2003). When researchers have difficulty in dissolving complex problems in a particular context by the generalizations offered by quantitative research tools, case study provides actual context-specific materials about the case, which makes it easier for researchers to analyse a case closely and extensively and reveal the boundaries more clearly either in a narrowly-bounded or in a broadly-bounded system (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Boundedness may also occur at a micro-level or at a macro level within which the case is bounded to macro-level factors such as national policies and traditions. Case study is generally carried out based on the assumption that reality is multi-dimensional, complex, and prone to change (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

Case studies enable researchers to explore a bounded system constituted by individuals, institutions, entities available in the context, actions occurring in this context, and interrelationships within this context to make unclear boundaries more apparent (Heigham & Croker, 2009). In this sense, case study functions as a comprehensive framework to understand the complex realities in a particular case. This methodology offers many methods that

researchers can choose in accordance with their needs and goals. As the main objective of researchers conducting a case study is to reveal and define the boundaries within a case over a long period, research questions and methods set before are constantly likely to change according to the flow of the research (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Some qualitative research methods that researchers can utilise are interviews, observation, participant diaries, documents regarding the policies about the research topic, archival records, and artefacts such as assignments and handouts (Yin, 2003). In addition to these methods, researcher memos can be kept by the researcher from the beginning of the research process until the end of the study to document their own interpretations and thoughts on the research process (Heigham & Croker, 2009). In this sense, researcher memos can serve as an efficient tool to triangulate and validate the data.

There are various types of case studies in the literature. According to Stake (2005), there are three types of case studies. The first one is intrinsic case study. Intrinsic case study, which is the methodology used in this research, focuses on a single case for an in-depth understanding. Intrinsic case study neither intends to make generalizations for other cases nor compare one case to another. The second is instrumental case study, which is based on the intention to highlight and identify a particular problem or theory out of context. Merriam (1998) states that instrumental case studies can be used to create conceptual categories or discuss some theoretical assumptions, so it requires researchers to interpret and evaluate the case after making a description. Stake (2005) defines the third type as multiple case study, which aims to explore more than one case to have a better understanding of a single issue, problem, or theory.

In addition to the classification of Stake (2005), Yin (2003) points out a different way to categorize case studies, the criteria of which are based on the purpose. In this sense, case studies can be grouped into three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. Exploratory case study is used when researchers do not have too much information about a particular issue. Descriptive case study is conducted with the aim of offering a well-documented description of a particular case only to gain an understanding of the case. The last type, explanatory case study, aims to reveal cause-effect relationships within a particular case (Yin, 2003).

Apart from these categorizations, researchers have the freedom to choose cases to study in accordance with their purpose of exploration. Hence, they can choose cases concerning the characteristics they have. Duff (2018) acknowledges that researchers can choose the case to explore in accordance with their psychological, linguistic, institutional,

sociocultural, or biological characteristics, which refrains researchers from being confined to a specific case study type. As for the case study findings, the findings can be used either to improve the conditions in a particular context or to be extended to other similar cases (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Another prominent point of the case study concerns the researcher's role because case studies allow researchers to take an active role throughout the research (Heigham & Croker, 2009). Considering the researcher as an essential part of research and their ongoing relationships with the participants and research site, case study encourages researchers to reflect on their role in the research by documenting how they get involved in the research process, which is seen as a significant step for the validity of the study (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

3.1.4. Ethical concerns

Adopting a qualitative research paradigm requires researchers to admit that what is considered ethical in quantitative paradigm remarkably differs from ethical considerations in qualitative paradigm because ethical concerns are not confined to what is determined by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of institutes (De Costa, 2015). That is why a qualitative researcher should employ various procedures to make sure that the research is ethically rigorous for researchers themselves, participants, and potential readers. A postmodernist approach to research makes it necessary for the researcher to consider who they are and what they believe, the power distance regarding the particular research setting, services provided for participants, and their rights, so it is essential (De Costa, 2015). In this sense, I paid close attention to explaining myself as a researcher and my positionality explicitly during the fieldwork and write-up process. The participants knew that it was a study as a part of my Ph.D. dissertation and a PD program for their benefit at the same time. To clearly understand the power issues influencing the relationship between the setting and participants, I tried to provide a thick description of the context. Also, maximizing the benefit of participants and justice was one of my top priorities throughout the research.

Throughout the research process, I tried to integrate both macro and micro ethic perspectives (De Costa, 2015). While the former is based on the ethical protocols set by the IRB of the institute where I conducted the research, the latter primarily focuses on the daily ethical dilemmas that appeared as a result of particular roles and actions of both the researcher and participants (Kubanyiova, 2008). To adhere to macro ethics, I applied to the IRB of the institute and submitted all the required documents including the scope, time, and objectives of the study, data collection tools and procedures, and the consent forms prepared for the

participants (Appendix 2). Having got the approval from IRB, I provided the participants with all the details concerning the study before I asked for their volunteer participation. They were also informed about the whole study in detail after accepting to participate in the CPD program. The instructors were given an informed consent form (Appendix 3), including the study's scope, time, and aims. They were also reminded of the right to withdraw from the study anytime. Before the CPD program started, all the participants were informed about the data collection tools and procedures in addition to the reading materials that they were expected to read throughout the program.

As for the micro ethics, I was always open to any suggestions put forward by the participants. Likewise, I tried to be understanding and honest to make them feel as comfortable as possible, which yielded their active and willing participation. Knowing that the participants had more important things to do than this CPD program (Holliday, 2015), I always did my best to decrease their workload by editing the documents they had to read for the CPD program and arranging meeting times flexibly in accordance with their needs and suggestions. My efforts not to steal their time made them more motivated and concentrated. To provide justice among participants, I always tried to assign equal time for their talk and questions so that every member of the TSG stated that they felt good because nobody dominated the conversation in the meetings. The instructors were also provided with confidentiality measures such as the use of pseudonyms in the dissertation, the safety of their recorded interviews and discussions, and their reflective journals. The instructors were also integrated into the research after the data collection process. They had a voice in their transcribed data and experts because I asked them to read everything about their parts and confirm. They also had the right to elaborate on their excerpts in case of a point that they disagreed with.

3.1.5. Researcher's reflexivity and positioning

Leavy (2014) bases research on three key components: philosophy, praxis, and ethics. While the philosophical element of research is mainly about the ontological and epistemological approaches of the researcher, the praxis of research encapsulates the design, methodology, and methods of the study (Leavy, 2014). The final research component is conceptualized as an ethical element, categorized into three sub-components: values, ethics, and reflexivity. The ethical element is assumed to bridge the philosophical and praxis components of the research (Leavy, 2014). In this regard, I have tried to work on my reflexivity throughout the research by keeping a researcher log, constantly thinking about the reasons for my actions, presenting the reasons behind my decisions regarding the theory, methodology,

and results of the study in a detailed and explicit way. By doing so, I mainly aimed to establish a sound and consistent relationship between the study's theoretical framework and the methodological actions I took to implement what I theoretically suggested.

Reflexivity refers to the researcher's attempts to reflect on their actions, decisions, positioning, and biases continuously, which makes research more valid by showing how the researcher is related to the context, participants, and situations throughout the research process (Schwandt 2001; Starfield, 2013). Implementing reflexivity as a component of the research by writing and thinking about every action I took led me to change my positioning whenever I noticed a need to take further action. For example, how the participants got involved in the group discussions made me think about revising how I moderated the sessions. Likewise, the teachers' written reflective practice patterns helped me realize that the reflective framework was a bit confusing, resulting in a revised version of the framework. In this sense, my reflexive practices enabled me to express what I discovered and how these discoveries emerged throughout the research process (Leavy, 2017). My reflexive approach to the research also encouraged me to be as explicit as possible when documenting how I constructed knowledge out of the data (Davis, 2020). Thus, I tried to provide a thick description of every theme I reached and how these themes are related to one another within the scope of research case.

As it is integral to the research process to document how researchers position themselves in terms of the integrity of the study (Rampton, 1992), I have always been aware of the fact that I had to express my stance, roles, decisions, and biases rather than staying neutral (Startfield, 2011). Throughout the research process, I kept in mind that I had started this PD project to be able to lead a change in the field of teacher education by encouraging teachers to voice their ideas, identify their needs, and take action to develop professionally by empowering themselves and investing in their identities. Having based the PD model on two theoretical frameworks that inspired me for personal and social change for the benefit of teachers and students, I decided on the methodological actions to bridge the theories and praxis. This attempt resulted in a one-semester PD model through which the teachers could create a space where they could take action for their PD with the help of some mediation tools such as my moderation, expert talks, peer collaboration, and program materials. In addition to my researcher role, I was also the program's moderator. In this sense, I felt that it was essential to make my presence more explicit and make my voice whenever necessary (van Maanen, 1988), considering the role of researcher and researcher reflexivity as essential components of research instruments (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

How the researcher is situated within the context and how they build relationships with participants impact the flow of the research. Thus researchers' reflections on this situatedness and relationships with participants are expected to be well-documented for the transparency of the research process (Davis, 2020). In this sense, I always kept track of my role and how it influenced the flow of TSG meetings. Watching the initial recordings of the TSG meetings made me more accustomed to teachers' needs and expectations. Assigning myself to an upper position and acting as a teacher educator might have caused detrimental effects on the teachers' willingness to participate. Thus, I paid close attention to position myself as a friend of theirs, responsible for the coordination and moderation of the project. Besides, I constantly reflected on my relationships with the participants to determine whether my actions gave rise to any detrimental consequences that might have influenced the objectives of this PD program. Being responsive to their questions and needs made me feel more confident and stay attuned to their progress. In this sense, having a reflexive lens throughout the research helped me to be able to inform the readers about all these decisions and choices made during the entire research and the reasons behind these decisions and choices, which makes research more transparent and valid (Palaganas et al., 2017).

Finally, the reasons behind the integration of researcher reflexivity into a qualitative research study can also be attributed to the empowerment of researchers and their control over the research since qualitative research developed after critical and interpretive approaches highlighted the issues of social justice, power distance against minorities and oppressed groups, and inequities (Leavy, 2017). In this regard, I felt more confident and freer to integrate my own voice, and it helped me have a strong sense of ownership towards the study rather than being a passive reporter of the research. Furthermore, my reflexive actions led me to control the researcher's power for the sake of the participants and break the rigid hierarchy between the researcher and participants, which paved the way for non-hierarchical relationships with the participants (Leavy, 2017). Being reflexive throughout the research by constantly analyzing my role, integrating participants into data collection and analysis processes, and taking reflexive actions in accordance with emerging necessities in a democratic way made me feel that I was able to make contributions to the empowerment of the participants', which is also aligned with what the theoretical frameworks of this study suggest.

3.1.6. Credibility and Validity

Differing from quantitative research, the qualitative paradigm is susceptible to subjectivity, which is not considered detrimental as long as it is well-managed (Holliday, 2015). To manage subjectivity to enhance the credibility of the study, I have applied three principles suggested by Holliday (2015) throughout the research: transparency, submission, and making appropriate claims. First, I resorted to a rich description for all stages of data collection, analysis, and my personal decisions, beliefs, and positioning as a researcher to make the study as transparent as possible. Keeping a researcher log enabled me to be mindful of every step I took by self-reflecting on my actions and beliefs that could have influenced the research steps. Secondly, I avoided any preoccupations or pre-determined expectations from the data to be utterly submissive to the authenticity of the data and the participants' perspectives. To comply with the third principle, which is making appropriate claims, I always kept in mind that qualitative findings offer a perspective to think about a context-specific reality rather than aiming to prove a theory or make generalizations. This attitude helped me not to use bold claims based on the findings. Instead, I have employed a tentative language by touching upon the multidimensionality of realities and how they can be interpreted in various perspectives depending on the context, time, and person. Employing subjectivity as a lens to make interpretations based on the facts emerging from the findings in a balanced way contributed to the trustworthiness of the research by increasing its credibility (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

The credibility of a study in a qualitative paradigm refers to how the study can make readers believe that all stages within the research have been contemplated and implemented as a result of a rigorous and trustworthy effort (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). To promote the credibility and trustworthiness of a qualitative study, Saldaña and Omasta (2018) propose several ways encompassing four research stages: literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion. In this sense, I carefully designed the initial stage including literature review and conceptual framework by touching upon key terms and authors and pre-existing studies in the field. I also paid close attention to the study's theoretical framework to create a solid basis for the rationale behind the study. Secondly, I aimed to harmonize the methodology with appropriate data collection methods. I used a variety of data collection methods in line with the case study methodology to have a better understanding and interpretation of the bounded system. I have spent an extended amount of time with various participants and documented all data collection sources after several reviews. Then I provided a rich description of how theories or themes have emerged from the data to make it easier for a reader to go through how I have

reached the final themes through the constant comparison analysis. Finally, I tried to present my perceptions, insights, and interpretations of how I make meaning of the case based on the findings professionally.

In addition to the previously mentioned steps, I have utilized a wide array of tools to establish and maintain the study's credibility from three different perspectives (researcher, participants, and readers) based on the framework for validity procedures introduced by Creswell and Miller (2000). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), the validity of a qualitative study can be assured with the help of nine procedures categorized into three perspectives comprising the researcher, participants, and readers (triangulation, disconfirming evidence, researcher reflexivity from the researcher perspective; member-checking, prolonged engagement in the field, and collaboration from the perspective of participants; the audit trail, thick description, and debriefing from the reader perspective). Creswell and Miller (2000) also grouped these nine procedures into three categories depending on the paradigm adopted in the study (post-positivist, constructivist, and critical). From the researcher's perspective, I employed triangulation not only to bring various data sources and participants (teachers and students) together but also to integrate different data collection methods (observation, field notes, interviews, stimulated recalls, group meetings, and teacher journal) and different investigators to analyze data.

Likewise, I utilized researcher reflexivity as a procedure to establish and develop the study's credibility by constantly reflecting on my actions, beliefs, and assumptions retrospectively, introspectively, and prospectively. From the participants' perspective, I implemented member-checking and collaboration with the participants for data analysis and coding process by including their voices in this stage of the research, which enabled me to examine to what extent my interpretations converge with the participants' actual thoughts and understandings. My prolonged engagement in the field (six months) also paved the way for insights into the bounded case and enhanced the study's trustworthiness. Finally, from the perspective of readers/editors, I employed debriefing sessions with my PhD advisor to ensure that the process and product of the data analysis have been reviewed and assured from an outsider's perspective. For this reason, I shared detailed documentation including my theme-building coding process, final themes and categories, and background of the study with my advisor, who is an expert in the field of teacher education. These debriefing sessions yielded insightful support that encouraged me to go over and re-consider the data to reveal better relationships within the data set. Similarly, I asked a critical friend, who is also a PhD student

in English Language Teaching, to review the data and research process at different phases of the study as an external audit. This practice of external audit made me think out of the box several times since I noticed that I had been immersed in the setting for a long time, and this situation had prevented me from thinking about alternative ways independent from the research context.

3.2. Research Context

In this part, a holistic description of the research context is presented through macro, meso, and micro-level characteristics to offer a broader understanding of the research setting. In this sense, macro-level context presents the details regarding the characteristics of the country where this research was conducted. Through meso-level context, I aimed to shed light on the university where this study was carried out. Finally, micro-level context is presented to delve into the research site realities and the detailed description of the preparatory school where TSG program was implemented.

3.2.1. Macro-level context (Türkiye)

The CPD model in this study was conducted at a School of Foreign Languages (SoFL) of a public university in Türkiye. The functions of universities and affiliated university departments in Türkiye are defined and regulated by Higher Education Council (HEC). For this reason, it is essential to have some insights into the university and country context to have a better understanding of the micro context of the study. Also, getting familiar with the macro context can contribute to the evaluation of this study in terms of whether it is transferable to other contexts (Brown, 2004). Considering how a particular case is bounded by the micro, meso, and macro-level factors (Heigham & Croker, 2009) that offer a broader picture of the interrelationships between a case and how this case is affected by factors from various levels can make the current study more convenient for larger-scale interpretations.

HEC was founded in 1981, one year after a large-scale military coup was staged in 1980 (Öztürk, 2005). The capacity and functions of HEC were defined by the articles 130 and 131 in the 1982 constitution. The establishment of HEC ended all autonomous universities and institutes which were not affiliated with any centralized institutions in Türkiye. HEC became the only authority responsible for the functions and regulations of Türkiye's state and foundation universities. Being subject to a centralized administration required universities to comply with what was mandated by HEC, which left a restricted area for autonomous policies and implications for universities.

According to the statistics provided by HEC in 2021 (https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/), the number of non-degree (two-year program) students is 3.002.964, degree students (undergraduate program) is 4.538.926, master students is 297.001, and Ph.D. students is 101.242. When it comes to the number of universities in Türkiye, the statistics show that there are 74 foundation universities, four foundation vocational schools, and 129 state universities. Considering the total number of universities, which is over 200, and the students enrolled in a university program, universities are expected to have a significant role in determining the country's social, cultural, academic, and financial life. The number of universities in Türkiye has increased dramatically in recent years in such a way that all cities in Türkiye, even the smallest ones, have at least one university within their borders. However, whether the rise in quantity has induced development in the quality of higher education is still being questioned (Yalçıntaş & Akkaya, 2019).

As for the administration of universities, before 2016, faculty members used to vote to select a rector for university administration. Based on the elections, three candidates used to be reported to the president of Türkiye, and the president was expected to choose one of these candidates. However, this regulation was abolished with the Decree-Law No. 676, published in the Official Gazette on October 29, 2016 (https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/10/20161029-5.htm). According to the new regulation, the president appoints one of three candidates suggested by HEC to the university's rectorate without holding an election among university faculty members. Additionally, HEC is responsible for appointing deans to faculties, and all faculty members are expected to obey all decisions and actions executed by these authorities.

To document how schools of foreign languages at universities are subject to the regulations determined by HEC, it is vital to remind how three main functions, regulated by HEC (2016), constitute the institutional framework of these schools. The new law, regulated and passed on March 23, 2016 (HEC, 2016), schools of foreign languages are firstly responsible for preparing and administering a proficiency exam for the students enrolled in an undergraduate program to determine whether their proficiency level is eligible to start their departments. Secondly, schools of foreign languages are expected to execute a preparatory program aiming to develop primary skills of a foreign language such as vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, reading, and listening for the students who fail to have a satisfactory score in the proficiency exam (or an equivalent exam) and will study a program that requires a specific language proficiency level. Thirdly, these schools are also responsible for providing

General English, English for Specific Purposes, and Advanced English courses for undergraduate-level students during their four-year education time (HEC, 2016).

This new regulation was put into effect as a result of the report published by the British Council (2015) to evaluate the state of English language use in Turkish universities (https://www.britishcouncil.org.tr/sites/default/files/he_baseline_study_book_web_-_son.pdf). This report is based on a large-scale study conducted by the British Council in collaboration with Türkiye and the Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV) at 38 Turkish universities in 15 cities. In this sense, surveys were conducted with academic staff and students, and some courses were observed. The report mainly touches upon the problems and makes recommendations about language teaching programs, English language teaching, and English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The report revealed that EMI is not effectively utilised in Türkiye because of the language inadequacy of students and academic staff. Since there are no opportunities for instructors and learners to advance their proficiency level in undergraduate programs, EMI does not function as successfully as expected. As students start an EMI department with an inadequate level of language proficiency, in some cases, instructors suffer from the same problem. The report recommends decreasing the number of EMI departments until there is an adequate number of students and academic staff to maintain these programs. The report also touches upon the necessity of CPD programs to be implemented at the tertiary level to equip academic staff with new approaches to EMI.

HEC took this report into account and made some regulations to improve the state of the English language at the tertiary level and enhance the state of English in Türkiye to take advantage of the global status of English and its economic and international benefits across the globe (Ulum, 2020). Overall, the macro-level context informs about the need for betterment in language instruction in Türkiye, and there have been numerous attempts to achieve this goal.

3.2.2. Meso-level context (University)

This study was conducted in one of the biggest cities in Türkiye in terms of its population. In addition to the size of the population, the city is a metropolitan city serving as one of the most important financial, educational, cultural, and medical centres in Türkiye. Considering the role of the city in education, the university where this study was conducted is one of the prestigious state universities in Türkiye. The university offers higher education to a larger group of students in many fields. The medium of instruction is English at the university. In this sense, English Preparatory Program is mandated for the students who fail to have a

certain degree of English, which is tested through the English proficiency exam prepared and administered by the School of Foreign Languages (SoFL) or an equivalent exam.

At the university, there are three faculties, one graduate school, and one foreign languages school. There are 18 undergraduate programs, 27 master's programs, and 19 Ph.D. programs in these faculties and schools. These departments offer higher education to 1432 graduate students and 4911 undergraduate students. Besides, the university is known as an international university hosting international students from 48 nationalities. The university aims to offer an ecosystem based on invention, innovation, entrepreneurship, and scientific research. With respect to these values foregrounded by the university, it is home to hundreds of ongoing scientific projects supported and funded by the European Union (EU), the Turkish State Planning Organization (DPT), the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), and the Turkish Industry Theses Support Program (SANTEZ).

3.2.3. Micro-level context (Research site: School of Foreign Languages)

The Department of Foreign Languages was founded in 1996 to prepare students for their departments which require an advanced level of English to pursue academic studies. Later in 2010, the status of this department was changed, and it was turned into School of Foreign Languages (SoFL). SoFL has two departments: The Department of Basic English, which provides English courses for preparatory students before they start their undergraduate or graduate education, and the Department of Modern Languages, which offers compulsory English courses for undergraduate students and elective language courses such as French, German, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

The administration of SoFL is composed of the director, two vice directors, one preparatory program coordinator, and one school secretary. There are 44 English instructors teaching in both departments and five instructors teaching other foreign languages. There are also several units serving the needs of the SoFL. Testing and Assessment Unit is responsible for preparing, planning, and administering the English proficiency exam and other online and face-to-face exams and quizzes for preparatory students in accordance with a calendar announced at the beginning of the academic year. Curriculum Unit is responsible for planning and following the curriculum and pacing determined at the beginning of each academic year. This unit makes announcements regarding the necessary actions for the execution of lessons in accordance with the academic calendar. The content and timing of the curriculum are designed and developed by this unit. Likewise, Material Development Unit is responsible for contributing to the Curriculum Unit by preparing support materials and documents for the

preparatory program. As for the Professional Development Unit, it is not a stable unit despite some efforts to maintain it. It was first founded in 2019, and this unit was responsible for preparing surveys for students and instructors, assessing and evaluating the findings of these surveys, and presenting the survey results to the instructors. After the global pandemic broke out, this unit planned a series of presentations about various issues: the role of technology in teaching and learning, motivation, and learner autonomy. In this sense, a series of three webinars including these issues was organized. PDU unit members reviewed the literature and gave a webinar based on their findings in the literature in a lecture format. After this PD activity, the unit never came together again on any platforms because of the academic workload.

This study was conducted with the instructors teaching at the Department of Basic English (preparatory school). The preparatory program offers English courses at three levels: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3, which is determined based on the criteria of CEFR *(*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). According to the CEFR criteria, the starting levels for Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 are A2, A2+, and B1 respectively. The exit level expected at the end of the program for these three levels is B1+. Teaching hours vary from one level to another. Considering that a hybrid system was implemented due to the pandemic, the lessons are given in three different ways: face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous. Level 1 students are required to attend 25 lessons (11 synchronous online lessons, eight face-to-face lessons, and six asynchronous online lessons) each week. Level 2 students are taught 23 lessons (9 synchronous online lessons, eight face-to-face lessons, and six asynchronous online lessons) per week. As for the Level 3 students, they are to attend 20 lessons (8 synchronous online lessons, six face-to-face lessons, and six asynchronous online lessons) every week.

3.3. Participants

A TSG comprising 6 EFL instructors was formed within the context explained above through a purposive sampling process. The purposive sampling strategy aims to choose participants deliberately because they can provide insights into the study by their experience, position, and identity (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). In order for an adequate purposive/purposeful sampling of participants, it is necessary to build both boundaries, which aim to make selections based on physical limitations such as time and access to participants, and conceptual frames, which require researchers to choose the participants who can provide the most relevant and valuable insights into the study (Miles et al., 2014).

In line with this methodological rationale, I determined a two-stage purposive sampling strategy by focusing on the boundaries and conceptual frame of the study. First, I determined the boundaries by restricting the study to the preparatory school case, so I excluded the instructors giving academic English courses to undergraduate students who have already passed the preparatory school. These instructors do not have face-to-face lessons, and the syllabus of their courses was not convenient to conduct action research since student-teacher interaction is relatively lower compared to the preparatory classes. Likewise, I did not invite any other instructors teaching at different universities as a result of the difficulties in managing time for regular meetings and making a study program that can fit all participants due to their busy schedules and varying school time. Also, I reminded the instructors who had extra administrative duties of the program's intensity, so they agreed that they would not participate in the study to catch up with the steps of the program.

As for the conceptual frames of the study, members of TSG are expected to get engaged in prolonged PD activities requiring collaboration, inquiry, and school-based practices (Francis et al., 1994). Getting involved in action research practices collaboratively in a TSG can provide a mediational space where teachers can examine their classroom practices and go through a transformational process to reconstruct their theoretical and practical knowledge (Johnson, 2009). The participants for this PD program had to be aware of the rationale behind the TSG and what they had to sacrifice to complete the program. As this PD model can function better with the participation of the teachers who can fulfill the objectives of the program, I determined a series of criteria that could help me to find the most appropriate members for this study. The program was presented to all the instructors, and they were informed about all steps they had to complete throughout the semester. Participation in TSG was on a voluntary basis; however, the instructors were reminded that they needed to be aligned with the following criteria:

- Voluntary participation
- Willingness to participate in prolonged PD activities
- Positive attitudes towards PD, action research, and collaboration
- Enough time for the implementation of the PD activities
- Interest in reflective practices

After the first call was made for the instructors, they were given two weeks to inform me if they considered participating in the study. Eventually, 6 EFL instructors volunteered to participate in the study (see Table 1). All participants were female, which is not surprising because of the fewer male instructors at the preparatory school. Surprisingly, all the volunteer teachers had a graduate degree in English Language Teaching, and they were interested in research, which was in alignment with the program's objectives. The teaching experiences of the participants range from 4 to 12 years, which resulted in a relatively more heterogonous community of practice with respect to the year of experience. One favorable aspect concerning the profile of the participants was the level they taught. As they were teaching at similar levels, it helped them become more familiar with the classroom problems shared and discussed within the group. Additionally, all the participants had different unit roles in addition to 20-22 teaching hours per week, resulting in difficulties in planning TSG meetings in a way that fitted every member. The following table shows the descriptive data for TSG members.

Table 1

Demographic and academic profiles of the TSG members

Name	Degree	Years taught	Level taught	Unit roles
Aylin	BA & MA & Ph.D. in English Language Teaching	12	Level 1	Curriculum Development Unit
Buket	BA & MA in English Language Teaching	4	Level 1-3	Survey Development Unit
Cansu	BA & MA (in progress) in English Language Teaching	6	Level 1-3	Survey Development Unit
Eda	BA & MA in English Language Teaching	8	Level 1-3	Public Relations Units
Sibel	BA & MA & Ph.D. (in progress) in English Language Teaching	10	Level 1-3	Professional Development Unit
Zeynep	BA in American Culture and Literature & MA in English Language Teaching	8	Level 1-3	Community Service Unit

All participants stated that they wanted to participate in this PD program to get involved in a research cycle to improve their instructional practices and make contributions to their PD. Even though the group members were highly motivated and eager to complete the study, their busy schedules made it difficult to create an appropriate period that could fit everyone. These

teachers are expected to teach 20-22 lesson hours (11 face-to-face lessons and 9-11 online lessons) a week. As explained in the contextual background of the research site, the teachers are also required to follow their duties as academic advisors, provide written feedback on writing assignments periodically, assess exam papers and provide feedback on results, participate in regular coordination meetings, keep track of absenteeism of students, hold regular office hours, and execute their duties coming from their units. All participants had a unit membership, resulting in regular meetings with unit members and extra duties to be completed throughout the semester.

Towards the end of the program, I interviewed three students from each class where a TSG member conducted action research. Each TSG member chose three students from their class depending on the purposive sampling strategy. In this sense, the instructors chose the students in the class when the lesson regarding the implementation stage of action research was conducted. They also chose those students by considering how insightful contributions they could make to the study. In this sense, I interviewed 18 students coming from the same level (Level 1). They were going to study either a science or engineering program, and their primary motivation to learn English was to pass the proficiency exam and complete their degree program without a language barrier. They had 19 Integrated Skills lessons (8 face-to-face and 11 online lessons) and 8-10 asynchronous lessons. They all started as elementary-level students after their language proficiency was assessed at the beginning of the academic year, and they are expected to finish the preparatory school with B1+ proficiency level according to CEFR criteria.

To enrich the data with an etic perspective, I also interviewed ten non-TSG teachers after the TSG teachers presented their AR projects at the AR Seminar Day event. In order to include the perspectives of the audience who attended the event, I used purposeful sampling to choose the teachers who would like to share their insights and takeaways from the TSG program. In this sense, 10 teachers from the SoFL volunteered to take part in the interviews. Ten EFL teachers, aged 27 to 55, had similar lesson hours and duties as the TSG teachers. While the youngest had a four-year teaching experience, the eldest teacher had a 33-year teaching experience in ELT. While eight teachers have a degree in ELT, two have a degree in English Language and Literature. Besides, three of these teachers have an M.A. in ELT, and three have an M.A. in Educational Sciences or English Language Literature. Also, I interviewed four students from the classes of TSG teachers to conduct interviews and shed light on student perspectives. After I asked the TSG teachers to choose one student from their

classes, four students aged 18 to 19 volunteered to participate. While three students were from Level 1 classes, one was from a L3 class.

When it comes to the role of administration in this study, the director of SoFL was one of the supervisors of this PD project. The administrative support I got in every step of this study facilitated the procedures that might have taken a long time without any support. The director of SoFL is an assistant professor who is a graduate of English Language Teaching (ELT), and also she has MA and Ph.D. degrees in ELT. The director made invaluable contributions to the study at every stage of the process. She got involved in the planning stage before the program was implemented. She also accepted being the project supervisor, which led to constant support during and after the study. Being a supervisor and active participant in the study, the director of SoFL contributed to the program by giving an expert talk, supporting the activities conducted at the preparatory school, organizing the in-house conference to present action research, and supporting the process of publications.

3.4. Research and Data Collection Process

This case study was carried out with the instructors who wanted to participate voluntarily after the program was introduced in detail in the second semester of the 2021-2022 academic year at School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Türkiye. Within the scope of this study, a training program was offered to teachers, and the research was carried out through a variety of data collection tools, including observation and field notes, interviews, reflective teacher journals, researcher journal, and an online discussion board. I used a purposeful sampling strategy to choose the instructors who could provide rich information (Patton, 1991) based on the criteria explained in detail in the participants' section. After I made a presentation and called for the participants based on the criteria mentioned above, six instructors who aligned with the project requirements volunteered to participate. Then a TSG was formed with these instructors who were willing to participate. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to reveal the opinions and needs of the participants about continuous professional development, their perceptions of activities provided by the institution, their expectations from this program, and their language learning and teaching background (Appendix 4). Afterwards, in the group meeting with the participants, the theoretical and practical issues they needed were determined, action research as a methodology was introduced, and a program spread to the spring semester was scheduled (see Table 2). Participants were also requested to think about an action research plan in line with their

classroom needs during this period as everyone would have done action research by the end of the semester.

Table 2

Timeline for TSG process

Before the program (1st semester)	Individual semi-structured interviews (teaching/learning background, teaching philosophy, experiences, beliefs)
Before the program (1st semester)	**1st TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** for protocols, introduction of theoretical framework, introduction for action research
Before the program (1st semester + winter break)	Reading the materials (Sociocultural Theory, Critical Pedagogy, Action Research)
1st week	**2nd TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** **Discussion** (based on the readings) + **Reflective Journal Writing** (after the meeting)
2nd week	**3rd TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** Discussion (based on readings and in-class observation) **Reflective Journal Writing** (after the meeting)
BREAK	
4th week	**4th TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** **Presentation week** (collaborative feedback on action research plans +**Expert talk 1**) **Reflective Journal Writing** (after the meeting)
5th week	**5th TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** **Presentation week** (collaborative feedback on final draft action research plans) **Expert Talk 2** **Reflective Journal Writing** (after the meeting)
BREAK	
7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th week	Implementation of action plan (literature review, data collection, data analysis, writing-up) **6th TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)** **Expert Talk 3** Peer and expert feedback for the research process

	Peer observations **Reflective Journal Writing**
After the program	**AR Seminar Day** (presentation of o action research process and sharing the takeaways with other stakeholders at the university)
After the program	**Semi-structured interviews** (individual) based on the action research process **7th TSG Meeting (Microsoft Teams)**
After the program	**Semi-structured interviews** with students based on the action research process
After the program	**Semi-structured interviews** with non-TSG teachers based on action TSG outcomes and their insights into the AR Seminar Day

In the first six weeks of this program (including two breaks), the teachers came together to discuss the assigned readings (Appendix 5) about the theoretical frameworks (Sociocultural Theory and Critical Pedagogy) and action research design, reflected on classroom practices to identify a problem to be solved through action research, presented their action research plans, and gave feedback to each other on their action research plan presentations. All TSG meetings were held online on Microsoft Teams. TSG members also used this platform as a discussion board to ask their questions or to get feedback asynchronously throughout the process. Participants were asked to do the readings announced in advance to discuss them and their in-class observations in the first two meetings in light of the questions that I had sent. Two weeks were allocated to discuss the reading materials and in-class observations, the first week was for the evaluation and discussion of the readings, and the following (second) week was for sharing and discussing the participants' experiences in their classrooms in relation to the readings. After a one-week break, we had two more meetings in two weeks to present the action research plan (in the light of a sample template given to them) and get collaborative feedback, followed by a one-week break.

At the end of the sixth week, the instructors started to implement their action research plans in their classrooms (7th week), and they had enough time to carry out their research until the end of the semester. Participants conducted action research based on the problem they identified and discussed in the TSG, and their peers observed at least one of their lessons related to the selected topic. During the action research process, the participants were coached at every stage of the process (planning, implementation, and analysis). In addition, the online reflective journals assigned to them at the beginning of the program and requested to be filled

out during both the online education and action research process were collected every two weeks for feedback (Appendix 6 and 7). Teachers used an online notebook program embedded in Microsoft Teams to write their journals periodically, making it easier for me to read and provide feedback. Teachers also participated in two expert talks given by two teacher educators, who were also the project supervisors of the dissertation. They could get feedback on their action research plans and other instructional practices through these expert talks given after the TSG meetings. At the end of the program, the participants were asked to make a presentation on their action research (Appendix 8). These presentations were given in an in-house PD event (AR Seminar Day) under the supervision of the SoFL administration. At the end of the process, individual semi-structured (the second one) interviews were held with the instructors to evaluate the program (Appendix 9), and their reflective diaries were collected. After AR Seminar Day, I also conducted interviews with non-TSG teachers to shed light on their experiences with the AR projects (Appendix 10). Similarly, the students whose teachers conducted AR in their classrooms were interviewed to include a learner perspective into the TSG process (Appendix 11).

3.5. Data Collection Tools

In this study, a variety of data collection sources were employed with the aim of in-depth exploration of a bounded system, an intrinsic case for this study, the components constituting this bounded system, and how the CPD program designed for this setting has contributed to the case. For this reason, several qualitative research methods were conducted to obtain insightful data that helped me have a better interpretation of the whole case with its all components and transformative benefits of the CPD program. The methods implemented in this study are observation and field notes, interviews, reflective teacher journals, researcher journal, and an online discussion board (see Table 3).

Table 3

Summary of data collection methods and methodological aims of the use

Methods	**Data detail**	**Aim of the use**
Observation & fieldnotes	Observations based on all interviews and research lessons & Fieldnotes based on all interview and observation sessions	To collect contextual data about perceptions and practices of the teacher study group
Reflective journal writing	Based on teacher entries after all group/individual interviews and the action research process	To collect reflective and introspective data about the teachers' experiences

Group discussions	Group discussions (TSG Meetings) conducted at the beginning of the program (1), during the program (5), and at the end of the program (1)	To collect data concerning the group perspective towards the TSG and AR through their interactions
Online discussion boards	Asynchronous panel discussions based on weekly readings and assignment questions	To collect written data about the teachers' insights into the reading materials
Semi-structured interviews with teachers	Based on the preliminary thoughts of the teachers at the beginning of the program	To collect data about the teachers' preliminary thoughts, beliefs, and expectations concerning CPD
Semi-structured stimulated interviews with teachers	Based on the teachers' experiences in group interviews and the action research process	To collect retrospective data about the teachers' experiences and practices during specific moments
Semi-structured interviews with students	Based on the students' experiences after the action research process	To collect data with an etic perspective about what students think about the changes in their lessons
Semi-structured interviews with non-TSG teachers	Based on action TSG outcomes and their insights into the AR Seminar Day	To collect data with an etic perspective about what other teachers think about the TSG takeaways
Researcher journal	Based on the researcher's reflections on participants and self-reflections	To triangulate data by integrating researcher reflexivity

3.5.1 Participant observation

As the primary purpose of this investigation is to reveal, understand, interpret, and analyse human life to open new ways for continuous learning, interpretation of the routines, rituals, rules, roles, and social relationships in people's lives to analyse life and life experiences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) has been a substantial driving force of this study. In this sense, participant observation was one of the methods to collect data in this study. Participant observation is a method that enables researchers to observe the participants' actions, reactions, and interactions in their natural settings (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Engaging in the TSG meetings, the teachers' lessons, online board discussions, and group conversations have been the skeleton of the participant observation data source. Having an active role in the research site, facilitating the research process by developing interactive relationships with participants (Cowie, 2011), and observing the teachers in their natural settings yielded a great deal of data to make meaning. I observed the participants both in their natural settings and in particular

situations (TSG meetings and expert talks) to have a broader comprehension of their actions and the underlying reasons behind these actions.

3.5.2. Field notes

Regarding the observations, I made use of field notes, which helped me to document rich information about the participants, settings, actions, interactions, and reactions in addition to my own reflection and interpretation of the field (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). I always attempted to take field notes systematically so that I could go back and forth for further analysis to triangulate the data. As the TSG meetings were video-recorded, re-watching the videos also allowed me to have an in-depth understanding of the content. In this sense, my field notes consisted of several categories (Bailey, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011): on-the-fly notes (words or phrases from the participants), thick descriptions (detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, and actions), summary notes (summary of the field notes at specific periods), conversation notes (notes on teacher interactions), and my interpretation notes (preliminary analytical notes on the field).

These notes were also supported by the researcher's journal with reflexive and reflective notes. I also tried not to confine myself to the focus of the study in that I paid attention to all the things happening around me to employ a more holistic perspective toward the entire research site (Friedman, 2012). The role of observation in this study is not independent of other methods since observation data are interrelated to interviews, stimulated recalls, and teacher journals, and one data set collected through one method led me to collect another data set in a different method, which enriches the whole data corpus (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Also, as a researcher, I paid close attention to the fact that the way I observed the research site and the participants was in conjugation with my personal stance, gender, age, identities, and socioeconomic status, which led me to critically and continuously reflect on my decisions while collecting and analysing the data (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

3.5.3. Semi-structured interviews

I conducted several semi-structured interviews in several ways to shed more light on the reflections and insights of the participants. Interviews can serve as fruitful data sources considering that interviews are conversational in concept, and people are used to engaging in natural conversations in their daily lives (Brinkmann, 2013). All the interviews I used in this study were semi-structured in-depth interviews since interview questions were not wholly prescribed, and the answers expected from the participants were not short and pre-determined

(Leavy, 2017). I prepared some lines of inquiry including the main questions, themes, and topics to be covered (Weiss, 1994); however, this guide did not aim to restrict the role of the participants and their probable answers. While preparing the lines of inquiry, I tried to include all the topics related to the focus of inquiry, and I started with more simple questions to improve the rapport with the participants, which helped me to get more in-depth answers to the more complex and sensitive questions asked towards the end of the interviews (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

Semi-structured nature of the interviews provided a flexible environment in which I could ask improvisatory questions with regard to the participants' answers dynamically and mindfully. Active listening during the interviews enabled me to determine the following questions to enact a more in-depth inquiry. It was also quite significant for me to build a rapport with the participants before and during the interviews by respecting their answers and showing that I was an active listener through some probes (Leavy, 2017). In this regard, I used semi-structured individual interviews for teachers to collect data about the teachers' preliminary thoughts, beliefs, and expectations concerning CPD, followed by periodical group discussions (online TSG meetings) to collect data on the group perspective toward the TSG.

TSG meetings were held at the beginning of the program, during the program for discussions about readings/AR, at the end of the program, and after the action research process. To promote the credibility of the study, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the students whose lessons had been observed before to collect data from an etic perspective (De Costa et al., 2019) about what students think about the changes in their lessons. In line with etic perspective, non-TSG teachers who participated in AR Seminar Day event and witnessed the TSG process were also interviewed to collect data about the takeaways of the TSG program from different perspectives. In this sense, all the individual interviews were audio-recorded and conducted in Turkish to provide a plausible environment in which the interviewees could feel less stressed to state their opinions and insights.

3.5.4. Stimulated recalls

I also used semi-structured individual stimulated recalls to collect retrospective data about the teachers' experiences and practices during specific moments through audio recordings and field notes that helped the participants remember the specific moment and elaborate on their actions (Gass & Mackey, 2017). By using semi-structured stimulated recalls, I aimed to enable teachers to make reflections on their in-group actions, classroom practices, action research process, and their reflective thoughts written through reflective journals

throughout the program. Apart from being a data collection tool, these stimulated recalls functioned as a means whereby teachers made elaborations on their beliefs and practices. I witnessed the turning points that led to a cognitive and instructional transformation in this professional development journey.

3.5.5. Reflective teacher journals

Another source of data in this study is reflective teacher journals. The teachers were expected to keep a reflective journal throughout the research process. Teachers made reflective and introspective notes for all interviews, online and face-to-face group meetings, and action research stages, which yielded rich documentation of their experiences of CPD and a dynamic evaluation of their progress. Reflective journals were used to help teachers express their attitudes and dispositions towards an activity through reflective thoughts (Dewey, 1933). Reflective writing is also helpful in examining the complex nature of professional practice and detecting the detrimental components that hinder professional growth (Schön, 1987). The teachers were informed that they could utilise both reflection-in-action (reflection based on previous understandings and background while an activity is happening) and reflection on action (reflection based on the actions and the outcomes of these actions within an activity after the activity is over) in their teacher journals (Schön, 1987). Using reflective writing in almost all stages of the CPD program enabled teachers to enact thorough and in-depth thinking on their beliefs and actions compared to aural expressions (Farrell, 2014). In this sense, reflective teacher journal was not solely a source of data to collect teacher data but also a CPD tool intended to foster teachers' professional growth.

3.5.6. Researcher journal

Reflection and analytic memo writing are considered prominent components of qualitative data analysis (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Researchers benefit from reflection to triangulate data and make in-depth interpretations to make meaning out of interrelated data sources while they utilise reflexivity to examine their own relationship with the research, data, and participants (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). With respect to the essential role of the researcher in a study, researcher journal was a significant part of this study in that I created a personal space where I could be reflective and reflexive about each stage of the study and make new decisions for the further stages. This personal space made me go through mixed-up ideas in my mind and turn them into a coherent unit transparently (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), which enhanced both the data collection phases and the data analysis process. Using a researcher journal was like having a close company to whom you could tell about everything happening

around you to get an alleviating help. Thinking and reflecting rigorously on the setting, participants, their reactions, and the flow of the research through a researcher journal opened new doors to position myself and reconsider the next steps.

3.5.7. Online discussion board

Apart from these sources of data mentioned above, I also used an online discussion board asynchronously as a source of data and as a tool for CPD. Teachers were expected to attend the discussions on a digital portal (Microsoft Teams) to reflect on the articles and readings that they were supposed to read. For each article and reading material, I prepared some assignment questions to promote in-depth reflection; however, the participants were not restricted to these questions because they had the freedom to post their own questions or start a new discussion regarding the content of weekly materials. The written flow of the conversations on this board was used as one of the data sources to explore how teachers go through a professional development process and how they indicate this development through their expressions.

After the data collection process, I transcribed the audio-recordings of the interviews and video-recordings of the TSG meetings and translated them into English. Observations, discussion notes, research plans, and reflective journals were also analysed inductively. To promote the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of a study, I used debriefing, enabling me to engage in extensive discussions with my advisor about all the stages of the research, including methodological decisions, data collection, data analysis, and further steps (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). I also utilized participant check to promote the trustworthiness of a study (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Participant check helped me verify the collected data and my interpretations by receiving feedback from the participant who provided the data. Also, by using external audits, I could examine the research process and findings from the perspective of an external individual (Creswell & Miller, 2000), which led me to employ a better etic perspective.

3.6. Data Analysis

For the data analysis, I adopted the constant comparison method, which is a qualitative data analysis method based on coding and analyzing the data simultaneously to generate a theory or themes (Conrad et al., 1993; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Comparing and contrasting the data constantly helps researchers to create categories, determine boundaries among categories, assign relevant content to categories, and diminish discriminative features within

a category to reach conceptual similarities and patterns across the data (Tesch, 1990). I decided to adopt the constant comparison method to generate major patterns out of the data. As the constant comparison method aims to bridge the gap between basic thematic coding and use of theoretical frameworks while coding (Corbin, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I thought this method would help me to ensure that "all data are systematically compared to all other data in the data set" in light of SCT and CP (O'Connor et al., 2008, p.41).

Constant comparison analysis requires (re)examining the code whenever something new is added to existing codes from the beginning of the data collection to differentiate all similarities and differences, which means that themes are constantly built through a systematic and analytic perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, it is essential to conduct data analysis and data collection simultaneously to make decisions on new data sources that can contribute to theme-building process. Even though constant comparison method is mostly used to generate a grounded theory, in this study, I conducted the constant comparison method to constantly compare my data set and determine if I needed further data to generate more comprehensive themes out of data rather than generating a theory (Corbin, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fram 2013). Besides, constant comparison method enabled me to use the theoretical frameworks (SCT and CP) to analyse the data and conduct a coding procedure by using the theoretical frameworks as tools to maintain an emic and etic perspective (Fram, 2013). While constant comparison method helped me enact an emic perspective by comparing all data and make meaning at the concrete level, the theoretical frameworks provided an etic perspective to understand and analyse the data at the abstract level (Fram, 2013).

Immersion with the data and the participants' worlds rather than sticking to pre-determined beliefs or interpretations is a critical component of the constant comparison method; however, taking such a stance does not underestimate the role of the researcher's interpretation made out of the data (Glaser, 1965). This method provides a space for researchers where they can make relevant interpretations to generate conceptually sound patterns. In this sense, I went through four stages of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to analyze the data and generate overarching themes out of it:

- open coding (to identify the words emerging from the data and list the codes)
- axial coding (to make connections between codes, check intersecting sub-categories and eliminate the similar sub-categories)

- selective coding (to give definition to emerging categories and create core categories)
- next analysis (to integrate the concepts of appropriate categories and reach common patterns/themes)

I employed a cyclical, iterative, and constant coding process to create categories out of the data. The addition of each data source and additional data from each participant led me to re-examine the categories and codes to get more familiar with the data and to what extent all data sources converge. For the first and second stages of constant comparison analysis, I also utilized descriptive and in vivo coding, followed by pattern coding (Saldaña, 2009; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). I used descriptive coding to assign codes comprising topics representing the participants' direct quotations. That is to say, I used those direct quotations as codes by conducting in vivo coding to preserve the participants' actual wording, followed by descriptive coding to assign words to quotations to categorize them (Saldaña, 2009). Later, pattern coding was applied to earlier codes and categories to reach overarching themes and constructs. Likewise, I also integrated a three-phase coding: open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) into the coding process to reach bigger units of data and themes. In the open coding phase, I tried to identify and understand codes and how to relate them to one another, which ended up with many sub-categories. In the axial coding phase, I merged the sub-categories and eliminated similar ones to reach categories by analyzing the codes under each sub-category inductively and deductively. Subsequently, I gave definitions to emerging categories and came up with the core categories in the selective coding phase. Finally, I related all the core categories to each other by validating the similarities and connections, and I integrated the appropriate concepts of the theoretical frameworks I adopted for this study, which led me to reach overarching themes to represent the data. (Fram, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Throughout the coding process, I kept analytic memos (Saldaña, 2009) to document my thoughts and interpretations concerning how codes, categories, and themes emerged and how they are interrelated. Keeping analytic memos provided me a space where I could constantly reflect on the existing relationships within the whole data and how I could generate the themes with emerging codes and categories.

This coding process to compare incidents for categories and integrate those categories was applied to all data sources chronologically, considering the data collection timeline. In this regard, the coding process started with the transcription of the initial semi-structured

interviews and TSG meetings. Then observation and field notes and teacher journals were analyzed and compared to existing codes emerging from the previous data set. However, these field notes and journals were analyzed according to the time they were written to understand the developmental progress better in a chronological way. Finally, the transcribed final interviews with teachers and students and stimulated recall interviews were analyzed concerning previous codes and themes.

For the third and fourth stages of the analysis, I worked on the core categories to create and refine the overarching themes supported with the concepts of SCT and CP frameworks. Selective coding at these stages helped me increase my understanding of the data. This process started with a few potential themes that led me to conduct a theoretical sampling to broaden and refine the potential themes and integrate more insights into the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Therefore, I decided to integrate additional cases (new data sources and new participants such as interviews with non-TSG teachers, and learners). Having integrated theoretical sampling to enrich the content and scope of the themes, I worked on the additional data by using the same procedures that I applied to the previous data sources. That is to say, I employed descriptive, in vivo, and pattern coding for the content of the data in addition to open, axial, and selective coding for the first and second stages of constant comparison analysis. Then I worked on the third and fourth stages to elaborate on the themes and integrate them with the appropriate concepts of the theoretical frameworks. Besides, for the entire analysis process I worked with my advisor, and we conducted debriefing to reach a consensus on emerging data. Likewise, my critical friend, who is also a PhD student in ELT, acted as an external audit to review the emerging categories and themes, which helped me reconsider the data from an outsider perspective.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the study findings are presented in relation to the research questions. In the first part, regarding the first research question, I focused on the participant teachers' background information about their current pedagogical philosophies and PD perspectives before the implementation of the TSG program. Hence, I aimed to elaborate on the findings concerning their current pedagogies, PD needs and expectations. Subsequently, I present the findings for the second research question, exploring the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective. In this regard, my intention was to shed light on the sociocultural outcomes of the TSG program from the teachers' perspective. Finally, I present the findings in relation to the third research question, intending to reveal the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective. Based on this research question, pedagogically critical outcomes of the TSG program are scrutinized from the TSG teachers, non-TSG teachers and learners' perspectives.

4.1. Teachers' background and PD perspectives before the TSG program

Four themes emerged from the data for the first research question to reveal background information about TSG teachers' current teaching philosophies and PD perspectives before the TSG program: inadequate pre-service teacher education, learner-centred teaching, inadequate institutional PD, and practice-oriented collaborative PD expectations. Each theme is presented with a detailed description and relevant excerpts from each teacher's pre-TSG interview data.

The teachers describe their current teaching philosophies based on two factors: inadequate initial teacher education (due to overemphasis on theory, inadequate practicum experiences, practicum in unrealistic classrooms, lack of guidance from teacher educators, and lack of course book practices) and learner-centred teaching. Although they complain about the inadequacies of their undergraduate programs, they seem to have developed a teaching philosophy based on learner autonomy and empowerment through their self-directed professional development activities. Regarding their PD perspectives and expectations, the teachers complain about the institutional PD practices, which need to be more context-specific and practical. They express that they need more practice-oriented and collaborative PD activities.

4.1.1. Inadequate pre-service teacher education

The first interview for the TSG teachers reveals that inadequate pre-service teacher education is a common drawback all the teachers agreed upon. The teachers define the inadequacy in pre-service teacher education by referring to the theoretical aspect of the curricula, lack of practicum experiences, unrealistic classroom observations, lack of course book teaching training, and inefficient guidance by teacher educators.

The data reveal that the teachers find the theoretical knowledge offered by language teacher education curricula ineffective and somehow irrelevant to their profession, as Buket explained:

> *In my pre-service education, I was not satisfied with the theoretical knowledge offered by my department. It was generally literature-based. It did not contribute a lot to me. Pre-service education has little to do with my teaching, but it helped me improve myself in literature.*

A theoretically-loaded pre-service education is not considered a prerequisite for better teaching practices, as stated by Cansu: "*Our program was heavily theoretical as if we had been master's degree students. We had to read many academic papers, which was unnecessary for teaching*." Likewise, pedagogical formation programs offered for non-ELT teacher candidates are also found to be ineffective and irrelevant in that they cannot equip them with adequate theoretical knowledge needed for teaching, as stated by Zeynep: "*I studied American Culture and Literature. I wanted to be an instructor at university, so I got a pedagogical formation certificate, but this program did not contribute to my professional development. It only provided a chance for classroom observation*."

Lack of practicum experiences is also considered one of the reasons for inadequate pre-service education for the teachers. Starting the practicum in the final year and engaging in a limited number of teaching sessions throughout the practicum results in a lack of teaching experience after graduation, as Cansu pointed out: *"I experienced real teaching practices only in the final year during the practicum. We only taught two lessons during the practicum, which is less than necessary. I wish I had taught more to prepare for the real classes."* Lack of teaching practices in a practicum can also lead to fewer opportunities to observe and teach various classrooms in different settings, which makes teachers less prepared to teach in real classrooms, as openly stated by Sibel:

> *I had the chance to observe a real classroom just in my second grade and then practicum in the final year. I do not think that it was enough to get experience in teaching. I only taught a particular group of students there; the sample was insufficient. After I graduated from the university, I realized how real classrooms differed from the practicum sample. I wish I had observed more various cases in my practicum.*

Another drawback TSG teachers highlight is the pre-service education's inefficiency in preparing them for real teaching practices. Teachers believe that skill teaching courses did not serve their classroom needs; as Eda explained: "*Skill teaching courses were not beneficial enough. I was not satisfied at all. I could not use what I learnt in those courses*." Preparing detailed lesson plans for skill teaching courses in pre-service education is also criticized: "*We needed more practices that could have been done in real classrooms. We prepared too many lesson plans, but we did not learn how to use a course book more effectively.*" (Cansu). Hence, the teachers believe they should have more training on how to utilize course books more efficiently rather than spending hours preparing detailed lesson plans for each skill.

The teachers also criticize the role of teacher educators in their pre-service education by stressing that they could not get enough guidance and feedback from their teacher educators, which made them feel less prepared and confident at the beginning of their professional career: "*In my pre-service education, I did not have qualified teacher educators. One of them was very obsessive. The department chair was not fair and discriminated against some students. The others were indifferent to us. I just had one teacher educator whom I like*." (Aylin) Lack of rapport and communication between prospective teachers and teacher educators is seen as a hindrance, as explained by Cansu: "*Our teacher educators were not very close to us, and they did not guide us efficiently. We did not have close relationships*."

The data show that the TSG teacher compensated for the inadequacy of pre-service teacher education by involving in further studies such as MA and CELTA programs. The teachers think they felt more satisfied and proficient after completing these studies: "*I learned a lot during my master's degree. Pre-service education does not have much to do with my teaching*." (Buket). Master's and CELTA programs are found to be very effective, especially for one of the non-ELT graduate teachers, as Zeynep explained: "*As I was not theoretically satisfied, I got a CELTA certificate. Then I did my MA in TEFL. The last two actions helped me a lot, both theoretically and practically*." Post-studies after the pre-service education seem

to be effective by the teachers in that these studies help them to reason their teaching practices and restructure their pre-service education outcomes:

> *As I was not satisfied with my pre-service education, I took a CELTA program, I learnt how to teach, and I learnt to rationalize my practices. It helped me a lot. My master's degree helped me to brush up on my previous knowledge and learn new approaches. I learnt how to do research. It was helpful for my professional development*. (Eda)

However, Aylin continued to take extra courses for her professional development as her master's programs were not satisfactory enough:

> *My master's education did not satisfy me. I thought I had not learnt enough, so I decided to take 4 MA courses given at a different university as a special student. Those courses helped me a lot to train myself. I started to feel that I was learning for the first time then*.

The findings show that pre-service education deficiencies stemming from the theoretical load, practicum opportunities, course content, and teacher educators make teachers feel less satisfied and confident after graduation. Hence, the teachers took their own responsibility to equip themselves with efficient and satisfactory teaching skills and experiences by attending further studies.

4.1.2. Learner-centred teaching

The first interview before the TSG program also aimed to reveal what teaching philosophies the teachers had, which is essential to evaluate to what extent TSG and AR objectives compromise with the participant teachers' existing beliefs and instructional practices. The data show that the TSG teachers have a learner-centred teaching approach, and they have a lot in common in terms of learner autonomy. The teachers mostly would like to position themselves as a guide rather than a source of knowledge. They emphasize the role of learner autonomy, rapport with students, communication, and learners' needs; however, they also touch upon the curricular obstacles and unwillingness of learners, which impedes their decisions and plans.

As the TSG teachers persistently state that language learning should be a learner-centred process through which learners build their own language and communication knowledge, they tend to position themselves as a guide mediating this process by providing enough room for learner autonomy:

> *As an English teacher, I prefer to position myself as a guide because I am not a source of knowledge. Whatever you provide for them is in vain because they have easy access to much information on the internet. I prefer to guide them to choose the correct sources and activities rather than spoon-feeding them.* (Buket)

Being a guide to students is thought to be a facilitative positioning that lets students take more actions and responsibility to communicate, as Zeynep stated: "*Teachers should be like a guide to them and make them aware of new career paths*. *I want to teach English as a communication tool rather than a course and guide them to make them engaged in communication.*" Teachers' guidance can lead to more autonomous practices by learners since they can have the opportunity to learn how to learn rather than exposing them to explicit grammar teaching, as Buket explained:

> *I don't think that teachers should teach English by spending hours and hours on teaching rule-based grammar explicitly. One cannot learn a language in this way. I have not learnt; no one can learn through explicit grammar teaching. The internalization process is essential. Students just store the grammatical knowledge; they do not use it practically. I prefer encouraging and guiding students to infer from reading and listening texts.*

To foster learner-centeredness, the TSG teachers believe that there must be a positive and comforting rapport between teachers and students, which is found to be a prerequisite for accelerating better language learning practices from the perspective of learners, as highlighted by Cansu: "*I value developing close relationships in a friendly way. I think students learn better if they feel close to you*." Creating a stress-free learning environment and considering learners' needs responsively can foster the learning process:

> *I think building a rapport with students is crucial to enhance teaching and learning practices. They should ensure I am friendly because it is important to create a stress-free environment where the anxiety level is low. I can adapt myself in accordance with particular needs*. (Sibel)

Also, the rapport between learners and teachers is further specified as a relationship that comforts learners but at the same time maintains classroom management: "*I think students like lessons if they like and respect the teacher. However, I do not mean that a teacher should be like a friend. I am not a strict teacher, but I have rules to manage the class.*" (Zeynep)

Positioning themselves as a "teacher as a guide" helps them be more responsive to learners' demands and needs. Taking learners' suggestions into consideration could enhance learner autonomy, as Aylin explained:

One day, one of my students made a suggestion and wanted to complete a story given in the course book. It was a very creative idea. I appreciated and accepted the offer. I modified the activity due to my students' needs and wishes. I generally ask for feedback in my class because feedback is the most important component of the teaching and learning process. The context is quite important to have the flexibility and provide feedback, which results in strong relationships between students and teachers.

The TSG teachers prioritize their learners' needs so that they think it can contribute to their autonomy. Considering their needs, the TSG teachers believe learners can experience better learning experiences. Despite the curricular hindrances, some teachers tend to comply with the learners' needs and expectations by designing their lessons accordingly and valuing their perspectives:

> *I prefer to prepare lesson plans designed in line with multiple intelligences to reach more students. I am not a course book teacher. However, I am a kind of course book teacher now because of the curriculum and partnership system at our institute. I always consider my students' needs and expectations. I always integrate my students' perspectives into my lesson plans.* (Sibel)

The curricular obstacles prevent teachers from designing lessons in line with their philosophies and their students' needs, so the teachers state that they cannot quickly implement what they believe as a teacher, as explained by Eda: "*My teaching philosophy is not clear-cut. It is hard to articulate. I tend to be an idealist teacher by considering learner needs and autonomy. However, I feel very mechanic and not idealistic enough. The current conditions influenced me.*"

In addition to curricular obstacles that deprive the teachers of offering more autonomous instructional practices, the TSG teachers also emphasize that learners' unpreparedness and unwillingness might impede their decisions and plans regarding learner autonomy, as Buket stated:

> *Our students mostly have a conservative perspective and are not even aware of learner autonomy. They are used to traditional learning practices. Learner autonomy is not a*

> *significant component of our curriculum. Even though I encourage them to adopt an autonomous perspective, they think I do not do my job by letting them self-learn. As some students are used to spoon-feeding, they react to my philosophy. That is one of the most significant problems in my teaching career.*

Learners' unwillingness makes the teachers less motivated to implement what they believe to be effective and beneficial for them, as Zeynep shared: "*Students are unwilling to speak English. It is a big problem. They do not find it interesting. They feel stressed and ashamed while speaking. They perceive English as a course. They have no curiosity, which affects my teaching practices*." Learners' unwilling attitudes toward self-learning tasks and homework lead to a dissonance between what the teachers would like to do and what happens in reality, as Eda explained: "*Unfortunately, students are not interested in self-study skills/tasks. It is tough to draw their attention. They do not do homework; they do not even try. Some of them dropped out of school. They do not want to learn English*." Hence, the teachers mostly complain about spending time motivating students to make them engaged in the language learning process:

> *Lack of motivation and unwillingness is one of the most important problems in the class. My level 1 students are always unmotivated to learn. I try to contact them personally to keep them motivated. We are the first faces they encounter at university, so I try not to make them feel stressed or lost. Their performances make me sad; they are not focused. I give extra materials and do my best, but it may not always work. I want to keep them motivated and feel happy*. (Aylin)

The findings demonstrate that TSG teachers mostly adopt a learner-centred approach to language teaching by increasing learner autonomy, creating a positive rapport, and guiding learners to take responsibility for their learning. However, the curricular drawbacks and learners' inability to learn autonomously prevent teachers from implementing what they believe to be ideal in their classrooms.

4.1.3. Inadequate institutional PD

TSG teachers unanimously emphasize that their institution has not provided enough PD practices for them except for a few seminars offered by the publishing houses. Apart from the limited amount of PD events, the teachers also complain about the content of those PD practices since they think the seminars were mostly theoretical and irrelevant to their needs. Finally, the teachers point out that they lack the flexibility and authority to take the initiative

for their personal PD actions and practices because of the workload and curricular expectations.

TSG members think the institution does not provide enough PD events for the instructors because they state that they could attend only a few seminars that were not based on their demands or a needs analysis, as explained by Cansu: "*I only attended one PD activity at my institute. We did not have enough PD activities. That PD event did not contribute to me at all because I had already done it in my classes*" For this reason, teachers resort to their own ways to get PD, as Sibel stated: "*The schools where I worked did not provide enough PD activities. I am a member of some PD platforms. I generally catch up with PD activities to improve my profession on those platforms*."

The seminars offered by the publishing houses are considered irrelevant and unrealistic to the teachers' needs because the teachers think that what is suggested in these kinds of seminars cannot be put into practice in their classrooms. The teachers think they do not have the instructional authority to make changes in their lesson plans as suggested in those seminars, as Aylin stated: "*I attended one seminar at my institute, but it did not help me at all. It was about testing, but there was nothing to do for me*." They also stress that teacher trainers who are unfamiliar with their context cannot offer too much for them:

> *Theoretically, the seminars I have attended so far did not work. The theories discussed in these events do not work in class. I have already forgotten most of these theories; they are not long-standing. I attended one PD activity at my institute, but I did not find it realistic enough because we have a curriculum, and we do not have the authority to change it. We cannot implement what is suggested in this kind of seminar. Also, foreign teacher educators cannot provide relevant PD since they are not aware of the realities in our context.* (Zeynep)

Another reason why top-down seminars do not work is attributed to the lack of needs analysis, which results in teachers' wasting time by attending seminars that cannot benefit them at all:

> *The PD activities I have attended at my institute offered a pack of theoretical knowledge. In these seminars, the educators only gave a summary of some theoretical issues, which I had already known very well. It was not useful for me. I expected to take part in seminars that were based on the improvement of practical teaching knowledge.* (Buket)

Even though attending the PD seminars made one member of the TSG happy, she states that she could not benefit from those seminars in the long run:

> *I attended some PD events, such as seminars and conferences at the school. While attending, I felt good but later realized I did not learn something to implement in the class. They had no significant effects on my philosophy or practices. Except for CELTA, I have not been to any beneficial PD events. PD events are unrealistic in that they are irrelevant to our needs.* (Eda)

The teachers who had worked at state schools before also stated that their previous PD training offered by the MoNE was also irrelevant to their needs:

> *When I was an English teacher at a state school, the seminars offered by the ministry of education were completely irrelevant to our needs. The content of the seminars was based on professional development, but it was not relevant to my field.* (Cansu)

As a result of the inadequacy of institutional PD, the teachers would like to pursue their own PD by engaging in external sources such as national/international PD platforms and social media. However, they do not think they have enough flexibility and time to catch up with these PD events or programs, as explained by Eda: "*I try to follow some teacher trainers on social media for my professional development. Apart from that, I have not been engaged in enough PD activities because of my duties.*" Likewise, Sibel stated:

> *I constantly search for national and international PD organizations. I got a scholarship from one of those international organizations for PD activities. Last year, I got an education on motivation, but I have not attended any of these seminars this year because of my class hours and duty in one of the school units.*

Teachers' workload and inflexibility are stated to be detrimental to their willingness to attend personal PD practices, as explained by Buket: "*I personally need to improve students' learner autonomy, so I would like to attend seminars that would help to implement this perspective in my lessons. We are not flexible enough even though the institute favours teacher flexibility*." Being tired of the workload prevents some teachers from looking for external PD sources for their professional growth, as pointed out by Zeynep: "*Even though we like the idea of PD, we may refrain from attending PD activities because of tiredness and workload*."

The findings show that TSG teachers are willing to contribute to their professional growth. However, the training offered by the institute and the relevancy of this training do not

satisfy them, which makes them expect to get involved in personal and external PD practices. However, they complain that they lack the flexibility to sustain their PD practices.

4.1.4. Practice -oriented collaborative PD expectations

TSG teachers agree upon the need for practice-oriented PD by highlighting the essence of practical knowledge through hands-on practices and workshops based on needs analysis, theoretical knowledge that can be concretely implemented, practices to foster learner autonomy, collaboration among colleagues, and. observation practices. They assertively point out that transmission-based and top-down PD practices delivered through knowledge transfer without considering teachers' real needs do not meet their needs and expectations.

The teachers expect to get involved in PD practices designed in line with a needs analysis to enrich their practical knowledge and implement better instructional practices in the class. By doing so, they believe that they will have a variety of instruments to be implemented, and students will learn better without getting bored:

> *The PD activities I attended offered a pack of theoretical knowledge. In these seminars, the educators only gave a summary of some theoretical issues, which I had already known very well. It was not useful for me. I expected to take part in seminars that were based on the improvement of practical teaching knowledge*. (Buket)

As some PD practices are theoretically loaded and tiring, the teachers expect to attend the more practical PD events and to the point considering their tiredness and workload, as explained by Zeynep:

> *PD activities should be concerned with common problems based on a needs analysis. PD is appealing, but we might feel tired of attending them. Even though we like the idea of PD, we may refrain from attending PD activities because of tiredness and workload. Thus, PD activities should be practice-based and to the point, which may attract us more. Use of L1 in the class, less grammar-based lessons. These topics are not interesting, but something like "how to teach writing more enjoyably" can be more attractive to us. Students are afraid of writing. Some PD events based on poster writing or blog writing can work well.*

However, they may also need theoretical knowledge to foster their practical knowledge, as reasoned by Buket: "*I think PD activities should not be solely based on theoretical knowledge, but we sometimes may need it. Therefore, to satisfy all needs, a PD*

activity including both theoretical and practical sessions would meet our needs." Theoretical knowledge in PD is believed to benefit teachers to have a better understanding of teaching practices, as explained by Sibel: "*I like the idea of reading academic texts. We can understand better by reading. These readings can also help us brush up on our previous academic knowledge*."

PD needs for practical knowledge are not considered to be one-shot activity since some teachers believe that this kind of PD events should be well-organized, and there should be follow-up sessions after a practice-based PD in order to share and discuss the outcomes more sustainably, as exemplified by Sibel:

> *For PD, a survey can be prepared for teachers. Depending on the needs analysis, we can have a PD schedule announced at the beginning of the year. The activities can be designed in line with various skills, such as speaking, pronunciation, and writing. The activities should not be presentation-based. They can be conducted as workshops where we can do hands-on practices. Concrete practices should be shared and encouraged. Follow-up meetings should be held for teachers to keep track of the effect of these concrete practices on their teaching. Therefore, they can make better use of these workshops.*

The teachers also state that they need PD practices aligned with their philosophies and needs. As they are aware of what they need, they expect to attend PD practices that can foster their teaching philosophies. Depending on their teaching perspectives, the teachers are willing to take part in PD practices appealing to their particular needs, such as learner autonomy and innovative practices. While Buket emphasizes the need for learning instructional practices that foster learner autonomy by stating: "*I personally need to improve students' learner autonomy, so I would like to attend seminars that would help to implement this perspective in my lessons*." Zeynep points out the need for innovative practices for students:

> *New technologies and approaches should be integrated into ELT. We have difficulty catching up with the new generation. ELT as a field should be more related to new technologies and trends. We need an innovative approach in ELT to catch up with the needs of the new generation*.

Furthermore, the teachers specify what kind of PD approaches they need by emphasizing the role of collaboration, observation and research skills. The teachers believe that collaborating with their colleagues and sharing their teaching problems/practices could

help them develop professionally, as explained by Cansu: "*I expect PD events to help us to be more collaborative. I want to share my experiences with my colleagues collaboratively. I expect to share all materials, personal practices, and lesson plans with other teachers*." Collaboration through a community of practice is also found to be helpful, as exemplified by Aylin: "*I benefited a lot from my colleagues. These are not formal and structured discussions, but these informal discussions helped me a lot. I want to be a part of a community of practice; it is also a good network*."

Although some teachers may find peer observation stressful, Sibel believes it leads to beneficial outcomes for a teacher: "*Peer observation may not be appealing to teachers in Türkiye. However, I like peer observation because it is beneficial for teaching*." Observation practices within PD are thought to be useful in terms of constructive feedback, as explained by Cansu: "*I want my colleagues to observe my lessons. We should observe each other's lessons to provide constructive feedback to raise awareness about our strengths and weaknesses*."

In addition to collaboration and observation, the teachers also refer to the role of research at the tertiary level in terms of PD. They expect to attend PD practices to further their research skills and integrate research into teaching practices, as expressed by Eda: "*I like researching. While doing my master's, I realized that I like to research and have always wanted to integrate research and teaching*." Engaging with academic work through research, reflection and academic readings is also considered effective for PD, as explained by Sibel: "*I like the idea of research and reflection on readings and bridging the academic knowledge and classroom practices. We have students from diverse backgrounds, so sharing classroom experiences through research is beneficial to teach more effectively*." Also, benefiting existing research is thought to be an effective way for professional growth, as exemplified by Cansu: "*My favourite PD activities are reading recent journals and searching for best practices that can work well in the class*."

Based on the teachers' insights on the first research question, which aimed to reveal teachers' educational and professional backgrounds, PD experiences, needs and expectations. The findings show that the TSG teachers are willing to engage in PD as a result of inadequate pre-service and in-service teacher education practices. However, they believe that transmission-based PD policies and practices determined in a top-down manner without a needs analysis do not appeal to them. Hence, they are more willing to participate in PD programs tailored to their particular needs. They also expect to get involved in collaborative

PD practices through which they can search, share, observe, reflect and learn together. These findings show that what the teachers need and expect compromises with the objectives of the TSG program in that it provides collaboration, reflection and research practices.

4.2. The TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective

With the second research question, I focused on how TSG teachers elaborated on their TSG experiences and insights from the sociocultural perspective. In this regard, after the completion of the PD program and the reflective journals that the teachers had kept writing throughout the PD process, five themes emerged from the post-interviews conducted with the teachers: (1) forming true concepts through mediation means, (2) developing the teacher self through knowledge generation, (3) developing a critical stance toward the teacher self through reflective practice, (4) collaborative professional learning through inter-thinking , (5) teacher wellbeing: transformation from interpsychological to intrapsychological form.

4.2.1. Forming true concepts through mediation means

TSG teachers could reach true concepts by integrating their experiential/everyday concepts (based on their beliefs, practices, and teaching philosophies) with new theoretical/academic concepts (sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy and action research) through the mediational means defined by Johnson and Golombek (2016): artifacts, activities, concepts, and social relations. In this context, the teachers utilized AR samples and academic readings the researcher assigned to them before the PD program as mediation means (artifacts and academic concepts) to reconceptualize their existing everyday concepts in light of new academic concepts. Social relations with the researcher and experts functioned as mediation activities through which the teachers received constant, systematic, and relevant mediation and formed true concepts. TSG teachers' insights showed that with the help of artifacts, activities, and concepts offered by the researcher within the PD program, they were able to reconstruct their theoretical knowledge regarding SCT, CP, and AR. Responsive mediation from the experts and the researcher allowed the teachers to form true concepts about AR, academia, and academics and feel more motivated and confident in carrying out AR. As a result, TSG teachers could use these true concepts as psychological tools to regulate their teaching and research practices in a more contextually relevant, pedagogically and theoretically effective way.

Firstly, TSG teachers reconceptualized their existing theoretical knowledge by engaging in academic concepts (SCT, CP, and AR) given in the theoretical materials designed

by the researcher. The teachers achieved to reach theoretical richness, as Buket explained: *I knew more or less about AR content before that it consists of steps and different frameworks; I updated my information and added it to it. Readings helped me integrate AR with SCT and CP.* Starting the PD program by engaging in the theoretical underpinnings helped teachers to reconsider their existing concepts and compare them to the new concepts introduced at the preliminary stage of the process, as reported by Sibel: "*The readings we made at the beginning gave me a direction, and I did it believing there is a basis for everything. In other words, literature is always our starting point, and I think it made our job easier*." It is not unusual to have difficulty recalling previously-learnt theoretical knowledge for in-service teachers. With the help of academic readings, discussions, and reflections, the teachers were given a chance to remember and build on their academic concepts. Integrating practical knowledge to revitalized theoretical knowledge can be considered another way to form true concepts, as Eda pointed out: "*Since I studied ELT before, I remembered some of the parts. I really liked reading articles again and doing something related to my field. It was good for me to read the materials and to contribute to my teaching*." Likewise, true concepts concerning SCT, CP and AR enabled the teachers to reconsider their pedagogical knowledge and research perceptions, as explained by Buket: "*SCT and CP contributed to my teaching pedagogy. I was already familiar with AR. Within the scope of AR, the steps to identify a problem in my classroom and proceeding to the planning phase became clear with the readings.*"

The researcher's role in planning and organizing the mediation means to reach true concepts made the process easier and more functional. The teachers found the preparation part very effective by emphasizing that the materials and PD program was well-planned and organized, as Cansu explained: "*It was planned very well. I was always saying, wow, how well he had prepared it. The materials sent to us, the meeting order, flow and timings, planning details, everything proceeded in an organized and systematic way*." The materials provided for the teachers were found to be practical and relevant, which made the mediation process easier to learn new concepts and implement them; as Zeynep stated: "*The materials given to us helped us to develop a point of view about action research. We needed those rich sources."* The materials also enabled the teachers to adopt the philosophical dimension of the PD program they participated in:

> *Especially the readings you chose were much more fluent and understandable. It was something that every teacher could read and understand. Therefore, I think these readings made the process easier. I saw the philosophical dimension of the job and,*

> *of course, the action research and teaching dimension, and I knew what steps to take at the end of the process*. (Sibel)

Secondly, expert talks and relations with the researcher were found to be very helpful in forming true concepts since the teachers could figure out all the questions they had in mind about AR and transform their perceptions about academia and academics. The feedback they received from experts and the dialogic interactions between the teachers and experts yielded a higher motivation to maintain the study, a new perspective on PD, and a clear understanding of AR. The teachers felt more relieved and motivated as a result of expert mediation. Interacting with a teacher educator who openly and sincerely helped them solve their problems made the teachers feel secure and motivated compared to their previous PD experiences and transformed their perspective toward academia and academics as a result of this close contact:

> *Expert talks were very useful. For example, I did not know Professor İdil and Professor Berna. They were so sweet, and I loved them. I have always thought there were some strange people in the academy, but thanks to the expert talks, I have realized some professors also value teaching and sharing something sincerely. It made me very happy*. (Zeynep)

The experts played a substantial role in relieving the teachers' fear of research, which stemmed from misconceptions about AR. Even though some teachers were afraid of conducting an AR study, the expert talks had them figure out AR was not a complicated research form, as Cansu stated: "*I can say that I liked the expert talk series a lot. Professor Berna also said very sweetly that AR is not something to be afraid of. They explained the AR with concrete examples; it was not frightening anymore*. Expert mediation enabled the teachers to redefine AR and adopt more positive attitudes:

> *I learned valuable things from the Expert Talk series. For example, Professor İdil made me feel very comfortable about AR. While doing our master's degree, our teacher asked us for AR. AR was very theoretical in my mind. At first, I thought of it as a typical research type. I thought it was a comprehensive study with a typical research cycle. However, Professor İdil and Professor Berna said it did not have to be a big deal, and she said that we should focus on in-class practices, which was very useful*. (Buket)

The teachers could redefine AR with the help of expert mediation. Even though they completed theoretical readings, analyzed sample AR studies, and discussed AR procedures,

mediation from experts was found to be very effective in reconceptualizing AR constructs. Also, the feedback the experts provided for AR plans helped the teachers to find their way out:

> *The expert talk series was perfect because it made us feel where we were in the process. The feedback we received showed that we were not alone and where we would go step by step. I think it allowed us to take more collaborative steps to advance our ideas, and beyond helping each other here, it turned into a collaborative process stemming from team spirit and experts' support. Then I thought professional development should be collaborative like this*. (Sibel)

Having redefined AR, the teachers also reconceptualized their research understandings. As the teachers used to think that effective and reliable research studies had to be based on statistics and large sample size, expert talk series paved the way for transformed perspectives toward research:

> *I realized that qualitative research is not as bad as we feared. I noticed it both with our in-group discussions and expert talk series. Expert teacher educators also confirmed this. I realized that research conducted purely qualitatively could also be accepted. Professor İdil and Professor Berna emphasized the importance of qualitative research and presented examples. It reminded us not to feel insecure. We always think about very complex and comprehensive things when starting research, but Professor Berna says that small-scale research is not something to be afraid of. We found this to be very valuable in the context of prep school. It was perfect, especially for our friends who are new to research*. (Aylin)

In addition to the experts' role, the teachers highlighted the role of responsive mediation provided by the researcher by stating that he kept helping them constantly and responsibly by organizing meetings flexibly in accordance with their schedules, moderating the meetings by engaging everyone, and organizing every step in detail so that they could easily follow the workflow, as Zeynep expressed: "*The researcher's timing and discipline were great, which kept us united and devoted. The researcher had many responsibilities to keep the group more organized and dynamic. Therefore, all of these served the best for our goals."* The researcher's attempts to keep every member engaged without making them feel distracted were also noted to be valuable, as stated by Buket: "*The researcher has kept us up to date by summarizing us throughout this process. His summary skill is very advanced. He*

always made summaries for those distracted in long meetings by giving concise information. It was useful for me."

TSG teachers also think that the researcher comforted them emotionally by relaxing them as a guide, building positive rapport with them, making decisions considering the participants' needs and demands, and constantly reminding them what to do next in a friendly manner:

> *The researcher's role was beautiful. He carried out the process without forcing or oppressing us. In case of any problems or delays, he always put us at ease by saying, "No problem" "No rush, we will take care of it". He has always taken action by considering our schedules. He softly collaborated with us beautifully. Human relations are essential in this kind of work. One does not want to work with a person who is nervous and nervous. He coordinated us very well without making us nervous. Everything was very well planned and programmed. On the digital platform, the plan for each stage was clearly given. It progressed systematically, and he provided constant reminders, so we did not break away from the process*. (Aylin)

Finally, bridging experiential and theoretical knowledge with the help of all the mediation means explained above enabled the teachers to reach true concepts used as new psychological tools to enact customized and contextualized teaching and researching practices. TSG teachers re-evaluated and regulated their existing practices and tried to resolve some instructional practices by enacting SCT and CP perspectives, as Cansu reported: "*The first readings were very instructive. They taught me to look more critically. I always questioned myself in class about what I saw as problematic. I generally paid more attention to the problems and possible solutions in the lesson.*" In this sense, forming true concepts and benefiting them in the class led to a transformation in teaching practices for the teachers. For instance, Zeynep stated that the relation between power distance and learning highlighted in critical pedagogy readings helped her to have a better awareness about learner empowerment and discrimination-free learning environment. This true concept was used as psychological tools in the class:

> *CP and SCT affected me. For example, the father of a student in our class went to jail. He was prisoned for an unfair reason (Soma mining incidents). I had to teach something about family. I was supposed to start the activity but did not use it. If I had used it, I would have reminded him of his father, and he might have felt embarrassed*

in class. I have always avoided things that negatively affect them socially and psychologically. I was more careful. (Zeynep)

From the lens of true concepts, the teachers had a better understanding of the PD program they participated in. Having rationalized the underlying framework of the program, they felt ready and more willing to carry on. Besides, they started to think about how they could customize and contextualize their teaching in light of these new true concepts:

I have not done serious research on SCT and CP before. Especially the readings you chose were much more fluent and understandable. It was something that every teacher could read and understand to reconsider their practices. Therefore, I think these readings made the process easier. I saw the philosophical dimension of the job and, of course, the action research and teaching dimension, and I knew what steps to take at the end of the process. (Sibel)

Thinking through true concepts also helped the teachers to reconsider their instructional decisions and customize them to foster sociocultural learning critical empowerment for the benefit of learners:

SCT and CP gave me a lot of ideas and motivation for the AR I was going to do. I wanted to run an AR to empower prep MA students collaboratively, and that is where the idea for digital storytelling came from. Responsibility and consciousness were higher in these students. I could not do this AR in undergraduate preparatory students; I would use a more uncomplicated application. CP helped me a lot in making these choices. (Aylin)

The findings show that the teachers' engagement with the new academic concepts through mediation means paved the way for a reconceptualization process whereby the teachers could construct true concepts by integrating experiential and theoretical knowledge. Expert mediation did accelerate this reconceptualization process to attain true concepts since the experts helped TSG teachers to redefine AR as a PD tool by relieving their fear of research and reminding them that AR could be implemented as small-scale research without having to work with large sample sizes and use heavy statistics. Getting to know new academics and working with them also reshaped the teachers' perceptions of academia and research. Besides, the researcher's role in providing the mediation means and being responsive to the teacher's needs throughout the program was thought to facilitate the learning process. As a result, the

teachers could use the true concepts as internalized psychological tools to have contextually, theoretically, and pedagogically more effective teaching and researching practices.

4.2.2. Developing the teacher self through knowledge generation

From a sociocultural perspective, the data show that TSG teachers developed the teacher self by generating knowledge through AR after their reconceptualization of AR with the help of expert/researcher mediation and readings. In this sense, reconceptualization of AR prepared teachers to be knowledge generators through AR. Getting involved in the AR process and reflecting on student data yielded a knowledge-generation process for the teachers. The teachers transformed their instructional beliefs and practices by relying on evidence-based learner insights and performance. The teachers perceived AR as a PD tool that mediates practical research, learner autonomy, teaching quality, and professional satisfaction.

Firstly, AR was found to be very practical in that the teachers could obtain tangible/concrete findings concerning their learners' understandings and insights into instructional practices implemented in the class, which helped teachers to generate new knowledge by enforcing their own resources. In this sense, AR made it easier and more practical for the teachers to explore what worked badly or well in the class:

> *I realized that researching whatever issue you like is not as intimidating as I thought. It is possible to conduct research and get instant results out of it. With those results, instructors can immediately adapt their teaching practices (in my case, feedback practices). Action research is very practical and to the point. I really like it*. (Cansu)

As the research concept had been regarded as complex and challenging work by the teachers, AR was thought to be intimidating because of their workload at the beginning of the program. The teachers also thought they would use advanced statistics and a large-scale sample to conduct AR. However, it turned out to be wrong:

> *One of the most valuable experiences I learned about designing action research was remembering "Simplicity is the best". It used to be hard to design research on a large scale. I used to try to find a gap or a problem and try to fix it. Moreover, I always sought to conduct mixed-method research design to be on the safe side. However, by doing my action research, I tried to break my chains about not leaning on numbers to some extent*. (Aylin)

After the teachers analyzed sample AR studies and then got involved in AR practice, they realized that AR was not as challenging as it had been taught:

> *I felt more encouraged to conduct AR because I noticed that we first needed a need analysis to find a real problem we encountered in our lessons and take some actions to solve this problem within reflective thinking in each phase. When we check the samples, we see that conducting AR can be handled easily with some effort.* (Sibel)

Familiarizing with AR created a new professional perspective towards generating knowledge since the teachers were used to consuming the knowledge presented to them in PD activities; however, they re-positioned themselves as knowledge generators after they carried out their AR projects:

> *AR enhances the professional development of teachers compared to other means. Attending a conference, following relevant webinars or taking formal courses can be other alternatives, but taking part in action research makes teachers reflective practitioners rather than passive learners. AR requires teachers to read and digest other research or published journals (engagement WITH research) as well as conduct research (engagement IN research). By doing so, we became prosumers (produce+consume) rather than mere consumers of research*. (Aylin)

Second, considering learners' perspectives through AR studies was found to be an effective way to provide more learner autonomy in teaching practices, which is in line with all TSG teachers' teaching philosophies. Having insights from the learners enabled teachers to generate and reconstruct their knowledge concerning their instructional decisions and actions, as Sibel explained: "*I want to create games and plan lessons for students with the results of this research, which will definitely benefit my students. I will try to teach more goal-oriented and motivating lessons. Students can learn while having fun*." Integration of learners' perspectives into the decision-making process comforted the teachers to rely on the new knowledge they generated from the AR studies. Having seen what worked well in an evidence-based way motivated the teachers to benefit from their personally-generated knowledge in the long run:

> *It was nice to be involved in a process, to be involved in the research process, to point out the lack of one's own class and act accordingly, and to get positive student results. There was a more tangible benefit. In other words, it helped me learn that it has a more concrete benefit. I think we can share more like this*. (Eda)

Being aware of what learners liked or disliked guided the teachers to decide whether they had to adopt the new knowledge built upon the AR findings, which made them feel more confident and motivated:

> *It was very nice that the students were excitedly waiting for the process drama hour. I was very happy not to see this while the students were doing drama. It was very nice that those who heard us from other classes were curious and interested while we were doing the drama. Getting rid of the book brought professional satisfaction. I was also in action, and our bond with the students increased. I was able to evaluate what they had learned so far while they were talking, which was very nice*. (Zeynep)

Finally, using AR as a mediation tool for PD was beneficial since the teachers came up with new knowledge that could improve their teaching quality and make them feel professionally more satisfied. They reported that they had acquired a new lens to evaluate their teaching and their learners' real experiences with language learning, as Cansu stated: "*For my professional development, I started to think more critically. I have learned that if something I do does not work, I need to think about why it does not work and take action to solve the problem.*" Based on the knowledge they produced through AR, the teachers were eager to reconsider their teaching practices with the aim of furthering their strong points and minimizing the problems in the class:

> *Based on my AR findings, I will resume using Digi-tools, engaging in pair work, group work, and mingling activities. What is more, I will be more careful about time management, especially for digi-tool activities, and I will prepare vocabulary activities to pre-teach particular vocabulary regardless of the level of the students. I will also continue calling my students with kind words to make them feel relaxed during the lesson and to create a good rapport with them. Last but not least, I will carry on maximizing Student Talking Time and Thinking Time before eliciting the targeted answers. More importantly, I will adopt an action research philosophy throughout my teaching career to see real learning fruits within the more satisfying feeling that I continue doing the right job*. (Sibel)

In addition to the willingness for improved teaching quality, the teachers also stated that they felt professionally more satisfied because they could end up with tangible outcomes thanks to their own effort, and they felt productive:

> *When I look back at the end of the year, I look back at what I did. I question what I have done for my field apart from the courses and unit tasks I have taken. My motivation drops if I accomplish very little that year (attending a few seminars, publishing, and learning new things). Looking back, I think I had a very productive period now that I joined a TSG and completed an AR project. Doing research has also affected me in a very positive way in terms of job satisfaction. I would like this to continue. I always want to stay in it.* (Aylin)

The feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment led the teachers to make AR a part of their professional life, as Buket stated: "*AR will be a tool I will implement in my classrooms in the future. AR is an essential tool for everyone, student/me/institution, and it is a tool that develops and transforms us*." The role of AR in equipping teachers with more practical and theoretical knowledge was also found to be effective for professional growth because the teachers could transform themselves at the end of the PD program, and they could get out of the repetitive and mechanical cycle of habitual teaching practices:

> *I felt inadequate because I did not know that much. I felt accomplished because I could produce something at the end of the process. The appreciation for what we have come up with has been overwhelming. I also researched video feedback, which is the subject, because I did not give it very systematically. I learned quite a few things and went beyond mechanical teaching practices*. (Cansu)

For this reason, TSG teachers developed the teacher self by constructing their own knowledge through AR without being passive recipients of a PD program. To generate their own practical and theoretical knowledge, they used AR procedures such as collecting data from learners and reflecting on the practice. These procedures not only made the teachers implement instructional practices aligned with their philosophies but also made them feel professionally more satisfied.

4.2.3. Developing a critical stance toward the teacher self through reflective practice

In addition to developing a teacher self, TSG teachers also developed a critical stance to the teacher self by constantly reflecting on their thoughts and practices for improvement. Teachers' reflective thinking practices familiarised them with themselves and customized their teaching practices**.** Reflective thinking as a psychological mediation tool helped teachers create a space to focus on their thinking and teaching practices. As a result of these reflective practices, TSG teachers were able to develop a critical stance toward the teacher self. By

engaging in reflective practices, the teachers could enhance their awareness at every step of the PD process, organize and systematize their thinking, keep track of personal transformation, and improve their teaching quality.

First, the teachers could be more aware of their thinking and teaching through systematic reflective practices. The systematicity of reflective practice within the TSG program facilitated the reflection process, as Eda explained: "*The reflection I made here was within a framework; it was more systematic and organized. In this respect, it was different from my previous reflection experiences*." In this sense, the teachers could use a constant reflective perspective towards their decisions and actions, as stated by Buket: " *While doing reflection, I constantly evaluated my development and transformation in my class, which brought awareness in this respect*." Since teachers may not find enough time and opportunities to think about their thinking, a systematic reflective practice can function as a mediation tool to help teachers devote thinking time to reconsider their decisions and actions; as Cansu explained: "*Reflection studies contributed to me, it was useful. It raised my awareness. I have a teaching philosophy; I have written it in detail. We carry out many things, but putting it in writing within a framework gave me awareness*."

Second, raising awareness towards personal theories built on previous thoughts, beliefs, and experiences led the teachers to re-think those theories and reconstruct them, considering new ways of thinking; as Aylin stated: "*Reflective practices were very guiding and organized. It was easy for me to follow. I think reflection is beneficial for both the teacher and the student. I was able to rearrange and structure what was in my head*."

Besides the role of reflective practice in reconstructing ideas, it provided a systematic framework for teachers to organize and systematize their thinking and AR procedures. Constantly thinking about what they were doing and why they were doing it guided them to come up with new personal theories on teaching and avoid misjudgements concerning teaching practices and learners:

> *Reflection systematizes the work. First, we look from the outside and comment on ourselves. We put this into a specific systematic, not irregular. For one thing, we look at ourselves from the outside. I think it takes us to the next step. The reflective journal helped us to do something more practical. It was better to share there. I think this should be in every aspect of our lives. It will definitely guide us in our next life. It also allows us to reflect again. It enabled us to put it in the correct system*. (Sibel)

Finally, reflective practice enabled teachers to reconstruct their experimental knowledge and improve their instructional practices since they had a better understanding of their reconstructed personal theories. Using reflective practice as a self-criticism tool paved the way for revealing strong and weak aspects of personal teaching theories and keeping track of teacher transformation at every step of the PD process, which led to a reconstructed way of thinking and teaching:

> *Reflection is an essential thing, in my opinion. It is like writing in a diary. I used to write diaries until high school, so I found it very useful. You think you have a big problem without reflection, but after you start writing, you realize it is not such a big problem. When you look back at the things we have done, there is room for thought. It is like you are thinking about them again. What I enjoyed when I was a student, I tried to do as a teacher. I try to look at myself from the outside and get to know myself while doing reflection. This is reflected in my classroom practices as I get to know myself, and it helps me to teach better*. (Zeynep)

In this sense, conducting reflective thought throughout the PD process within a systematic framework facilitated the reflective practice for the teachers and raised their awareness in that they could adopt a more critical lens towards their thinking and implementations. By doing so, they underwent a reconstruction process whereby they could build upon their existing personal teaching theories and reconsider their positionings, which was believed to improve the instructional quality.

4.2.4. Collaborative professional learning through inter-thinking

Building true concepts, developing a teacher self, and adopting a critical stance to the self are not independent of collaborative practices among the teachers since teacher collaboration contributed to these PD gains. Collaborative and dialogic practices in the TSG created an Intermental Development Zone (IDZ), as suggested in SCT**.** A collaborative space to share opinions and experiences with colleagues enabled TSG teachers to think collaboratively and contribute to each other's professional growth. Inter-thinking practices on PD materials (theoretical readings and sample AR projects), classroom experiences and AR steps within the TSG resulted in collaborative thinking and learning among TSG members and sharing-based dialogic practices with TSG and non-TSG teachers.

First, being a member of TSG allowed the teachers to get together on a regular basis and exchange their insights into PD materials, classroom experiences, and AR plans. These

structuralized and organized talks and informal talks among TSG members paved the way for collaborative thinking and learning practices since they could inter-think on diverse perspectives voiced by all members. Thinking interactively and bridging the gaps in personal ways of thinking resulted in collaborative learning for the teachers, as explained by Buket: "*Cansu and I worked in collaboration. Working with someone is hard, but it teaches something in the end. What I cannot think, the other one thinks, and I can think what the other one cannot. It has been an effective experience*." Collaboratively thinking and reflecting on teaching practices rather than individual actions also facilitated the PD process for the teachers by decreasing the burden on their shoulders and gaining new perspectives:

> *It is not enough for a teacher to just enter and exit the classes. It is more effective and practical in terms of professional development to be able to reflect on the lessons, criticize, analyze and do this together with other teachers. I love working together with other people. I love listening to other teachers' experiences. Collaboration brings discussions, reflections, negotiations, and conflicts with it. These are all essential elements in professional development. We need other people's eyes and perspectives to improve ourselves.* (Cansu)

Inter-thinking practices among TSG members functioned as a peer mediation tool creating an IDZ for them so that they could contribute to their existing knowledge through those practices even though they had some concerns at the beginning of the program:

> *At first, collaboration was the most frightening part for me. I do not know why, but I had some suspicions that process drama was a very effective way of teaching for me, but maybe some of my colleagues might not think like me. Also, I felt insecure about having some criticisms about my method and its way of application. However, their constructive and open-minded attitudes helped me feel more motivated and relaxed. Also, I believe that I learnt a lot through the brainstorming parts in meetings, and I really think that this shed light on my teaching skills.* (Zeynep)

In addition to gaining new perspectives and knowledge, the teachers could also have the opportunity to reconstruct their concepts through inter-thinking practices. Peer mediation, in this sense, allowed the teachers to advance their ideas collaboratively, make easier progress and expand their perspectives toward teaching and AR. For example, the teachers discussed whether AR had to be problem-oriented. Although the teachers were of the opinion that AR had to be based on a particular classroom problem that needed to be solved, after a

collaborative inter-thinking session, they all agreed on the idea that AR could also be utilized to improve a practice that works well in the class or a novel practice that has never been tried before:

> *I especially remember I asked why we should always focus on the problems, and we discussed this. I remember our discussion in this action research project about the fact that our actions that need to continue to be developed should also be the subject of AR. Most importantly, everyone gave each other an idea and exchanged ideas, which made it strong. The team was open to these discussions, and people expressed their opinions openly. We directed and advanced our own plans with the support of each other and made each other's work easier*. (Sibel)

> *Our discussions and questions in the group always encouraged us to collaborate. For example, our friend asked if AR should be run on problems only. Until then, I always thought we should proceed based on the problems. However, after that question, we brainstormed and decided that it might be an AR issue to improve the practices that we think are going well rather than just problems. That was one of the most important things I learned at these TSG meetings. I never thought of it that way, and I felt so good at the end of this discussion. Our minds are always used to finding gaps/problems. Why shouldn't something good get better? This perspective has helped me a lot.* (Aylin)

The teachers benefited from peer observation and perceived it as a mediation space where they inter-think with their colleagues to make profound progress in their teaching. While inter-thinking on in-class practices after the observation, the teachers were able to discuss and reconsider what worked well and what could have been done to improve the quality of teaching:

> *I have video recorded my face-to-face and recorded online lessons to be able to observe again and again with my colleagues. I have received effective peer feedback from two of my colleagues, not for the puzzling moments of the lesson but also for the engaging and motivating moments of the lessons, so I have calibrated myself to refollow or change certain teaching practices to maximize student learning*. (Sibel)

The other outcome regarding the inter-thinking practices of the teachers was the opportunity to share AR plans and results with colleagues and reflect on these plans and results collaboratively with the aim of improvement in teaching. While TSG teachers shared their AR

plans with one another and received feedback for the final draft, the non-TSG teachers could reflect on AR projects on the seminar day. First, TSG teachers reflected on each other's work and provided feedback and support by offering new perspectives, as stated by Eda: "*What I liked most was sharing our plans and giving/receiving feedback. Sharing, collaboration, and development parts were perfect for me. We always listened to and supported each other, which was the best part of the job.*" Sharing their AR projects with each other led the teachers to inter-think about new perspectives and possibilities. Having different perspectives ignited future project ideas by combining their plans for a joint activity, as Zeynep explained: "*Interaction was one of the strongest points of this program. It laid the groundwork for new studies. I did not know about Aylin's work. We talked together and decided to combine her work with mine. I had professional satisfaction*." This new idea appeared as a result of the inter-thinking practices of two colleagues, and it motivated the teachers to keep working together for their future teaching careers:

> *I talked to Zeynep in TSG and we were eager to combine our projects and do new work, but we saw that this year's schedule prevented it. We had a brilliant idea, but we need a more flexible schedule. For example, Zeynep has to teach the stages of drama first, and I have to teach some tools and proceed step by step within a program. However, our schedules and intensity prevented this. If we could do this, we would implement and complete our projects by the end of the term. We could also produce new publications from them. Students would also love it, and it would be instructive for them*. (Aylin)

Inter-thinking practices were not restricted to TSG members since non-TSG teachers interacted with each other and TSG members as active participants on the seminar day. Non-TSG teachers could talk to each other based on the AR findings presented by TSG members, and they could reflect on their own practices in light of these findings. They also interacted with the TSG members and raised their questions concerning the AR findings, which led to collaborative inter-thinking practices between TSG and non-TSG teachers:

> *This work contributed a lot not only to TSG members but also to the audience. The people there asked questions after we made our presentations. It is such a nice thing to have. They talked to us at the end of the presentations and offered to work together. They asked detailed questions about our work with interest and tried to learn. Some friends wanted to participate in the TSG study in the next term. Seeing them made me feel like we could touch them. We have created a lovely atmosphere with such small-*

> *scale studies that we carry out with our own resources, which shed light on our own problems without requiring massive projects or extensive research. That was the most important thing. It is the first time something like this has happened in our school. I felt we were scattering like light. The most excellent satisfaction for me is that someone can learn from us. It was really nice to learn from each other. We were able to touch each other without hierarchy* (Aylin).

In this regard, inter-thinking practices among the teachers mediated collaborative teacher thinking and professional learning by paving the way for new concepts and restructured teacher knowledge. Also, sharing-based interactions between TSG and non-TSG members activated inter-thinking practices, which resulted in professional talks on AR results and teaching practices in light of those results at the institute.

4.2.5. Teacher wellbeing: Transformation from interpsychological to intrapsychological form

TSG teachers could form true concepts through mediation means, develop a teacher self, reflect on the teacher self critically, and get involved in collaborative professional learning practices for their PD. In addition to all these PD gains, the teachers also could psychologically feel much better as a result of their TSG experiences. Collaborative practices and sharing with colleagues through dialogic mediation resulted in individual transformations that made teachers feel better. Dialogic interactions among TSG teachers at the interpsychological (intermental) level led to intrapsychological (intramental) transformations such as psychological and social wellbeing.

Peer dialogic mediation practices at the interpsychological level made the teachers mentally feel better at the intrapsychological level. The teachers felt psychologically more satisfied after engaging in dialogic interactions with their colleagues. Asking for their colleagues' opinions about their teaching practices and AR process, sharing AR findings with non-TSG teachers and feeling their support contributed to the teachers' personal satisfaction:

> *I was satisfied. AR Seminar Day was beautiful, I was excited, but it was an outstanding experience. Being collaborative was its strongest point. We were always able to listen to and support each other. I think this is one of the best parts of the job. One of my personal gains was sharing with other teachers, and I felt better. We needed this. (Eda)*

As the teachers increased their awareness about their colleagues' experiences and insights through the dialogic interactions, they could reflect back on their own individual practices, which ended up with personal satisfaction, as reported by Cansu: "*TSG allowed us to learn about other teachers' experiences and the things they thought were problematic in the lessons. Listening to their problems and solutions, perspectives on teaching and learning, and asking questions about those experiences were very satisfactory for me.*"

Engaging in dialogic interactions and receiving feedback from peers positively impacted the teachers' psychological wellbeing since they felt more productive, accomplished and appreciated at the end of the program, as pointed out by Sibel: "*I felt delighted after the presentation. After the reactions, I said I was in the right group. We were like a society; a culture was formed*." Being appreciated by other colleagues as a result of a profound accomplishment in their profession made the teachers psychologically feel better:

> *I enjoyed being appreciated and honoured by other teachers for what we have achieved. It was excellent for me to go beyond the current school plans and work differently with the students. I also had personal gains as a teacher. Getting rid of the book and being appreciated for my work brought me personal satisfaction*. (Zeynep)

As motivating reactions from the peers evoked a feeling of accomplishment among the teachers, they started to feel more confident and motivated to pursue their personal goals even after the study:

> *I felt accomplished because I could produce something at the end of the process. The appreciation for what we have come up with has been overwhelming. I also systematically researched video feedback, which was my AR project. I learned quite a few things. Afterwards, I even thought about whether something could be done across the country. I also thought if we could examine Tübitak projects and turn them into a project. I am very motivated to go for it* (Cansu).

The other reason TSG teachers felt psychologically better was that they realized they all had similar problems and concerns about their teaching practices. Dialogic interactions among them revealed that they were not alone in their feelings and concerns. Having realized that they had all been through similar challenges, they felt more relieved and confident, as expressed by Buket: "*I realized that the problems we had in the classroom were not that different from each other, and I can say it was comforting to be aware of."* Likewise, Sibel touched upon the significance of not feeling alone throughout the process and how this feeling

could be utilized for betterment: "*Nobody felt alone. Seeing that other people face the same problems, one can be a bit result and solution-oriented instead of struggling alone, thanks to the team. The spirit of working together is very important to me*."

Besides, intermental mediation practices revealed a strong feeling of social wellbeing since TSG teachers stated that their intra-group bonds got much stronger as they worked together. Dialogic practices and sharing at the interpsychological level strengthened collegiality, solidarity, and a sense of belonging among TSG teachers, as reported by Buket: "*Our intra-group relations and bond have improved. We constantly helped and supported each other. I experienced satisfaction in terms of my professional development. After the presentation, I was happy when everyone said that I was great*." Solidarity among TSG members opened new pathways for the problems that the teachers had in common as well:

> *When we saw our colleagues facing similar problems, we felt we were not alone in encountering these troubles, but also we created solidarity to accept these things and come up with some solutions based on some hands-on experiences. It helped us to have stronger relations in the group. I might not even have realized how successful I had been without the group support, but in these six months, I saw that I could afford it. AR is a very easy activity when practising with such a team* (Sibel).

The teachers also strengthened their sense of belonging by actively sharing their experiences and supporting each other in further steps. Despite the workload, the teachers dedicatedly kept working on their projects collaboratively and helped each other, which resulted in better collegial relationships:

> *We came together voluntarily for a common goal. It was not like forced and compulsory meetings. I felt that we spoke the same language and enjoyed learning from each other, which made me very happy. It was very nice that everyone did AR there somehow of their own free will and our solidarity. Being able to do this in the midst of such a course load and extra work has brought us closer to each other and increased our sense of belonging. In solidarity, we were able to be motivated to do this at this pace. One of my most outstanding achievements was to increase my sense of belonging and to be able to talk about academic subjects*. (Aylin)

Considering their workload and daily struggles, TSG functioned as a friendly platform where the teachers freely talked about their problems without being judged by their colleagues, so TSG meetings were perceived to be therapy sessions as well:

> *I really loved the TSG Meeting because it felt like I was in group therapy. It may sound funny, but in a daily school routine, I sometimes feel alone while having some difficulties in class or think I am the only person who faces that kind of difficulty. However, during the TSG meetings, I could share my worries and targets with my colleagues. We shared common ideas, and sometimes they helped me notice some details that would ease my job. Thus that was so helpful for me* (Zeynep).

Considering all those insights, TSG functioned as a collaborative space where the teachers dialogically mediated with each other. In a dialogical way, this kind of peer mediation positively transformed psychological and social wellbeing at the individual level. Interpsychological practices among the teachers transformed them in that they could build professionally and emotionally better relations with each other, which resulted in psychological and social wellbeing at the intrapsychological level. In this regard, the data show that TSG functioned as a PD tool not only for PD gains but also for psychological and social benefits of the teachers.

4.3. The TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective

From a sociocultural perspective, the data revealed that mediation means including reading materials, the researcher/experts, collaborative practices and AR enabled TSG teachers to form true concepts, developing their teacher selves, have a critically reflective stance, internalize collaborative professional learning, and contribute to their psychological and social wellbeing. SCT perspective allowed me to depict how professional learning is socially constructed and how mediation means and social interactions can shape teacher learning by transforming pre-understandings.

In addition to the SCT perspective, this study was designed on the basis of CP as well. The reason why there is a need to analyze the data from the CP perspective is that language learning/teaching practices and PD of language teachers cannot be maximized and improved solely through mediation means. As educational practices are not independent of power issues within a society, empowered teachers and learners can diminish the power distance within an educational system. Empowering teachers and learners as active agents of educational practices and equipping teachers with a critical perspective toward the role of social, cultural, political, and economic systems in education through PD tools can lead to educational and social betterment, which is not possible merely through SCT. For this reason, a critical perspective on the data from the teachers' insights was employed for the third research question. By doing so, I aimed to analyze how TSG teachers experienced this PD program in

terms of teacher and learner empowerment and critical awareness toward educational policies and practices. In addition to the TSG teachers, insights from non-TSG teachers who participated in the AR Seminar Day and the learners who became part of the AR cycle in the TSG teachers' classes are presented in this part, which helped me to reach a broader perspective to evaluate the findings and reveal a holistic perspective to an effective and sustainable PD approach. This holistic perspective revealed four themese: (1) teacher empowerment through knowledge, collaboration, and identity reconstruction, (2) learner empowerment through transformed pedagogies, (3) transformed PD perspectives, (4) social change: projections for sustainability and impediments.

4.3.1. Teacher empowerment through critical tools

Generating their own knowledge from their own intellectual sources through AR, engaging non-hierarchical collaboration with colleagues, and reconstructing teacher identities through TSG experiences resulted in an empowerment process whereby the teachers could liberate from their orthodox understandings and transform their identities. With the TSG process, the teachers were able to liberate themselves from their orthodox teaching beliefs and practices that generally take their roots from colonial construction of cultural forms by engaging in AR and teacher collaboration. Liberation from curriculum-mandated and oppressive teaching practices and generating teacher knowledge through collaborative PD tools to create a better learning environment for the students also helped TSG teachers to reconstruct their identities. Critically reflecting on the usual way they think about their identities based on their TSG experiences led to new ways of thinking and more critical lenses toward their existing identities, which contributed to teacher empowerment since the teachers could create their own power and build a new relationship with their own context (Lather, 1991). In this sense, empowerment embodies the process of increasing critical consciousness and capabilities to take transformative actions (Karl, 1995) and transforming identities to reposition as a more potent and agentive individual as a result of collective action (Drury et al., 2015).

First, TSG teachers could empower themselves by liberating themselves from their orthodox teaching beliefs and practices based on the new knowledge they generated collaboratively (Kincheloe, 2011a; Gray, 2019). TSG teachers were able to liberate themselves from regular teaching practices by getting out of oppressive curricular frames restricting them from implementing what is prescribed to teach, which gave rise to more empowered teacher roles in the class, as explained by Buket: "*I did something that we usually would not be able*

to do. Normally, the institution gives us directives through the curriculum. We strictly depend on the book and materials, but we tried different things through AR, which made us stronger." The teachers could take more initiatives to initiate a counter-hegemonic change in schooling practices (Kirk, 1986) and evaluate their students in a way aligned with their teaching philosophies, as Zeynep pointed out: "*Getting rid of the book brought professional satisfaction. I was also in action, and our bond with the students increased. I could evaluate what they had learned while talking, which was very nice*."

Conducting AR and learning new concepts based on AR enabled the teachers to feel stronger since they could generate reflective-synthetic knowledge, which teachers acquire by reflecting and analyzing diverse knowledge types, including theoretical and experiential knowledge (Kincheloe, 2011b). Similarly, they developed emancipatory praxis by synthesizing their theories, reflection and actions as a self-creative activity (Freire, 1970; 1993), and relying on their own sources:

> *I felt very comfortable while giving video feedback. It was very nice to share the screen and feedback as if you were chatting. Towards the end of the program, I felt much more competent because I had found the location. I scanned the literature and read articles. My own knowledge has also been revived. I have not read an article in a long time. I was glad that I could read, and I felt much stronger. I even thought of training and developing teachers across the country.* (Cansu)

Secondly, collaboration within a non-hierarchical community of practice to pursue a collective action (Drury et al, 2015) made the teachers feel more empowered since they had this opportunity for the first time. By sharing their experiences and asking for opinions on their work, the teachers could support each other to improve their personal and professional lives. These collaborative practices helped teachers to liberate from conventional PD approaches and empower themselves by being a part of a continuous cycle of learning within a community (Kincheloe, 2009) and developing a collective consciousness (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999) since the teachers realized that they could rely on their own sources and their colleagues for PD without having to entirely depend on external sources as mere PD opportunities:

> *I felt that I got closer to my TSG member friends at the end of the process. Being in academic pursuit and acting as a team strengthened this feeling in me, and our ties became stronger than before. I felt we spoke the same language. Research has also empowered me in a very positive way regarding job satisfaction*. (Aylin)

Sharing the work in progress with other colleagues through dialogic knowledge construction (Kohli et al., 2015) and working collaboratively on them also empowered the teachers, as Eda stated: "*What I liked most was sharing our plans and giving/receiving feedback. Sharing, collaboration, and development parts were perfect for me. We always listened to and supported each other, which was the best part of the job*." The non-hierarchical and democratic atmosphere of the TSG also contributed to the group dynamics since no one felt isolated or suppressed, as Aylin pointed out: "*I did my best to help my friends. I was like one of them. There was no hierarchy among us, which was meaningful and valuable. Everyone read the materials and conducted research. This experience is precious for teachers to feel more powerful."* Sharing what was studied with non-TSG teachers and interacting with them to build a shared knowledge was another source of empowerment for the teachers since they think they could exchange ideas and engage in academic work by generating their own PD materials and sharing them in a participant-driven way (Kohli et al., 2015). It shows the role of communities of practice like TSGs in offering teachers a democratic platform where they can voice their opinions and take action for a transformative and empowering education in the society in a counter-hegemonic way (Kincheloe, 2011a; Fraser, 1985):

> *We were able to present a new tool, method, and idea. I felt we were scattering like sunlight. The teachers who wanted to benefit made use of our projects. The most excellent satisfaction for me is that someone can learn from us. It was really nice to learn from each other. We were able to touch each other without hierarchy, igniting something. I am thinking of developing my AR work and publishing it in a magazine. AR can also contribute to such publications academically. I plan to publish it this year. The other colleagues and the SoFL could empower themselves through this PD program.* (Aylin)

Finally, the teachers could empower themselves by investing in their teacher identities and reconstruct them through TSG experiences. TSG teachers built new identities on their existing ones by engaging in various positionings throughout the PD process. The teachers were offered a chance to engage in research collaboratively, and consequently, they adopted a researcher perspective, which yielded new reconstructed identities to reveal their teaching capabilities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). As a result of their experiences, TSG teachers reconstructed their identities by raising their awareness about the intertwined relationship between academia/research and their profession. Hence, they gained a researcher identity and

became more critical and academic in perspective, which enabled them to come into a sense of their own power (Lather, 1991).

The critically dialogic PD process resulted in an empowering identity shift because research and collaboration practices transformed the teacher identity that previously was independent of collaboration and AR. In this sense, the teachers realized implementing AR and sharing findings with colleagues was an academic component of their profession:

> *As for the institution, an academic perception was formed. We only go in and out of class. We created an academic perception, so things like reading articles and researching came to the fore. Other teachers saw that we were different from teachers at other levels. It should be done at all levels of education, but here it has shown everyone the academic dimension of our work*. (Cansu)

While investing in their researcher identity in addition to teacher identity, the teachers became more aware of teachers' role as a researcher in order to contribute to their teaching quality through AR and teacher collaboration rather than being passive technicians of educational policies (Gray, 2019):

> *Thus, the teachers should be researchers at the same time to reflect on these situations appropriately to improve their teaching practices and maximize learning. Most of the teachers feel that they are not experts in researching but, in my opinion, just trying to observe what is happening in the classroom, if the objectives of the lessons are achieved, or what kind of problems occur in the lessons every teacher can do AR but if it is done in certain TSGs, it would help more teachers who learn from their own experiences and ideas about teaching*. (Sibel)

TSG teachers got to know themselves better by constantly reflecting on their beliefs and practices and collaborating as a result of a critical praxis process (Freire, 1970). Generating their own teacher knowledge at the end of the process by relying on their own sources, sharing the knowledge with colleagues, and receiving motivating reactions made them realize they had underestimated their capabilities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Reconstructed teacher identities enhanced with a researcher identity showed their real potential, which resulted in higher self-esteem and the sense of empowerment as a pedagogy of new possibilities (Simon, 1987) for an alternative perspective:

> *Our project opened our horizons, and we gained new information, so this study was valuable. We are all experts. We are people who have come to a place and have some equipment, but we may have different styles and specialities. There are areas where we feel better and more comfortable. It was so nice to share these spaces with each other. This is not the case at school, and we usually make small talk. We get tired of going in and out of class. However, this program was different.* (Zeynep)

The teachers got empowered by positioning themselves in different roles due to their research and collaboration practices and investing in their identities with these new positional gains. As a democratic way of producing knowledge for the benefit of teachers and students, AR enabled the teachers to question their roles and attain new roles (Kincheloe, 2011c). As they were not given much authority to try new things out, AR and TSG offered new roles to the teachers so that they could adopt new roles and implement different practices in the class by dismantling the oppressive structures of mainstream curricular practices, as Buket explained: "*As teachers and students, we are the most active in the learning and teaching process, but we are not decision-makers. In this respect, we have made our role more effective than our previous situation*." Likewise, AR and collaborative practices within TSG offered new tools the teachers could use to empower themselves by repositioning themselves into intellectual practitioners who could reconstruct schooling practices (Kirk, 1986) rather than being a domesticated educational technician in the learning site:

> *Learning, education, facilitation, participation, and collaboration are the core terms in AR. AR addresses the real-world problems of the teachers and pursues action and knowledge for a change to solve these problems. While conducting AR, the teacher is supposed to carry out different roles beyond being a researcher, like a planner, leader, facilitator, teacher, designer, listener, observer, synthesizer, and reporter, as he/she is already an existing party of that community or society*. (Sibel)

As TSG teachers had employed many roles in this process, they also uncovered a variety of roles that they could perform in addition to being a teacher/researcher, as Sibel highlighted: "*According to AR, the researcher is supposed to carry different roles beyond being a researcher, like a planner, leader, facilitator, teacher, designer, listener, observer, synthesizer, and reporter, as he/she is already an existing party of that community or society"*. Sibel continued to state that these new roles added to each other so they could reconstruct a complete teacher identity: "*It is definitely an investment. We cannot separate our different identities, and they are all just like AR. We invested in all our identities (researcher, teacher,*

planner, organizer, synthesizer). Thanks to this, we became a teacher completely because all these are necessary to be a teacher." Reconstruction of identities in this way shows that the teachers got empowered by building meaningful relationships between what they learned and what they experienced as a practitioner (Kirk, 1986), which allowed them to be at the centre not at the periphery of the educational process.

The teachers not only restructured their identities by gaining a researcher perspective but also started to reconsider their academic careers by making plans for further academic studies and PhD education. The teachers as intellectual practitioners took the initiative to reflect on their PD by developing new identities (Kirk, 1986), and it motivated them to pursue their academic career by starting a PhD program, as reported by Buket: "*As a result of the study, I realized that I missed doing research and even started to think about doing a doctorate and getting more involved in academia in my life*." Likewise, Eda stated: "*I realized that I really enjoyed the research process. What will the results be? Did it really work? I had already noticed this before when I was doing my master's degree. It made me think about doing PhD*." Besides, one TSG got a job offer after the AR seminar day since her study drew the attention of some publishing house representatives who attended the seminar:

> *After my presentation, someone from a publishing house contacted me in person. He told me that he admired my project and offered me a job at the publishing house. They expected me to give teacher training workshops on the project I had presented for AR seminar day; I felt very proud*. (Zeynep)

Therefore, AR and collaborative practices within the TSG allowed the teachers to liberate from their regular teaching beliefs and practices and helped them become empowered since they could generate their own reflective-synthetic teacher knowledge and collaborate for their PD by bringing multiple perspectives to the table without relying on external sources. TSG teachers also could empower themselves by adopting new roles reconstructing their identities. Realizing the academic aspect of their profession made them invest in their researcher and academic identities.

4.3.2. Learner empowerment through transformed pedagogies

The empowerment of TSG teachers yielded transformative pedagogies to be implemented as new instructional decisions in the class. The teachers underwent a transformation process regarding their teaching practices, and consequently, the learners had more power in their learning process since they got involved in the AR process by voicing

their needs and teaching practices were transformed based on those needs by their teachers. First, TSG teachers adopted post-formal thinking practices and ontologically a critical perspective by thinking and reflecting on their thinking (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). As they reflected on the usual way they think about their teaching and generated new knowledge that led to new ways of thinking, they acquired more critical lenses toward their habitual pedagogies. Second, the learners got empowered within the PD process. As they were involved in the decision-making process through the data collection tools of AR, they could voice their needs and expectations concerning their learning, which helped the teachers design instructional practices aligned with those needs.

Firstly, the teachers enacted post-formal thinking from the critical ontology perspective, which means reflecting on existing knowledge to produce new knowledge within a critical perspective and thinking about how we think to develop new thinking ways (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). In this sense, the teachers revised and reconstructed their habitual pedagogies in light of their research-based data and collaborative practices. As they acquired a more critical perspective toward their in-class practices, they realized that conducting AR and teacher collaboration could function successfully to revise those practices in a way that would benefit both teachers and students. Collaborative PD practices and AR process equipped teachers with new ways of thinking about their classroom practices and yielded criticisms about the lack of diversity in teaching practices. Interrogating the conventional banking model of education, which requires teachers to deposit knowledge and learners to receive and store the knowledge (Freire, 1970), the teachers enacted more liberatory forms of educational actions, as stated by Aylin: "*I got out of the "one size fits all" mentality. I thought our practices should provide choices rather than shaping students. Thanks to these readings, I encouraged students to attend webinars and seminars related to their departments*." Aylin's insights show that the new knowledge gained through TSG practices led to new thinking ways from the critical ontology perspective (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). Likewise, the teachers began to think differently in terms of their usual pedagogies after they obtained AR findings, as reported by Sibel: "*I want to create games and plan lessons for students with the results of this research, which will definitely benefit my students. I will try to teach more goal-oriented and motivating lessons. Students can learn while having fun*." Besides, the teachers began to question their instructional practices for the benefit of students as a result of inquiry-based PD practices they engaged within the TSG, as Eda stated: "*I realized that students needed more direction. We teach vocabulary, but it is necessary to*

introduce more strategies apart from the book. It is more effective to do things like this directly together. It contributes to the awareness of the students."

Secondly, the teachers stated that they were not the only ones who got empowered at the end of the program because the learners also benefited from the empowerment process. TSG teachers believe the learners got empowered at the end of the PD program power distribution in favour of students in the class. As the learners could voice their needs and expectations more openly and freely through the data their teachers collected within the AR process, the power distance between the teachers and learners diminished, and the learners were involved in the decision-making process, which empowered and relieved the teachers because they could provide a better equity-focused learning environment for the learners (Hawkins & Norton, 2009), as Sibel explained: "*I think I am empowered. I saw that the students were also actively involved in the process without the need to engage in this role conflict. It cannot be one-sided anyway, and I think the power distribution is well-balanced*." The distribution of power in decision-making from the teachers to learners enabled teachers to consider their learners' needs more seriously. Intersection of three agencies (teachers, learners, and co-constructed knowledge) led to a transformation of consciousness (Lusted, 1986). Knowing what they actually need led them to reconsider their teaching practices in the class and beyond the classroom. In this sense, TSG was thought to be used for different purposes as well in order to contribute to learner autonomy and empowerment:

> *With such studies, the sense of belonging of the student is strengthened. Teaching English cannot be done within four walls and based on four textbooks. The Curriculum Unit works well, but the rigid framework limits us. We can do research in different forms, not just for research. We should be able to introduce students to opportunities abroad by developing projects on different subjects. In this sense, TSG is an organization that can work on any subject. In this respect, it gave me such a vision. With these studies, we can empower students and strengthen their autonomy*. (Aylin)

TSG teachers reported that the inclusion of learners into the AR process and letting them voice their opinions about instructional practices yielded positive outcomes on the side of the learners and diminished the power imbalances in the class. Dialogic teaching and an egalitarian learning environment contributed to the schooling practices of learners (Shor, 1986) since the teachers reported that their learners found it very effective to be part of teaching and learning practices. The data the teachers collected from the learners for their AR studies helped teachers to realize how satisfied their learners were:

> *The students gave me good feedback, especially after interviewing. They said: "We are very happy that you received our ideas". Here, I received feedback from the students such as "I felt valuable, I became more motivated". Because they believe they are individuals. They think that they are human and they have needs too. I think such integrations enable children to involve themselves more in this learning process. To enhance critical learning, we must balance power transfer with students. Students also see that they should value/put effort into learning at least as much as their teachers. We will open a door for him to learn beyond the classroom*. (Sibel)

The critical approach of TSG teachers to diminish the power distance and flatten the hierarchies in the class by sympathizing with learners based on their needs and requests helped the teachers to make more democratic decisions (Kincheloe, 2011a) since they reconstructed their teaching practices in light of learner feedback without being restricted by curricular frames:

> *This program empowered the students and us. We started with our own students. We have seen to what extent our current practices are working and not working. We set out to see if we could find solutions to existing problems. Seeing that they were reluctant to speak, I asked, would it work if I did process drama? However, would it be nice if I did it by adapting it? Are they bored with feedback? I thought. From their point of view, I adapted a lot, which empowered my students and me because I got out of the mechanical pacing, and the students could engage in something they liked and benefitted*. (Zeynep)

Recognizing what learners really want and need through AR and being proactive in improving teaching quality is thought to be a democratic way to produce knowledge with the aim of educational betterment in teaching/learning practices (Kincheloe, 2009). By doing so, TSG teachers believe that they can take control of their own practices and constantly reconstruct these practices with the inclusion of learners through decentralized decision-making processes:

> *Throughout the action research process, I have learned that it is essential to understand the needs of the students before starting any kind of teaching practice although it is obligatory to follow a specific pacing. Furthermore, it is important to hear the students' voices after certain lesson phases, activities, or materials designed for their learning practices. While planning our lessons, we have some assumptions*

> *related to students' needs or interests according to their proficiency level, but still, beyond these pedagogical assumptions, we need to check what our students really need or are interested in to turn these learning topics or the activities into the real learning process through AR. It can be empowering both for teachers and students* (Sibel).

Besides, the data from the TSG members' learners also revealed that they felt empowered and satisfied with the AR process since they could have the opportunity to reflect on teaching practices in the class, and they could make use of new learning practices introduced to them through AR. The teachers' attempts to employ dialogic teaching by letting their learners voice their opinions about learning difficulties (Shor, 1986) resulted in more empowered learner positionings and educational betterment on the contrary to domesticated positionings endorsed by the hegemonic educational conventions:

> *Our teacher used too many tools to motivate us to communicate after she asked our opinions about why we had problems with speaking tasks. She did not limit us to the pictures given in the course book for speaking. She tried a new activity and made the topic more general to us. Instead of using the posters in the course book, she used more general terms about movies. I may not know those posters in the book. We may not know anything about the pictures in the course book. It limits us but using more general themes and questions really motivated and engaged us*. (Student 1)

As Student 1 explained, getting out of the scope required by the course book and liberating from orthodox practices (Gray, 2019) yielded higher learner engagement and less power distance in the class:

> *It has been easier for me to talk after these new tools because they helped us have some ideas. These methods helped me to be more prepared and ready even for topics I know nothing about. We could anonymously write our opinions on the new platforms. It was very helpful, especially when it was hard for us to speak. We could interact with each other on those platforms.*

Decreasing course book dependency and creating more egalitarian democratic learning environment with the inclusion of learners considerably contributed to a better learning environment (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c), as Student 2 reported:

> *My teacher made me feel much better by asking my opinions about my learning preferences and how I could speak more. The new communication tools we used in the lessons were very effective because I felt more engaged. We used some digitools where we wrote our opinions; it helped me to be more prepared to speak. Depending on the course book too much can be boring, so we changed it, and it worked well. Our teacher made us confident and comfortable speaking English. We were less stressed about talking*.

Decontextualizing educational problems by blaming individual failures and relying on normative and dominant knowledge offered by authorities prevent teachers from contextualized teaching practices that can liberate learners from what is mandated by mainstream policies (Kincheloe, 2009; 2011b). In this sense, using a set of new strategies in vocabulary learning as an AR implementation enabled the learners to have more self-learning tools in their inventories, as Student 3 reported:

> *The new vocabulary method was very useful for me. We tried new strategies to learn more vocabulary. I have learnt what kind of questions I can ask to guess the meaning of the words. I can easily use them in my future practices. Previously, I did not know that much about vocabulary strategies*.

TSG teachers' critical complex empiricism, which requires an interpretative approach to multiple realities (Kincheloe, 2011b), to generate their own knowledge by utilizing AR, their experiential knowledge and empirical knowledge in the literature helped the learners meet more empowering and context-sensitive teaching practices that do not undervalue the contextual needs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Parkhouse et al., 2023), as Student 4 explained:

> *I was very excited to get video feedback. I have not heard that before. I have many friends studying at preparatory school, but I have not heard anyone who got video feedback except us. I find it tough to get written feedback because we cannot get detailed feedback in written form. In video feedback, I felt like I am talking to my teacher face to face. I increased the productivity of the feedback. It was the first time she was reading my essay, so I was able to get her first impressions in detail. She could give more detailed feedback on each part of my essay, which also influenced my final exam performance. I realized my problems much better. Every tiny detail was shared with us carefully, and my teacher gave me many alternatives. The written version would be very long, and it would not be practical to read a long text like this.*

So, watching the video is much better for me. My generation is more willing to get video lessons than written texts, so it is much easier to follow.

The findings show that TSG teachers transformed their pedagogies. The components of the PD program enabled them to promote their teaching quality because they made use of post-formal thinking by enacting new ways of thinking and questioning the effectiveness of old instructional practices for the benefit of learners. In this way, the learners could empower themselves by making their voices heard by their teachers. The learners were also offered more context-sensitive practices aligned with their needs, which diminished the inequalities of power in the class.

4.3.3. Transformed PD perspectives

TSG offered a variety of new PD tools the teachers had not experienced before. Hence, their TSG experiences made them realize that a bottom-up approach to PD, which is tailored in accordance with their needs and teaching philosophies, can function productively and practically to resolve their problems. The integration of peer collaboration, AR, the researcher and experts' support, and reflective practices into a process-oriented PD program, which considerably differed from their previous anti-dialogical PD experiences, resulted in increased critical consciousness about their PD needs and the need for a new culture of PD. Criticising the decontextualized aspect of previous PD experiences, both TSG and non-TSG teachers transformed their PD perspectives and expected to get involved in contextualized PD practices that could shift their role from being a passive recipient of PD training to agentive components of the teaching process, which shows that TSG could start a social change among non-TSG teachers.

Firstly, having engaged in teacher collaboration and AR practices, TSG teachers transformed how they thought about their PD expectations and preferences since they were more inclined to be in a continuous cycle of learning within a community (Kincheloe, 2009) based on teacher/expert collaboration and AR. In this regard, peer and learner feedback were found to be an effective tool for the PD of TSG teachers, as explained by Cansu: "*I will continue to renew myself. In this sense, I will update all my teaching practices over and over, depending on the situation, and continue with my studies, plans and material development by receiving feedback from my colleagues and students."* As the collaborative practices with peers and expert talk series functioned differently from the teachers' previous PD experiences, they found these practices valuable and expected to sustain similar practices in their careers. Besides, the teachers criticized and interrogated hegemonic, normative and traditional top-

down PD practices offered by the school or publishing houses from the critical ontology perspective (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011) because they resorted to new ways of thinking for their PD by unravelling the irrelevancy of orthodox anti-dialogical PD approaches.

> *The collaboration and expert talk series within the group have been very useful. We just teach English and pass it by, and we must change this perception. There should be more innovative events like this and such speakers. I do not mean the trainer coming from the publishing house or other I mean more interactive, relevant and concrete activities based on our needs as we did. We criticize the students because they are upset, but we can be like that ourselves in some bad events. We do not want to enter the routine and leave our comfort zone. It does not make sense to be in and out of class all the time, so we definitely need these practices in our profession*. (Zeynep)

The role of collaboration in conducting AR was also found to be a helpful way for teachers' professional growth as a way of knowledge generation for the benefit of learners (Kincheloe, 2011c), as Sibel explained: "*Collaborative AR should be a part of teaching programs to create enough opportunities for teachers to consider the real problems that they encounter as a handicap for teaching and learning, and to find solutions to them collaboratively."* As the TSG functioned as a community of practice where they could voice their on-site concerns (Kincheloe, 2011a), they criticized hegemonic top-down PD practices for being hierarchical and transmission-based, as Zeynep reported: "*I do not like when someone with status comes, looks down on us and transfers knowledge. We shared and interacted sincerely; I like this kind of sharing. PD events should be like sincere tea talks, not like a rector's speech. You presented it to us this way, which was useful*." Likewise, the teachers realized they had the power to critically analyze and evaluate their instructional practices and work collaboratively on the issues needing improvement, as pointed out by Cansu:" *For my professional development, I started to think more critically. I have learned that if something I do does not work, I need to think about why it does not work and take action to solve the problem."*

AR as a PD tool also transformed the way TSG teachers thought about their PD since they ended up having a stronger tendency to take up AR as a life-long PD practice in their professional career, as Buket reported: "*AR will be a tool I will implement in my classrooms in the future. AR is an essential tool for everyone, student/me/institution, and it is a tool that develops and transforms us."* Having seen that AR was not a one-shot PD activity and it could

be done as a small-scale research study, the teachers were more willing to make it a part of their teaching practices:

> *AR will be a tool that I would like to do in my teaching life. When I see a problem, I think of sharing it with someone and doing research. I want to create an action plan and see the results in this context. I will do it in a practically-oriented way, as Professor İdil said, without having to be too scientific*. (Eda)

Hence, AR is considered a tool to increase teacher agency in solving problems instead of being a domesticated technician of educational policies (Gray, 2019). As a whole, this program paved the way for transformed perspectives towards PD by encouraging the teachers to think out of the box to activate new ways of thinking for their profession and question normatively indoctrinated ways of thinking through critical ontology lenses (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011), as Aylin reported:

> *I noticed the lack of research on PD. I started to think of AR and collaboration as PD tools. Reading, sharing and discussing what we read together are my favourite hobbies. TSG made this possible. I felt the lack of that community of practice in my life. Being in this group fulfilled this need, created a team spirit and positively affected my in-class practices. For example, I talked about something I did in class. "I did that in level 1; how about in level 3?" Asking questions, such as transferring and exchanging ideas, enriched our perspectives. I would like this to continue. I always want to stay in it. However, I would support this voluntar*ily.

Secondly, non-TSG teachers also reported that participating in the AR Seminar Day and witnessing the PD process TSG teachers went through ignited a new perspective to them since they started to question the ineffectiveness of their previous standardized PD activities and imported materials delivered by publishing houses or training institutes that were strange to their contextual realities, as Non-TSG 1 stated: " *I realized it is much more beneficial for people to carry out different studies and then come together and share them with each other in our own context, rather than 40 people listening to a single study."* The possibility of a PD approach relying on contextual power and resources made non-TSG teachers reconsider their approaches to PD and raise critical consciousness toward their own capabilities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009), as Non-TSG 9 stated:

> *TSG was more interesting to me because it was in-house. We saw their output more clearly. This work was much more meaningful to me because of these tangible*

> *outcomes. Our previous PD activities were more on the transfer of theoretical knowledge and remained in the air. Being in-house was motivating because it feels so good to be doing something together. There was a different motivation here and we felt it too. I can say that I want to see it more. I want to be in there too.*

Non-TSG teachers also realized that they have the capabilities to take part in such an organization and learn and share together to leverage their resources for their own development:

> *It is a project that involves many people in doing something, activates our feelings that have been idle for years, encourages the feelings of "I can do these, too", creates excitement in people, opens the door to innovation. It was the best day of my working days here for me, I was very excited*. (Non-TSG 4)

Witnessing their colleagues' studies and exchanging ideas with them enabled non-TSG teachers to reconsider their attitudes to AR as a PD tool, which shows an indicator of a potential social change among teachers (Kincheloe, 2009; 2011c), as non-TSG 5 reported: "*I was intimidated first because. I was afraid AR would be challenging. After my colleagues presented their AR studies, I was relieved. I'm planning to conduct AR next year*." Likewise, Non-TSG 6 stated: "*Conducting big research studies or making generalizations is intimidating. It's nice to see that AR does not have such a purpose*." Having been influenced by the studies presented on the stage, Non-TSG 8 realized that AR could be a tool she can practically use for her PD practices:

> *We do not have to do huge works; it doesn't have to get anywhere. Like thesis, the reliability does not have to be very high. I'm very relieved, I don't know if I can do it, but I think my chances of doing it have increased a bit. AR was in a more inaccessible place for me. It was a very difficult thing for me, but AR is in a more realistic and accessible place for me now*. (Non-TSG 8)

Contextualized nature of TSG and the focus of the AR studies, which relied on in-house instructional problems, drew the non-TSG teachers' attention, and they realized such PD approaches could be more productive and relevant for the teachers, as Non-TSG 10 reported: "*We usually attend irrelevant seminars, they are not so effective. However, TSG was spot-on. As AR studies directly addressed our students and tackled certain problems we experienced in our classrooms, and TSG aroused great interest in all of us*." Likewise, compared to decontextualized normative PD activities (Kincheloe, 2009; 2011c), Non-TSG 6

explained that TSG could successfully offered new insights since it was a contextualized PD tool reflecting inner dynamics: "*No matter how much you tell from the outside, it may not be effective because the person to tell may not have been teaching for years or may not know our internal dynamics at all. That's why this study was useful*." Besides, the non-TSG teachers could co-reflect on knowledge and think about their roles in relation to what they have learnt in a context-sensitive and culturally-relevant PD environment (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011) through AR presentations (see Appendix B), as Non-TSG 3 stated:

> *As TSG was an in-house event, I could easily relate it to my own settings. We could generate more ideas for ourselves, both positive and negative, on the subject. We reflected on each study with other audience. Presentations attracted and interested us more because we had an emotional and environmental bond. It is very nice that it was started not by an outside force but by an inside force. It was more effective that way*.

Lacking long-term effects on teachers, traditional PD practices decentralizing the learning environment is not seen to be pedagogically efficient:

> *The presentations that the native speakers sent by the publishing houses repeated in every university were not as beneficial to us as this. This project is based on a bottom-up process, based on our own problems, and coming out of our own school, so it is a success in itself*. (Non-TSG 2)

As non-TSG teachers raised critical awareness against previous PD experiences and started to reconsider their PD perspectives, they raised criticisms against hegemonic top-down PD policies by referring to the beneficial outcomes of the new PD tools they experienced thanks to their TSG-member colleagues:

> *It was a source of pride for us to have something like this, to have such a potential. beautiful. Maybe I felt like this because I had never encountered anything like this before We are people who are open to improvement, but it is not very efficient for an expert to come and convey something to us. That's why I saw creativity rather than knowledge transfer here, I'm very happy. It was a pride for the friends to present their work and knowledge that they have created in a creative way. I even said, why haven't we done this until now? How traditional were we? This was truly a game changer, it was, it was very nice*. (Non-TSG 7)

Similarly, TSG paved the way for transformed PD perspectives prioritizing the context-specific needs and inner cycle of educational process by revealing how normative PD activities offered by publishing houses could make language teachers depersonalized and alienated from their own contextual realities (Kinceloe, 2011), as Non-TSG 10 reported as follows:

> *Our previous PD events didn't have much suitable content for us. Publishers have presentations in the form of ready-made templates, which is the same for all universities. There were presentations made without taking into account the contextual realities. They look very stylish, but did they find a cure for our problems? However, TSG is definitely the right model. We talked among ourselves, "What a wonderful thing happened?" I think it was very productive to have results and suggestions behind the theoretical and practice-oriented content. It fed us both theoretically and practically. It was a project to the point addressing our problems. With this method, our PD can be a more to the point. Actually, PD is something like that*. (Non-TSG 10)

In this regard, the data shows that completion of a six-month PD program benefited TSG teachers so that they could transformed their understandings of PD by critically reflecting on the unproductiveness of previous PD experiences. TSG teachers' presenting their AR studies in an in-house PD seminar provided context-specific PD materials for the non-TSG members so that they co-reflected on those studies and compared them to their in-class practices. AR presentations intersected with non-TSG members' perceptions and co-reflections, which created a non-hierarchical and democratic PD space where all teachers contributed to each other's professional growth without relying on the external sources neglecting their agencies and realities. The collective action of TSG teachers in this sense influenced the non-TSG members, and planted seeds for future transformative practices because they all agreed that TSG could serve as an alternative PD tool to create a sound change in educational policies and practices, which can be interpreted as an ignited desire for a comprehensive social change.

4.3.4. Social change: Projections for sustainability and impediments

TSG teachers could empower themselves by liberating from hegemonic orthodox beliefs and practices about their teaching and reconstructing their teacher identities accordingly with the help of TSG affordances. Empowered TSG members transformed their pedagogies in light of the knowledge they generated collaboratively, which resulted in more

beneficial learning outcomes for the learners. Inclusion of the learners into the decision-making process through AR tools contributed to learner empowerment as well. These emancipatory outcomes caused TSG teachers to critically reframe their perspectives to PD. TSG teachers were able to reflect critically and analyse their context since they raised their critical consciousness toward PD. They practised a bottom-up PD program, including collaboration, reflection, and AR, which was completely different from their previous anti-dialogical PD practices, and benefited from this program in various ways. They transformed their PD perceptions and constructed new counter-hegemonic perspectives for PD by criticizing the traditional tools. TSG teachers also could initiate a potential for a social change among non-TSG teachers because non-TSG teachers critically reflected on their previous PD experiences and expected to get involved in TSG or similar PD practices for the perpetuation of emancipatory and transformative pedagogies.

To create a sound social change (Burns, 2007), TSG teachers raised critical awareness about how they would sustain the new PD perspective they adopted and how the impediments hindering this new PD perspective could be minimized. In this sense, the data show that the teachers believe this PD program will sustainably lead to a fundamental and counter-hegemonic social change at the SoFL on the condition that institutional PD policies are reformed, and expected curricular actions are taken. The teachers' critical reflections on the future of the TSG and its effects on the school revealed that TSG has the potential to create a sound social change if further steps are taken by the authorities and the ramifications of institutional impediments are resolved.

Firstly, TSG teachers critically touched upon the potential of this new PD perspective to lead a social change at the school and they came up with several suggestions for the future projections of the TSG. Their critical reflection on how the new perspective could be sustained as an institutional culture shows that TSG and AR must be employed as an institutional PD policy to create a new culture for the whole school and the learners. Besides, curricular policies and regulations are expected to be revised so that TSG and AR can be integrated into the curricular practices, and the teachers can have more flexibility and authority to implement teacher collaboration and AR. Also, the inclusion of new teachers to the TSG project and further discussions with non-TSG teachers based on AR outcomes are believed to create a social and democratic change at the school.

This new PD perspective is thought to lead a considerable change for the school and learners by creating a large-scale social change (Kincheloe, 2009) if it is sustainably implemented as an institutional policy:

> *This new PD perspective will also contribute to the institution. We teach different groups of students and provide training to them. What does this mean? It means that the students who will graduate from this institution, or rather, go to their departments, go with adequate English or feed on a better education environment. I think it is crucial to cause such a thing. It will be the most significant benefit. We can create a corporate culture based on TSG and AR. I know this work will contribute in every sense as long as we keep the administration's and employees' corporate culture in favour of success and development*. (Sibel)

The potential of this PD approach in terms of diversity and pluralism in teaching practices and learner achievement is also highlighted by Eda: "*Such an approach in PD is also very beneficial for the students. They can experience things that other students have not experienced. It is also beneficial in terms of diversity and difference in the institution.*." In addition to the benefits for learners, the teachers also believe that this new perspective in PD will contribute to the power and visibility of SoFL among other faculties. Considering the SoFL is not respected as much as other faculties because of the lack of on-site practice of policymakers and their ignorance of on-site concerns (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c), this new PD perspective and an increase in teaching and learning quality will empower the school and legitimise the hard work performed by the teachers:

> *Visibility is essential, and our projects can be published on our website. It will become more widespread if it is on our university's website. "What do the teachers at SoFL do?" There is pressure on us. It is assumed that we do nothing, but everyone here works very hard. In addition, we did such a study voluntarily. We should keep doing these projects and make them visible to reach a more permanent dimension. It might be of interest to other professors as well. We must show the other department teachers that we are working hard for our students*. (Aylin)

As for the curricular expectations, the teachers think that the curriculum and institutional PD policies must be reformed so that the TSG and AR can be easily implemented as components of the curriculum to initiate a social change; as Aylin explained: *"We presented excellent data for the Curriculum Unit. I wish it were integrated into the curriculum. By*

saying, "Let's reshape our curriculum accordingly." *It would be very beneficial and have more sustainable outcomes.*" Developing a critical praxis (Freire, 1970) through TSG enabled the teachers to reflectively and critically question the curricular problems and equip themselves with enough skills and awareness to impact the curriculum and policies (Barrow, 1984). In this sense, TSG teachers believe the teaching practices they conducted in their AR projects can be integrated into the curriculum to make their future actions legitimized and reach more transformative outcomes for the school:

> *If the institution considers such things, it will contribute. However, it will not make sense to say, "Oh, these were nice", and continue as before. If we implement drama as an extracurricular activity, there will be no participation and no benefit. Such studies will be successful if they can be added to the curriculum. We must integrate it. Giving a drama plan to the teachers will not work. Drama lessons should be given to the teachers first. There are also critical points. There are some things to watch out for. It would be great if the institution would take responsibility and make a preliminary study on this subject, train certain teachers, and add it to the curriculum*. (Zeynep)

Reforms and regulations in the curriculum are also expected to create more flexibility and authority for the teachers to pursue their PD objectives. As low professional status makes teachers susceptible to strict institutional policies (Kirk, 1986), having a space where they can comfortably implement PD activities in a self-directed way is thought to contribute to their professional growth, as Aylin highlighted: "*We should be more flexible and have more authority to integrate these new PD practices into the curriculum. We can easily maintain these PD practices if the curriculum provides enough time and power for us to collaborate and conduct AR*." It is seen that socially constructed hegemonic hierarchies within the education system deprive the teachers of enough power to design and implement their PD (Kincheloe, 2009). Considering the status of the university, which is officially a research-oriented university and supported by the state for academic research studies, the teachers demand a more flexible curriculum allowing them to conduct research. By doing so, they believe they can improve the quality of teaching, which can yield a positive impact on both the school and the learners:

> *As an institution, we are generally expected to do research. If we think about this expectation, AR can be the answer to this expectation. For this, we need to have a more comfortable curriculum. This model already directly affects the student because*

> *the teachers' classroom practices are improving. This project has benefited the institution as the quality of the lectures will increase*. (Buket)

The new PD perspective is thought to create a social change if the project's scope is extended with new participants. The inclusion of new teachers to the TSG project is believed to create a more comprehensive effect on the school:

> *This experience is precious for all teachers. More and more teachers should participate in this study in the upcoming years. It is a significant study, especially for those who have not completed a master's or doctorate and are far from the idea of research. My PhD helped show how meaningful this work is. There should be more teachers to collaborate within a TSG.* (Aylin)

Inclusion of new teachers is also expected to diverse teaching practices from different perspectives, which can contribute to the institutional curriculum and teaching quality at the SoFL, as Cansu stated: "*If new TSGs are formed, and new AR projects are conducted, we will be lucky to hear lots of ideas and data. We can use these data to reform our curriculum and fulfil more diverse and creative learning outcomes*." Critical teacher education programs and activities aim to democratically start a more collective change in the educational system by including all voices (Kincheloe, 2009; 2011a). In this sense, further school-wide discussions with non-TSG teachers based on the AR findings were recommended by TSG teachers for the institutional change:

> *It would be helpful to add more detailed information to these studies and make them more sustainable by including non-TSG instructors. However, we did not have time for that. It would be nice to make this more sustainable. It would be great if we could have school-wide discussions on the outputs of our work and talk about the transformation of school policies. With these discussions, we can lead institutional change and create a research-based academic atmosphere* (Aylin).

In addition to the future projections of the TSG the teachers suggested to lead a social change, TSG teachers enacted a critical perspective toward the institutional impediments hindering them from taking part in long-term and sustainable PD practices that could pioneer a social change at the school. These impediments were found to inherently stem from the intensive curricular load that prevents teachers from being more flexible to make autonomous decisions and the time constraints due to the workload, including lesson hours, unit duties and learner feedback time.

The curriculum and weekly pacing are found to be very challenging by the teachers. As the students are prepared for one hundred percent English medium instruction, they are expected to reach the expected level at the end of the preparatory year, which causes the teachers to cover a lot in a limited time. This curricular load prevented the teachers from doing further work on their AR projects, as explained by Zeynep: "*I wish we had more time. I could take the process drama and add different dimensions if our course load was not too much. I would love to do this but could not do it because of the intensity*." Weekly pacing for Level 1 students is relatively more intensive since they are at the beginner level. Hence, teaching at Level 1, which is the level that TSG teachers taught during the PD program, is considered to be more challenging to maintain long-term PD practices and less flexible in making autonomous decisions:

> *If we could implement the joint project we discussed in the TSG with* Zeynep*, we would see many benefits, but our conditions did not allow it. Especially the weekly lesson hours and the number of materials to be completed by Level 1 students are very high. They have a hectic schedule to pass the preparation at the end of the year. Since they start from the beginner level, the process is difficult there. We always have tight and rigid pacing to catch up with. These works require more collaboration, but we cannot provide that. If we could transform these conditions, it would considerably impact the institution*. (Aylin)

The intensity of the curriculum made the teachers feel constrained from coming up with innovative practices prompting learner production. Even though they are willing to integrate their perspective into the course design, the curriculum does not allow them to take the initiative, as Zeynep criticized: "*The challenge is the curriculum. If we had a more straightforward flow and focused on production, I could easily integrate the subjects with which I am competent. The curriculum was intense*." The teachers also criticize the stress of falling behind the pacing. Lack of flexibility in this sense impeded the teachers' AR plans, resulting in a way that did not satisfy them completely:

> *I could not do much more due to the pacing I had to follow. I completed my AR, but it did not turn out how I wanted. We could have looked more at these word strategies in students. I am not fully flexible. Even with an hour of flexibility, I will either have to do more lessons or fall behind.* (Eda)

As a researcher and the facilitator of the TSG, I experienced many moments when I had difficulty to arrange meetings with the teachers because of their workload, as reflected in my researcher's log: "*The teachers are too tired and busy to participate in meetings. They teach 22 lessons per week in addition to dozens of writing papers, written and oral feedback sessions, attendance work, preparing lesson plans, exams etc*." Then I added: "*Do you think they have enough time to refresh and motivate themselves for the meetings? How can I motivate them? If one person is stuck with curricular requirements and dozens of student papers, can we really motivate them*?" Macro systems such as social, economic and political systems have a role in shaping educational policies and practices, and the effects of these systems are reflected in micro situations (Kincheloe, 2009). In this regard, the educational hindrances stemming from macro systems are crowded classrooms, overcapacity, and the lack of teaching staff. According to the teachers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcomes of this PD program will be integrated into the curriculum and democratise the education considering the intensity of the weekly pacing, the number of students, and the limited staff:

> *I know the Curriculum Unit cannot integrate these studies into the curriculum. There is a very tight schedule. A lot of books and materials need to be processed. Classes are already overcrowded. It is not possible in a jam. There is only one way: to increase the number of teachers. This way, the teachers' workload would be reduced, and the teachers could use these studies outside of class hours. Since there are not enough teachers, our hands are tied to make significant changes and add to the curriculum. For example, I would like to integrate drama*. (Aylin)

In a similar vein, time constraints are considered to have deteriorating effects on the teachers' engagement in the new PD practices, such as teacher collaboration and AR. What makes teachers have less or no time for PD is mainly associated with lesson hours, extra workload stemming from unit duties and administrative work, and the feedback time spent on learners' assignments. The PD tools that the TSG project provided for the teachers are thought to be effective for sustainable PD; however, their TSG experiences made them critically aware that on-site problems hindered them from leading a social change (Kincheloe, 2011a). Buket touches upon the fact that these factors restrict them from being more flexible for PD as follows: "*Besides my overload, homework feedback, and personal time, our PD is also important, but this is not easy. PD is very important, especially in such process-oriented activities, but we do not have a proper working order. It makes things difficult*." Even though the program was found to be easy to achieve, lesson hours and school duties did not allow

teachers to have enough flexibility for their PD practices, as Aylin reported: "*I had a strong motivation to complete the project. Unfortunately, I have an overloaded schedule. Both intensive class hours and unit duties are challenging. There was never any compulsion from TSG*." Likewise, school and family time limited the teachers to spend more time on their PD, as Cansu specified: "*The program was not challenging, but I had my child, and there was not much time left because there was a lot of class and homework at school*." Unit duties also hindered teacher flexibility since their unit duties required teachers to work long hours in addition to their lesson load, as criticized by Aylin: "*I teach many hours like everyone. Unit meetings are very long, and we meet very often. I always had lessons with Level 1 students, which means a more intense and challenging pace. These factors were really tiring for me*." This workload caused a lack of motivation and willingness to maintain the PD program for some teachers. They realized that working in a more plausible and flexible working environment would work better for their motivation to practise PD:

> *There are times when I feel drained. I even thought I should not have started this project for a while because there was so much to do at work. On the one hand, lessons, feedback, and unit duties. There were times when I experienced fatigue and low motivation. If I had had more flexible working conditions, I would have been more motivated and willing to pursue my PD goals* (Eda).

To sum up, the TSG process contributed to teachers' transforming their PD perspectives by forming new ways of thinking and criticizing the irrelevancy and ineffectiveness of previous PD practices from the critical ontology perspective. They realized that a contextualized PD approach prioritizing their needs and demands could be empowering to initiate a social change at the school since they did not have to rely on decontextualized hegemonic PD practices and imported PD materials offered by external sources. However, curricular barriers and insufficient time to be more flexible and comfortable with PD practices dramatically constrained TSG teachers since they thought they could have done better projects with more collaboration with their colleagues and students. In that regard, this PD program enabled the teachers to become aware that institutional impediments limited them, and they needed a reform to have the flexibility and authority to get involved in sustainable PD practices that can empower them to be the frontiers of a social change, which will also improve the quality of teaching at the SoFL in the long run.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Discussion

Having documented the findings in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I discuss the findings in relation to my research questions and the literature. In light of the three research questions, I first discuss the results regarding the TSG teachers' background teaching profiles, previous PD experiences and expectations. As I utilized SCT and CP as theoretical foundations of this PD program, the second and third research questions were formulated to delve into the teachers' sociocultural and critical insights into the program. In this sense, in the second part of the discussion, I discuss the findings from the perspective of SCT and sociocultural literature. In the third part of the discussion, I delve into the critical analysis of the findings from the CP perspective by discussing the teachers' TSG experiences in relation to CP literature. In the last part of the discussion, I analyze the previous studies based on teacher collaboration in light of the findings of the current TSG research. To have a holistic look at the literature in the last part, I first discuss the current study in light of other collaborative teacher groups apart from TSGs. Then I compare the current study and similar TSGs in the literature, followed by a holistic and conclusive evaluation of my research.

5.1.1. How do TSG teachers describe their current teaching philosophies, PD perspectives, and expectations?

In the first research question, I aimed to delve into the teaching profiles of the TSG teachers and reveal their background in terms of their teacher education experiences, teaching practices, philosophies, PD experiences, and expectations. In this sense, the data demonstrate that the teachers complain about the inadequacy of their pre-service teacher education, they have strong beliefs regarding the role of learner autonomy, they are not offered adequate PD opportunities at their school, and they expect to involve in practice-based PD programs for their professional growth.

Drawing upon the TSG teachers' pre-service teacher education experiences, the inadequacy of teacher education programs is defined as the lack of practicum experiences, overemphasis on theories rather than concrete teaching practices, the irrelevancy of practicum experiences and materials, and lack of guidance provided by university supervisors. Pre-service teachers might bring their own language learning histories observations to their pre-service education settings, and these histories, which are also called the apprenticeship of

observation, can have a major role in shaping their assumptions of language teaching from the very beginning of the teacher education process (Borg, 2004). Overcoming educationally inappropriate assumptions built on previous histories might be challenging for pre-service teachers (Miller & Shifflet, 2016). In light of the risks that may impede the professional growth of pre-service teachers, the inadequacy of pre-service programs could induce severe problems that English teachers generally face in the initial phases of their profession (Senom et al., 2013). Hence, pre-service English teacher education programs have a vital role in offering pedagogically and theoretically sound opportunities that can prepare teachers for the beginning of their teaching career (Farrell, 2012). However, the conditions of pre-service English teacher education programs in Türkiye show that these programs are not satisfactory enough to prepare teachers for contextual actualities for various reasons. As Akcan (2016) addresses, overemphasis on the theoretical aspects of the profession, lack of integration between theory and practice, lack of teaching practices, limited practicum time, the irrelevancy of materials and teacher educators' lack of teaching experience might lead to inadequate takeaways from the pre-service programs. Hence, these impediments can lead to a gap between the objectives of a teacher education program and contextual actualities (Tarone & Allwright, 2005).

These studies (mentioned above) on the role of pre-service education and the detrimental components of these programs that lead to professional shock in teachers' careers shed light on the reasons behind the inadequacies reported by the TSG teachers. To maximize the efficiency of English teacher education programs in a more compatible way with teachers' actual needs, some actions can be taken to transform these programs. Considering the lack of reflective practices in pre-service and practicum programs (Akcan, 2010; Ceylan et al., 2017), reflective practices in pre-service teaching activities can enable teachers to reconsider their previous assumptions and build transformed perspectives (Farrell, 2016). Particularly for transformative learning practices, pre-service English teachers' engagement in critical reflective practices might transform their beliefs and pave the way for new actions aligned with this transformation (Liu, 2015). Apart from reflection skills, pre-service teachers can be equipped with research practices by conducting and reading research, contributing to teacher knowledge, educational views, and autonomy (Borg, 2008; 2009). Considering the lack of teaching practices reported by the TSG teachers, Dikilitaş and Çomoğlu (2022) put forward that engaging pre-service teachers in reading and discussing research studies of other teachers from various contexts can contribute to their pedagogical practices and prepare them for future challenges they may face in their classrooms. Inclusion of practitioner research into the pre-service curriculum can also foster teacher resilience in that they can get more familiar with

various practices and enhance their future images of teacher selves (Dikilitaş & Çomoğlu, 2022). Besides, the need for educational guidance addressed by the TSG teachers shows that pre-service teachers expect to receive more psychological support, which many pre-service programs lack (Ceylan et al., 2017). In this sense, pre-service programs can be enhanced through collaborative practices such as peer/team teaching or mentoring (Akcan, 2016; Ceylan et al., 2017) and dialogic and reflective practices with teacher educators based on practicum experiences (Akcan, 2016; Farrell, 2012), which could lead to a sound betterment in the adequacy of these programs to prepare teachers for their profession.

The TSG also strongly emphasized that they have a teaching philosophy foregrounding the role of learner autonomy, and they would like to position themselves as a guide rather than the source of knowledge. However, they also touch upon the hindrances preventing them from taking compatible actions with their beliefs: curricular obstacles and the unwillingness of their learners. Even though the TSG teachers reported that they tend to create an autonomous learning environment in their classrooms by relieving their learners' stress and guiding them to communicate, learner autonomy is not a one-dimensional action since it is defined as a multi-faceted concept requiring the learner to take charge of their independent learning process by planning, organizing, monitoring, and critically reflecting on the whole process independent of the teacher (Hedge, 2000; Little, 1991). The TSG teachers stated that they promoted learner autonomy by valuing their learners' needs and building rapport with them. Despite their efforts to be responsive to learner needs, they faced curricular barriers restricting them from catching up with the relentless pacing of the weekly syllabus and learner unwillingness, which shows a gap between what teachers believe to be effective in language learning and what they actually face in the class (Borg, 2011).

Drawing on this gap, the teachers found it challenging to make learners more autonomous due to a wide range of factors, including, school, teacher and learner-based factors (Alibakshi, 2015). As stated by the TSG teachers, curricular obstacles at a school, defined by Alibakshi (2015) as ignoring learners in the curriculum and prescribed objectives, materials, and assessment systems, might have a deteriorating role in hindering the implementation of autonomous processes. In addition, some institutional constraints such as administration-directed events, may impede the autonomy of teachers and learners (Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020). Besides, learners' lack of motivation, limited exposure to English, dependence on the teacher, lack of autonomous learning, low proficiency, focus on the assessment system, and lack of ability to identify their needs (Alibakshi, 2015) can be seen as the constraints against what the TSG teachers expect to fulfil in their classrooms in terms of learner autonomy. As

for the teacher-based factors, Alibakshi (2015) points out that teachers' not having relevant resources, lack of teacher autonomy, classroom management concerns, and lack of experience for autonomous learning might constrain learner autonomy in language learning settings.

In this sense, it is seen that learner autonomy is not a one-dimensional action to be taken immediately since its multi-faceted structure requires transforming learner, teacher, and school-based conditions. Considering the collectivist family and education cultures in Türkiye (Kagitcibasi, 2007), learners may not be attuned to autonomous learning, which requires teachers and educational institutes to take more sustainable steps to transform the culture of learning and increase the learners' autonomous abilities, intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm to learn independently (Bharathi, 2014) by keeping in mind that autonomy is fostered in learning settings where learners are included into decision-making processes (Balçıkanlı, 2010). The teachers' and institutional stakeholders' effort to transform the learning climate by empowering learners and providing them with the opportunities to voice their choice to learn for themselves can promote learner autonomy in the class (Chan, 2001; Smith, 2008) as the TSG teachers expected to happen.

Another issue raised by the TSG teachers within the scope of the first research question is the inadequacy of institutional PD practices offered to them. In this regard, the TSG teachers are not satisfied with the few PD opportunities provided by the school since they think these PD practices are limited and based on what the publishing houses offer them. Additionally, they addressed that the content of these practices was irrelevant to their needs and heavily theoretical, which did not yield long-term benefits for them. The teachers' not having enough authority and flexibility to plan and organize the PD events/practices for themselves made them find their way out individually by following some national and international PD platforms. Even though PD has a crucial role in informing the potential job efficiency of in-service teachers (Guskey, 2000) and improving their teaching repertoire (Richards & Farrell, 2005), PD is often conceived as a service needed to be provided by other professionals rather than teachers themselves (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Passivation of teachers from the planning and execution processes of PD (Tanış & Dikilitaş, 2018) does not leave any space for teachers to take their own responsibility for their professional growth, as expressed by the TSG teachers. As it emerged from the data collected at the beginning of the study with the aim of revealing what the TSG teachers expect to obtain from a PD program, indeed, the teachers are unanimously against the traditional top-down PD models that are organized as training by administrators or external researchers/teacher educators without needs analysis (Kasi, 2010).

The idea of training in this kind of traditional PD program refers to the transmission of knowledge from the expert to the teacher with the expectation that the teacher would replicate the transmitted knowledge in the class and change their instructional practices (Yan, 2005). The standardized nature of these programs intends to make many teachers acquire a set of knowledge and skills delivered by knowledgeable trainers and change their practices cost-efficiently (Guskey, 2000). However, Little (1993) notes that these PD practices are built upon the idea that one size fits all. Hence, the shallow nature of these practices often ignores the context-specific needs and positions teachers as passive recipients of knowledge (Kennedy, 2016; Little, 1993). Also, according to Guskey (2000), these PD programs lack individualization and feedback opportunities since the varied profiles of teachers are neglected, and the teachers are not provided with relevant content, as can be seen in the case of the TSG teachers' prior PD experiences. Another common problem with these traditional training models of PD is associated with the lack of feedback opportunities in that the participant teachers are not given enough feedback on their practices (Nouri & Kaouache, 2021).

As a result of the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the PD activities delivered as training sessions to the TSG teachers, they became more conscious about their PD needs. In this sense, the TSG teachers report that they expect to get involved in more practice-based PD programs designed in accordance with their actual needs. As they do not want to attend top-down PD events, which are based on knowledge transmission, they aspire to be actively involved in self-determined PD activities, including relevant theoretical knowledge, which can be concretely implemented as practical knowledge, practices to foster learner autonomy, and collaborative practices such as peer observation and peer feedback. What the teachers expect to find in a PD program shows that the teachers are inclined to experience a teacher-based PD rather than a trainer-based PD approach (Dikilitaş, 2015). On the contrary to a top-down perspective, which does not involve teachers in the decision-making of the PD roadmap (Uştuk & Çomoğlu, 2019), the TSG teachers need to have more control over their learning process that is structured in a bottom-up way within the consideration of their needs (Macias, 2017; Vangrieken et al., 2017). Besides, TSG teachers' emphasis on the need for updating practical knowledge to be used in the class and their efforts to upgrade themselves by following several platforms and attending graduate teaching programs reveals a continuous professional development (CPD) perspective that is not restricted to one-shot training programs (Sokel, 2019). CPD intends to equip teachers with lifelong learning skills (Day, 1999). In this regard, the continuity of professional growth can be enriched through collaboration and reflection on

teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009), which aligns with the teachers' reported willingness to participate in collaborative and reflective practices through relevant content.

All in all, the findings emerging from the pre-TSG interviews to shed light on teacher profiles revealed that the qualifications the teachers get through pre-service English language teacher education programs could not be adequate to prepare teachers for their profession and keep them updated considering the dynamic changes and expectations of constantly-changing educational environments (Hayes & Chang, 2012). The teachers' dissatisfaction with their pre-service education backgrounds reveals the need for re-evaluation of these programs in Türkiye and transformative policies and actions to re-design pre-service programs so that prospective teachers can have more opportunities to practise teaching, reflect on their progress, collaborate with their peers, and build dialogical relationships with their teacher educators. By doing so, pre-service programs might offer mediums of reflection with a strong emphasis on teaching practice rather than exposing pre-service teachers solely to research-based theories (Karakaş &Yükselir, 2020; Turhan & Kırkgöz, 2018; 2021). Besides, the inadequacy of pre-service programs draws forth the essence of in-service PD programs for teachers' needs. Despite the crucial role of in-service PD programs in English language teacher education, in-service PD programs could be ineffective in meeting teachers' needs and yield expected outcomes in the long run (Atay, 2008; Kennedy, 2016). The ineffectiveness can be attributed to the top-down organization of these programs independent of teacher needs (Yan, 2005) and the lack of collaborative, reflective, and practical experiences in teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009).

In this sense, TSG as a CPD model is a considerably compatible model for the teachers participating in this study regarding their needs and expectations. As the TSG provides a theoretical and pedagogical framework within which the teachers can collaborate, co-reflect, and co-construct knowledge by employing various CPD tools such as action research, collaborative reflection, reflective writing, and mediation with experts, the teachers have the authority and flexibility to design their PD roadmaps by prioritizing their actual needs (Francis et al., 1994). The TSG teachers' explicit willingness to enact autonomous learning environments and foster learner autonomy, which is also a prerequisite for democratic societies and enriched life-long learning perspective (Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012), displays the need for teacher autonomy as well since learner autonomy could not be fostered by the teachers who have no autonomy in curricular and instructional decisions (Alibakshi, 2015). Hence, TSG as a CPD model would function as an emancipatory project that would provide critical and sociocultural learning perspectives to achieve lifelong teacher learning perspective and empower teachers to be more qualified and confident in taking pedagogical actions by relying

on the power of their co-constructed knowledge generated from context-specific and inquiry-based practices. In this regard, the detailed analysis of the participant teachers' profiles shows that TSG facilities, including action research, collaboration, and reflection, were compatible with what the teachers desired and expected from a contextually-relevant PD program.

5.1.2. What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the SCT perspective?

With the second research question of the study, I particularly intended to reveal how the TSG teachers experienced the PD program from the lenses of sociocultural theory (SCT), which was the framework that laid the basis for this study together with critical pedagogy. The sociocultural theory was one of the driving forces behind this PD program since SCT posits that social interactions shape human cognition and that knowledge is socially co-constructed through these interactions (Lantolf et al., 2015). The sociocultural principle that human cognitive development is achieved through socially-mediated practices responsive to cultural, local and individual needs (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) shaped the rationale behind the TSG project. Hence, the TSG project aimed to provide teachers with socially-mediated spaces to reconstruct and transform their selves, practices, and resources collaboratively and internalize the socially co-constructed knowledge for individual cognitive development (Johnson, 2009). The study's findings revealed that a PD program designed in line with sociocultural principles and tools (reading materials as artifact, socially-mediated TSG meetings, discussion boards, expert talks, researcher's mediation, reflective journal, action research) provided various social learning environments that fostered teacher learning in many ways. In this sense, below, I discuss the findings of the second research question in light of the TSG teachers' sociocultural gains from the PD program.

I discussed in the previous section that the teachers are theoretically frontloaded during their pre-service education, and they need to be offered more opportunities to use that theoretical richness in their practices, which constrains their conceptual thinking (Freeman, 1993). The teachers also stated that the theoretical knowledge transferred through traditional PD forms did not correspond to their instructional practices. Being equipped with theoretical knowledge without any emphasis on the practical aspect of teaching might lead to "empty verbalism", defined as the accumulation of knowledge that cannot be implemented concretely (Vygotsky, 1986). Likewise, relying solely on experiential knowledge without any support from theories in the field of ELT would prevent teachers from utilizing the theoretical richness of language teaching (Vygotsky, 1986). Isolation of experiential and academic knowledge could result in conceptual development failure, which requires the meaningful integration of

experiential and academic knowledge/concepts through socially-mediated learning processes (Johnson, 2009). In this regard, the teachers' insights into the TSG project from the sociocultural lenses revealed that they went through a successful conceptual development process by integrating their existing experiential concepts with the new academic concepts and adopting true concepts eventually.

Throughout the TSG program, the teachers could benefit from various mediational tools such as artificats, activities, concepts, and social relations to reach true concepts (Johnson, 2009; Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Building the TSG on a sociocultural basis allowed me to design the program to enact these mediational tools systematically, and this architecture of the program was found successful by the teachers. The reading materials, guidelines, and theoretical concepts regarding the SCT, CP, and AR (artifacts and concepts), TSG meetings, discussion board, AR seminar, and dialogic interactions with peers, the researcher, and experts (social relations and activities) were acknowledged as transformative mediational tools for conceptual development by the TSG teachers (Kozulin, 2003). As Vygotsky stated, "Through others, we become ourselves" (1931/1997, p. 105); the sociocultural paradigm behind the TSG program provided the affordances that fostered the attainment of true concepts through social mediation between the TSG teachers and others (objects, peers, experts). As the TSG teachers signalled, their engagement with the TSG materials and readings (objects), their dialogic interactions with their colleagues (peers), and responsive mediation practices with the researcher and other teacher educators through expert talks (experts) accelerated the conceptual development process and yielded reconstruction of existing practices and knowledge (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). The mediational tools, as the TSG teachers proposed, "gave a direction" to them "became a basis for everything". As a result of this process, the TSG teachers could reconceptualize their existing knowledge with the new academic concepts and adopt true concepts about SCT, CP, and AR.

Responsive mediation from the experts and the researcher enacted a space for the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where the teachers could make use of effectively organized and mediated instruction for cognitive development to internalize the true concepts (Shi, 2017; Vygotsky, 1986). The teachers' insights into the PD process show that their dialogic interactions with the experts let them build meaningful connections between their own experiential knowledge and new academic concepts (Kennedy, 1999) since these interactions took place through contextually relevant and appropriate activities enabling them to voice their needs and questions (Shan, 2011). Having opportunities for scaffolded learning practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2011) enhanced the teachers' understanding of new concepts and

protected them from incomplete understandings (Hawkins & Rogers, 2016). The teachers' dialogic relations with the experts helped them reconstruct their perspectives towards AR without experiencing any dissonance since they had the chance to co-construct the true concepts through first-hand interactions with experts already experienced in teachers' professional development. This socially-mediated zone of proximal development did not alienate any part of the interaction. It increased the responsiveness of the mediation since the TSG teachers expressed their satisfaction with the expert talks in that these talks helped them to appropriate their AR plans and reconstruct their AR perspectives through the experts' academic concepts that were sensitive to their emerging needs (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Shi, 2017).

Besides, the teachers' experiences through the PD program demonstrate that my role as a researcher and facilitator of the program functioned as a mediation tool. As the teachers highlighted the "organized and systematic" aspects of the program in the findings, my active engagement with the planning and execution of the program in accordance with the teachers' needs, expectations, and convenience constantly helped them to stay engaged and motivated. My being responsive to their questions throughout the process by helping teachers with theoretical and practical aspects of the program requirements indicates the role of responsive mediation in reaching true concepts (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). As Vygotsky (1978) emphasized, the relationship between humans and the world is indirect. This relationship requires mediation so that humans can make meanings out of what is given by the world by unpinning the indirectness of the relationship. In my case, this mediation was responsive to the teachers' emerging needs, their personal expectations, and the contextual dynamics of the setting both at the pre and while stages of the program (Johnson & Golombek, 2016), so the teachers could adopt the true concepts and internalize them without experiencing a major dissonance their existing concepts and the new concepts (Shi, 2017). Mediation as co-regulation practice in the zone of proximal development activity between the teachers and the researcher who stayed attuned to their needs constantly (Fogel, 1991) and dynamic assessment of their needs to maximize their learning (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014) led to a qualitative transformation (Johnson & Golombek, 2016) in that the teachers used the true concepts as psychological tools to reconstruct their perspectives and teaching (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

In this reconstruction process, responsive mediation from the experts and the researcher facilitated the teachers' eagerness and engagement with the various forms of responsive mediation because they got involved in a transformative learning process by

leaving the conventional obuchenie (schooling experience) which is based on the instruction following cognitive development of humans (Vygotsky, 1987). Likewise, considering the different emotional experiences (perezhivanie) teachers bring into the activity system (Vygotsky, 1987), the experts and the researcher accommodated their responsive mediation in accordance with not only what the teachers externalized about their prior experiences and emotions but also how they were feeling during their interactions (Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Hence, the TSG teachers reported that their positive relationships with the experts and the researcher led to "sincere sharing practices" and not "feeling alone", which made research not "frightening" anymore.

Making meaningful connections between experiential and academic knowledge co-constructed through the PD process and forming true concepts helped the TSG teachers contextualize their learning and generate knowledge rather than being passive consumers of transmission-based knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). By generating evidence-based and co-constructed knowledge through AR after the reconceptualization of AR with the true concepts, the teachers could develop their teacher self. Reconceptualization of AR as a transformative PD tool through the mediation tools (readings, TSG activities, peers, the researcher, experts) contributed to developing the teacher self because the TSG teachers started to consider AR as a psychological tool to mediate practical research, learner autonomy, teaching quality, and professional satisfaction. As the TSG teachers reconstructed their perspectives on research after the mediational activities, they could develop their reasoning teaching (Johnson, 1999), which led them to contextualize their instructional practices in relation to contextual needs emerging from the student data collected through AR. By doing so, the teachers became aware of the qualitative aspect of AR and "broke their chains about not leaning on numbers".

Knowledge generation through AR, which was internalized as a new psychological tool, developed the teacher self since this new psychological tool paved the way for teacherly thinking. The teachers, by generating new concepts concerning AR, realized AR was not as "complex" as they thought. From the sociocultural lenses, as Johnson and Golombek (2016) suggest, teacherly thinking allows teachers to make context-sensitive decisions by considering all the emerging situational circumstances, enabling teachers to appropriate their actions in a way more responsive to their surrounding realities. Expanding their existing knowledge with the help of the TSG process and expanding the possible scope of knowledge that they will have in the future with the future implementation of AR as a PD tool, the TSG teachers enriched their conceptual development and teacherly thinking process (Johnson & Golombek,

2016). Likewise, developing the teacher self through knowledge generation increased the teachers' repertoire to teach more resourcefully, which might result in more resourceful learning opportunities in the classroom (Edwards, 2010). Therefore, the TSG teachers described themselves more critical to "pay more attention to the problems and possible solutions in the lesson".

In tandem with the second research question, the teachers' insights also revealed that their new positioning to generate knowledge (Johnson, 2006) through AR contributed to the teacher self to generate pedagogical content knowledge by relying on their own power and resources. The content of the TSG project provided them with a rich literature of content knowledge regarding SCT, CP, and AR. The PD tools implemented within the TSG allowed teachers to have discussions and research concerning how to improve their pedagogical knowledge, which refers to the knowledge of how to teach (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Through these affordances, as the TSG teachers highlight, they could realize "the philosophical dimension of the job". TSG, with its all mediational tools, offered a collaborative learning environment where the teachers could develop contextually relevant forms of instruction, bridging the content knowledge provided by the TSG readings and pedagogical knowledge obtained through teacher collaboration and AR (Johnson, 2009). The TSG teachers' dialogic interactions with their learners and the inquiry-based data obtained from AR enriched the development of more context-sensitive instructional decisions (Shulman, 1987). Hence, the mediational tools enacted within the TSG developed the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge in a collaborative and inquiry-based way (Johnson, 2009; Mansour et al., 2014) and gave rise to more investment in the teacher self. In this sense, the development of the teacher self by increasing their agency and developing relevant sources yielded more coherent instructional practices, prioritizing learner autonomy as the teachers suggested in their teaching philosophies (Alibakshi, 2015). Besides, adopting new psychological tools to generate knowledge increased teaching quality through an enriched teaching repertoire addressing the contextual needs (Shan, 2011) so that the teachers could feel "accomplished" and "go beyond mechanical teaching practices". This process positively impacted their professional satisfaction since they equipped themselves with continuous PD tools that could update their teaching repertoire in relation to dynamic changes and requirements of the educational settings (Hayes & Chang, 2012). Therefore, the teachers could describe themselves as "prosumers (produce+consume) rather than mere consumers of research".

Another sociocultural takeaway of the TSG project was teachers' critical stance toward the teacher self. The TSG teachers developed the teacher self by achieving conceptual

development and generating new forms of knowledge, yet they also activated a critical perspective on the teacher self by employing reflective practices, which was offered as one of the major TSG activities mediating teacher learning. The TSG program provided the teachers with the reflection tools to enact their reflective thinking on their practices and learning to reflect on their experiential knowledge in light of the new academic knowledge generated within the TSG process (Johnson, 2009). TSG teachers inherently employed two types of reflective practice within the program. While they used a reflective journal designed based on weekly reflective questions on their learning and TSG experiences, they also used a reflective framework developed by Farrell (2015; 2019) to systematically reflect on their AR process. These systematic reflective thinking practices functioned as a sociocultural PD tool mediating between the teacher self and teacher thinking in that the TSG teachers could focus on how they think and teach, resulting in reconstructed beliefs and instructional decisions (Farrell, 2015). By combining thinking and learning through reflective practices (Moon, 2013), the teachers employed a retrospective and introspective inquiry about their thinking and the motives behind the way they think, which helped the teachers to "rearrange and structure what was in their head", as they proposed.

The sociocultural perspective on the professional development of language teachers considers reflection as a component of alternative PD approaches aiming to offer a continuous and life-long learning cycle for the teachers (Johnson, 2009). In this sense, the TSG teachers' reflective practices became a mediational tool to organize and systematize their thinking to customize their actions introspectively and retrospectively (Schön, 1983). Utilizing the reflective framework designed for their reflective practices (Farrell, 2015) made it easier for the teachers to keep track of their personal transformation since they could systematically re-think their personal theories of language teaching and critically restructure them (Murphy, 2014). As the teachers highlight, reflective practice offered a chance to "look from outside" and "systematize the work". Besides, the teachers' employing a critical stance to the teacher self through reflection by describing their personal theirs, comparing them to the new academic concepts, and critically reconstructing them led them to reframe their perspectives and improve their teaching repertoire (Jay & Johnson, 2002). As the data from the TSG teachers revealed, the researcher's mediating role in designing the reflective frames and reflection materials created another ZPD (Vygotsky, 1986), which enabled the teachers to think about their thinking and criticize the teacher self with the aim of improving the teaching quality. Likewise, reflective practices became a mediation tool for the teachers to build meaningful interrelations among their personal theories, experiences, and new academic

concepts offered by the program. Hence, teachers could use reflective thinking as a psychological tool to contribute their teacher self and teacherly thinking skills to reason their decisions and practices in a continuous cycle (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

The TSG teachers' sociocultural takeaways from the TSG process cannot be restricted to the development of true concepts, teacher self, and critical stance to the teacher self because collaborative professional learning practices taking place within the scope of TSG also have a substantial role in the professional growth of the teachers (Mansour et al., 2014). The teachers' data revealed that their collaborative and dialogic practices during the TSG activities became a space for mediation where they could employ inter-thinking skills on the readings, materials, classroom experiences and AR plans. Inter-thinking practices with TSG peers within the TSG process and with non-TSG members on AR Seminar Day created a collaborative mediation space where they intellectually make better sense of their experiences compared to what they could do individually (Littleton & Mercer, 2013). As Mercer (2000) stated that language can function as a cultural and psychological mediational tool, which is aligned with the mediational relationship between language and thinking in sociocultural learning, the TSG teachers' inter-thinking practices in joint activities and their collective work on the language and thought yielded new understandings (Mercer, 2000). Inter-thinking practices by using the language and building meaningful relationships between language and thought enabled the teachers to collaboratively develop their cognitive skills, critical thinking, and reasoning skills (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). A PD program itself cannot guarantee that teachers will learn automatically by participating in the program. Hence, in line with what Abakah (2023) points out, self-initiated professional dialogues among colleagues in a continuous PD program mediated by other tools yielded inter-thinking practices and co-construction of new knowledge. The teachers' participation in socially organized activities paved the way for social learning practices (Greeno, 2003). The teachers' need for "the others' eyes and perspectives" to improve themselves was fulfilled with the help of "constructive and open-minded attitudes" of the TSG members.

The teachers' inter-thinking practices documented in the data excerpts also revealed that their collaboration while inter-thinking paved the way for new conceptualizations since they re-problematized the AR and they re-defined it as a PD too to be implemented not only for instructional problems but also for instructional improvement of good practices. This collaborative practice led to a more profound sense-making of teacher experiences (Littleton & Mercer, 2013) since they could take up new perspectives based on their co-constructed knowledge. Likewise, the teachers' engaging in peer observations and dialogic interactions to

deliver peer feedback fostered their collaborative professional learning perspective because they stated that peer observation enabled them to "calibrated themselves to refollow or change certain teaching practices" continuously. In this regard, peer observations helped both the observed and observer teachers. While the observer teachers engaged in a socially-mediated teacher learning practice to deliver dialogic feedback and reflect on their practices in light of the observed teachers' practices, the observed teachers could have the chance to externalize their cognition and enact retrospective assessment of instructional practices through observational notes and peer feedback. These collaborative practices can be considered a form of dynamic assessment (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), which yielded constructive discussions bringing out alternative perspectives (Johnson & Golombek, 2016).

Besides, the TSG, with its transformative role in PD, deconstructed the conventional role of teacher educators in transmitting the knowledge and assigned new roles to the teachers to become actively involved in their learning process, which resulted in more room for inter-thinking practices among teachers (Mercer, 2000). To exemplify, the TSG teachers employed inter-thinking practices on their AR plans before they finalized their studies, shared their AR plans and collaboratively thought about possibilities to improve the quality of the research and teaching. Considering the varying degrees of teacher potentiality (Johnson & Golombek, 2016), inter-thinking on each individual AR plan made profound contributions to the content and methods of the research as the TSG teachers suggested. Likewise, AR Seminar Day offered a new potentiality to the TSG teachers since they built collaborative dialogic interactions with the other teachers who were not members of the TSG. Collaborative dialogic practices by using the new academic concepts reciprocally contributed to both TSG and non-TSG teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Johnson, 2009) because they exchanged their experiences with the aim of co-constructing new forms of instruction based on the AR projects presented by the TSG teachers. The TSG teachers described the event as a "lovely atmosphere where they could touch their colleagues and feel like there were scattering like light". Expanding the scope of learning by including non-TSG members collaboratively in the AR process led to school-wide impact (Burns, 1999) and a possible qualitative transformation and reconstruction of everyday practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2016) with the help of a meaningful connection between theory and practice (Kennedy, 1999).

The findings also show that TSG teachers' dialogic and collaborative relations with their peers, experts, and the researcher created an intermental development zone (IDZ), which refers to space where both the teacher educators and teachers customize their knowledge, thinking, and the way they make sense out of events in accordance with the emerging needs

and expectations within the dialogic interactions (Mercer, 2000). The experts and the researchers' attempts to stay attuned to the emergent needs and emotions of the teachers and their responsive mediation appropriated the learning environment for them within the IDZ. These collaborative practices within the IDZ made the teachers more prepared and theoretically and pedagogically equipped for further mediation spaces within the ZPD. Hence, dialogic relations and the researcher's customization of the knowledge and thoughts considering the emergent needs within the IDZ, which functioned as a prolonged phase before the ZPD where the actual collaborative learning took place, contributed to more collaborative teacher learning practices within the ZPD (Miller, 2011).

In tandem with the fifth theme that emerged from the data for the second research question, the TSG teachers' transformation in their wellbeing can also be explained with sociocultural notions. Considering the sociocultural learning tools, the TSG teachers went through a socially mediated process whereby they achieved conceptual development and the development of the teacher self by employing critical reflective practices and collaborative learning skills. All these takeaways adopted through dialogical mediation among teachers, experts, and the researcher impacted how the teachers psychologically and socially felt at the end of the program. As it can be interpreted from the data, peer dialogical mediation practices among the teachers at the inter-psychological (inter-mental) level transformed into teacher wellbeing at the intra-psychological (intra-mental) level of the teacher self (Vygotsky, 1978). The teachers' active engagement in dialogical mediation activities with their peers, co-learning practices for instructional issues and AR plans, and sharing AR takeaways with non-TSG teachers contributed to their psychological and social wellbeing and increased the collegiality, solidarity, and sense of belonging among the teachers. These reciprocal mediation practices among the teachers create an opportunity to shape the cognitive development of others and also be shaped by other peers' theoretical and pedagogical contributions (Vygotsky, 1986). As Vygotsky (1981) addressed that learning, in sociocultural terms, occurs when humans individually internalize the true concepts through socially-mediated activities, inter-mental dialogic practices yielded intra-mental forms of learning and internalization (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Shi, 2017), which revealed the feelings of accomplishment and productiveness.

The teachers achieved to invest in their psychological and social wellbeing by projecting the external forms of experiences into their internal cognitive development process (Vygotsky, 1986). Psychologically, they felt more "satisfied and accomplished". Likewise, strengthened intra-group bonds contributed to their social wellbeing because collegiality,

solidarity and sense of belonging increased as a result of dialogic peer mediation despite their workload and daily struggles. The teachers' effort to maintain their professional learning progress also documented their resilience despite the threatening factors such as overloaded course schedules and institutional duties (Day et al., 2007; Gu & Day, 2013). For this reason, they felt like a "a society within a new culture". The collegiality among the teachers fostered the learning environment and motivated teachers to sustain their resilience throughout the study (Gu & Day, 2007; Wu et al., 2013). The teachers' becoming resilient agents helped them to make considerable contributions to their wellbeing because they could create a positive climate in their learning environment and build positive relationships with their colleagues (Mercer, 2020). The sense of "personal satisfaction", "accomplishment", "appreciation" and "collegiality", opened new horizons to "conduct new studies and TÜBİTAK projects across the country", as proposed by the TSG teachers. Considering the challenges that teachers face, such as professional stress and low wellbeing stemming from undesirable working conditions (Feryok, 2012; Kidger et al., 2016), teacher wellbeing is inhibited by many factors. However, a positive interplay between the teachers and their educational environments can foster wellbeing because teacher wellbeing is a socially-situated construct, and teachers' sustain positive relationships with other stakeholders can positively influence their wellbeing (Mercer, 2021). In this sense, the TSG functioned as a collective community offering dialogic mediation activities, making teachers feel that they are not alone in terms of the problems they face in their educational settings. Developing solidarity channels through dialogic relations and changing the work climate through their agentive role in collaborative knowledge generation enabled the teachers to minimize the inhibitory factors constraining their wellbeing (Mercer, 2020;2021).

In this part of the discussion, I intended to interpret the findings from the sociocultural lens by depicting the way the teachers' insights documented in the data intersected with sociocultural constructs. To summarize the discussion regarding the second research question, I mainly discussed how implementing AR and utilizing the affordances offered by a PD program constructed on sociocultural language teacher education principles helped the teachers conceptually develop psychological tools to transform their cognition and pedagogical content knowledge, which yielded the development of teacher self and enactment of a critically reflective stance to sustain the developed teacher self in a continuous cycle. The teachers' involvement in a CPD learning cycle mediated with respect to their emergent needs learning process (Jarvis, 1987) offered contextually relevant affordances to acquire knowledge and critically reflect on the new knowledge, followed by reconceptualization and

implementation of the new knowledge (Abakah, 2023). I also discussed the role of socially-mediated dialogic practices among TSG and non-TSG members and responsive mediation from the experts and the researcher. These collaborative practices facilitated the internalization of the new true concepts, and the teachers could transfer the inter-psychological transformation in teacher learning to the intra-psychological level, contributing to their social and individual wellbeing. As the findings suggest, sociocultural theory can still be used as a contemporary framework to create a qualitative transformation in teachers' professional learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2016) even though Lev Vygotsky first wrote about this theory in the 1920s and 1930s. As Chaiklin (2011) jokes, "What is over 75 years old, but still a baby? Sociocultural theory" (p. 15).

5.1.3. What are the TSG teachers' insights into TSG as a model of CPD from the CP perspective?

Basing the TSG as a CPD model on the principles of sociocultural theory and utilizing sociocultural tools in teachers' professional learning such as mediation of objects, peers, and experts, generated contextually-relevant ZPDs to accelerate teachers' cognitive development. However, confining the TSG solely to the sociocultural tools and objectives would prevent me from reaching a more holistic perspective embodying a sounder social change in educational practices and policies. Even though the sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy (CP) have many principles in common such as teacher collaboration, knowledge generation through inquiry-based methods, identity reconstruction, and development of teacher agency, CP offers another dimension to take social, political, cultural and economic inequities into consideration for educational plans and actions (Freire, 1970). Educational settings are not independent of the asymmetric power relations within a society, so these settings are influenced by the society's social, political, cultural, and economic systems (Kincheloe, 2011a). As asymmetric power relations in society help the socioeconomically or politically powerful groups to accumulate the power in their hands, they have the authority to shape educational policies and practices, which disempower mostly teachers and learners because they have less or no autonomy to voice their needs and regulate their own teaching and learning practices (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011).

To raise the teachers' awareness about these asymmetric power relations and social realities and empower their critical role as social change-makers, CP functioned as the second driving force as a theoretical framework. By integrating a critical dimension to the TSG, I aimed to maximize the conceptual development of the teachers by enriching this development with transformative and emancipatory perspectives that could lead to a more sustainable

change in educational environments. In this sense, I discussed how the teachers experienced the TSG from the CP perspective for the third research question. First, I discussed the empowerment process of teachers and learners. Then I focused on how this empowerment process impacted their PD perspectives, followed by social change possibilities emerging from the takeaways of the PD program.

First, it can be interpreted from the data that the PD program afforded emancipatory tools such as knowledge generation through AR, collaborative practices with peers, experts, and the researcher, and reflective practices to reconstruct identity. Contrary to the conventional PD tools passivizing teachers and positioning them as knowledge consumers (Richards & Farrell, 2005), these emancipatory tools resulted in the opportunities making the teachers discover new pathways to empower themselves without having to abide by the technician roles assigned to them (Kincheloe, 2011a). Having been alienated from their own personal theories of teaching as a result of their historically imposed passive positionality (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), the teachers experienced TSG as an empowering community, making them leave the orthodox practices mandated by the curricular frames. With this emancipatory PD program, the teachers "did something that they usually would not be able to do". The TSG teachers' counter-hegemonic actions to generate their own knowledge collaboratively helped them to get out of the strict boundaries drawn by the curricular expectations determined without their active involvement, which liberated them from the culture of silence (Shih, 2018). The teachers' counter-hegemonic PD actions resulted in a process whereby they used their existing experiences and knowledge as the basis of new forms of knowledge to create reconstructed teacher theories (Griffiths, 2000). The effort to initiate a counter-hegemonic change in schooling practices (Kirk, 1986) yielded new forms of knowledge for the teachers' teaching repertoire because their AR process enabled them to experience new instructional tools, including video feedback, digital storytelling, drama-based communicative activities, new vocabulary strategies, and use of digitools for willingness to communicate. Hence, "getting rid of the book brought professional satisfaction", as the teachers reported. The TSG teachers' involvement in their knowledge-building process made them feel more empowered since they could deconstruct the technocratic view of education (Gray, 2019) and reposition themselves as intellectual practitioners generating emancipatory teacher knowledge despite the effects of hegemonic educational views indoctrinated to them (Kirk, 1986; Liston & Zeichner, 1987). As a result of the empowerment process, the teachers described themselves "more competent" and "much stronger" and even motivated to "train and develop teachers across the country".

Likewise, the data from the teachers revealed that their collaborative practices and practising new identities empowered them throughout the TSG process. The teachers experienced being a part of a continuous cycle of learning within a community (Kincheloe, 2009) and "acting as a team" for the first time in their professional careers. The TSG teachers developed collective consciousness about how they can generate resources and knowledge collaboratively without a ready-made transmission from external sources that are generally aligned with the mainstream ideologies reproducing the power inequality within the society (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Setting academic goals collaboratively and working together to achieve these goals in a non-hierarchical community fostered the teachers' willingness to take collective action (Drury et al., 2015). Engaging in academic and intellectual work collaboratively and building dialogic interactions among peers to co-develop their professional growth in a non-transmission-based, democratic, and egalitarian community emancipated their professional selves (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2011b). In this regard, the teachers used the phrases such as "being one of them" and "no hierarchy between us" to highlight the egalitarian dynamics of the TSG. The TSG also offered an emancipatory context through the AR Seminar Day because the TSG teachers could collaborate with non-TSG teachers, and they got involved in dialogic interactions (Freire, 1973), which made the teachers feel that "they were scattering like sunlight". This collaboration made the teachers discover that their counter-hegemonic attempts and transformative intellectual roles (Giroux, 1992) could offer new perspectives for the other teachers for transformative and empowering educational practices (Kincheloe, 2011a; Fraser, 1985). Hence the teachers think they "ignited something new by touching each other without hierarchy".

Besides, the teachers also empowered themselves by reconstructing their identities during the TSG process. The teachers' experiences with the AR and collaborative practices with their peers about academic and instructional discussions based on theoretical readings, AR plans, and classroom practices helped them realize that research and academia have intertwined relationships with the teaching profession. Discovering that the academia and AR practices could promote their teaching and their academic identities, the teachers adopted a researcher perspective and made investments in their researcher identities in addition to the teacher identities, which yielded an increased potentiality in their teaching capabilities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). The teachers became more aware that engaging in and with the research and collaboration with their peers based on the research process was an academic component of their teaching identity, transforming their passivized positioning as technicians of instructional knowledge (Gray, 2019) through the creation of a new "academic perception".

The TSG teachers bridged the gap between theory and practice by meaningfully merging them through AR (Liston & Zeichner, 1987) and reconstructing their teacher identities with a stronger emphasis on the research dimension. In this regard, Sibel stated: “teachers should be researchers at the same time to reflect on these situations appropriately to improve their teaching practices and maximize learning”, which documents how they went through a critical praxis process by making connections between new knowledge and the new personal theories (Freire, 1970). Without marginalizing their previous identities, the teachers could cultivate their identities (Sardabi et al., 2018) by utilizing the affordances offered by the AR such as reflection, collaboration and inquiry-based knowledge generation. Therefore, the teachers experienced a democratic way to adopt new roles and positionalities, revealing a democratic way of generating knowledge and interrogating the hegemonic knowledge delivered through institutionalized and standardized forms (Kincheloe, 2011c). By acknowledging their social responsibilities, the teachers could develop a more humanistic voice and broaden their conceptualization of teaching at the end of the program (Sardabi et al., 2018). Being a part of the research community and engaging in reflective and collaborative practices yielded empowered identities, and it is seen as a new possibility for betterment in educational practices (Kincheloe, 2011c). Having positioned themselves as a researcher, the teacher also realized that they had executed various tasks throughout the TSG and AR process because they carried out different roles while executing these tasks such as “planning, organizing, observing, and synthesizing to be a complete teacher”, which stems from teachers’ being “an existing party of that community or society”, as proposed by Sibel. These new roles also helped teachers reconstruct their identities and shift their position from being teachers to intellectual practitioners (Kirk, 1986). These new possibilities to reframe and enrich their identities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009) allowed the teachers to reach their potential and expand the assigned teacher roles' limits because “our project opened our horizons, and we gained new information. We get tired of going in and out of class.”, as Zeynep addresses. Hence, the reconstruction process increased their confidence and gave rise to an empowerment process eventually (Simon, 1987).

Implementing a CP-informed PD program did not only empower the teachers because the data from the TSG teachers and their learners revealed that the learners got empowered as a result of their teachers’ counter-hegemonic actions to transform the curricular and instructional practices in the classroom. Reflective, collaborative, and interrogative practices within the TSG encouraged the teachers to enact post-formal thinking practices from the critical ontology perspective (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). This new perspective made the

teachers rethink their orthodox experiences and interrogate the banking model of education, positioning teachers as the banker of knowledge and learners as passive customers of transmitted knowledge (Freire, 1970). Having left the hegemonic practices behind, the teachers were found to create new ways to prioritize the diversity and autonomy of learners and customize their pedagogies in accordance with the needs and expectations voiced by their learners by "going out of one size fits all mentality". The teachers' conceptualizing new ways of analyzing their experiences through AR (Kincheloe, 2011c) provided a democratic platform for the learners to speak their minds while their teachers were collecting data from them for instructional betterment in the classroom. This platform helped the teachers and learners experience freedom-based educational practices (Shih, 2018) and "well-balanced power distribution, as described by Sibel. The data from the teachers demonstrate that integrating the learners into the PD process resulted in diminished power distance in the classroom because the AR data from the students allowed the teachers to create more egalitarian and dialogic microenvironments where the students felt more empowered in the decision-making process of the educational activities (Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Shor, 1986). As Aylin reported: "the sense of belonging of the student is strengthened". Hence, the TSG teachers, by utilizing the TSG affordances, prioritized the local epistemologies and ontologies existing in the classroom and reflected by the learners (Bartolomé, 2004). The teachers, learners, and their co-constructed knowledge intersected with one another to lead to a transformation in their consciousness (Lusted, 1986). This transformation process helped the teachers to deconstruct the centralized educational views and empower the oppressed groups (Giroux, 1988).

Apart from the teachers, the learners also reported feeling more empowered after being included in the AR process. The learners could externalize their reflections on the teaching process and address their challenges and expectations dialogically, which empowered their positioning (Shor, 1986). As the learners manifested, their productiveness might be inhibited due to strict curricular frames and standardized content of centralized publishing houses 'course materials. Emancipatory practices, relieving the learners by introducing more customized and contextually relevant tools and content, enabled them to make better learning practices and go beyond the atomistic view of instructional conventions (Gray, 2019). The teachers' attempts to increase their critical ontological agency revealed new ways of thinking, which reciprocally fostered a classroom-based transformation in power relations (Meyer, 2011). The learners' reflection on the new instructional practices through the AR showed that these new practices helped them engage in more contextually-relevant learning practices emerging from their immediate needs (Parkhouse et al., 2023). As Student 1 acknowledges:

“The teacher did not limit us to the pictures given in the course book for speaking”, which increased her “motivation” and “engagement”. Their increased performance due to these practices made them feel more confident and empowered at the end of the process compared to other groups of learners who were not a part of the AR process. Through the AR, the teachers promoted the learning process of their learners by offering life chances for equitable educational practices (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). The learners' becoming more empowered during the TSG process also reminds us that the teachers could set the ground for future learner autonomy, as highlighted in their profiles considerably. Using CP-informed AR practices and collaborating with other teachers, they could make a profound start to transform the culture of learning in their classrooms, which is essential for learner autonomy (Bharathi, 2014). Likewise, the teachers’ efforts to empower learners by including them in the decision-making process (Balçıkanlı, 2010) and providing the tools to make them voice their choice for learning can promote learner autonomy in the class (Chan, 2001; Smith, 2008). As Student 1 points out, “It has been easier for me to talk after these new tools because they helped us have some ideas”. Hence, CP has a vital role in learner autonomy by creating dialogic interactions between teachers and students based on intersubjectivity, which prioritizes mutual respect and interaction (Yang Wang, 2010), which is documented by Student 2 as follows: “My teacher made me feel much better by asking my opinions about my learning preferences and how I could speak more”.

The TSG project revealed that it could be a promotive starting point for a possible change in the PD culture of the school because both TSG and non-TSG teachers transformed their perspectives on PD by engaging with a bottom-up critical PD program aligned with their contextual needs and expectations. The data from the TSG teachers prominently shows that getting involved in a continuous cycle of CP-informed PD that is sensitive to their contextual realities (Kincheloe, 2009) contributed to a new consciousness-building experience for them, and it made them more agentive components of the teaching process, as Zeynep proposed: “I do not mean the trainer coming from the publishing house or other I mean more interactive, relevant and concrete activities based on our needs as we did”. The teachers' previous PD experiences, discussed within the scope of the first research question, show that traditional PD activities designed top-down were inherently anti-dialogical, and these activities did not amend the teachers' professional growth in the long run. As the conventional PD activities the teachers previously attended relied on the pedagogies and theories generated and marketed by external resources (Freeman, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005), these centralized and decontextualized PD practices did not yield any consciousness-raising or empowering

takeaways for the teachers, which maintained the status quo of the dominant ideologies in educational policies (Giroux, 1997). Drawing on the dehumanizing and alienating aspects of the previous PD experiences (Kincheloe, 2011a), the TSG teachers' first-hand experiences with the emancipatory PD tools enabling them to reflect and co-reflect on their learning with the intention of creating a social change made them develop critical ontological perspective (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). This perspective unraveled the dysfunction of anti-dialogical and contextually irrelevant orthodoxies in the hegemonic PD culture that reproduces the language teaching and learning practices framed by the dominant ideologies in the sector (Crookes, 2015).

The teachers' witnessing how the AR cycle supported with collaborative practices impacted their intellectual and professional development revitalized their willingness to be part of a community like the TSG continuously. The teachers' collaborative inquiry practices within the TSG community unraveled their potential to take responsibility for their professional growth by generating knowledge and transforming their teaching settings (Kincheloe, 2011b; Kirk, 1986). This potentiality is described as critical awareness by the teachers, as Cansu proposed: "I started looking more critically during the course. I have gained awareness that if something I do does not work, I need to think about why it does not work and take action". Having implemented AR projects and invested in their researcher identities, the TSG teachers uncovered that they had the power and internal resources to monitor and promote their professional learning, leading to educational betterment (Kincheloe, 2011c). The teachers developed a critical praxis between the theoretical underpinnings of the PD program and their first-hand experiences (Freire, 1973), and this critical praxis allowed the teachers to critically unmask the irrelevancy of hegemonic PD perspectives ignoring their on-site concerns (Kincheloe, 2011a). Unlocking the new pathways to take collective action for their professional growth and educationally emancipatory practices through non-hierarchical teacher partnerships in a community (Drury et al., 2015), the TSG teachers underwent a fundamental transformation in their PD perspective for the rest of their professional career. Hence, Buket describes AR as "an essential tool for everyone, student/me/institution, and it is a tool that develops and transforms us".

The Seminar Day, an in-house event to share the TSG teachers' AR findings with non-TSG teachers and other stakeholders at school, was considered to be a turning point for the non-TSG teachers since they realized that the in-house PD event based on their colleagues' AR projects was contextually more relevant to their local needs. Hence, the insights into this PD event were articulated as "the best day of my working days here" by some non-TSG

teachers. Having interrogated the irrelevancy of previous PD events organized in a top-down manner without their inclusion, the teachers at the school reconsidered their perspectives on PD critically and discovered their potential capabilities to control their PD (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). Having been exposed to the conventional implications of PD positioning teachers as technocrats of standardized and centralized curricula, the teachers found the TSG project transformative with respect to its inherent relationship with their context and their own resources (Kincheloe, 2011a), as proposed by non-TSG 9: "Our previous PD activities were more on the transfer of theoretical knowledge and remained in the air. Being in-house was motivating because it feels so good to be doing something together". Witnessing that relying on their own sources of knowledge without being obliged to external resources and authorities within the AR process relieved the teachers because they thought conducting research would be theoretically and practically improbable for them. Even though the teachers considered AR "inaccessible" before the Seminar Day, they reported that "concrete and tangible" outcomes relieved them because they realized AR was "realistic and accessible". However, their participation in the PD event and dialogic interactions with the TSG teachers to discuss the findings of the research studies made them raise their consciousness about the practicality and relevancy of collaborative inquiry practices to create social change and transform the educational practices critically for the benefits of teachers and learners (Kincheloe, 2009). Hence, participation in this PD event encouraged the feelings of "I can do these, too", as non-TSG teachers claimed.

The TSG's role in creating a new professional learning culture induced the teachers' harsh criticism of the decontextualized and alienating aspects of their previous PD experiences, which led the teachers to reconsider their personal theories (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and make them more responsive to the social needs of their learning environments (McLaren, 2015). Being responsive to the learning environments paved the way for a new PD perspective prioritizing context-relevant and emancipatory pedagogies that could promote the concept of teaching as a value (Crookes, 2021) rather than teaching as a technical act. In this sense, the data from the non-participant teachers show that this project made a profound change in their PD perspective in that both the presenters and the audience came from the same setting, and they could form organic and dialogic interactions in a culturally-relevant PD environment (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). For this reason, non-TSG teachers related themselves to the TSG through "an emotional and environmental bond" because "it was started not by an outside force but by an inside force", as Non-TSG 3 stated. This kind of large-scale collaboration among historically-disempowered and oppressed professionals (Freire, 1973)

offered a transformative perspective to deconstruct the role of hegemonic ideologies indoctrinating prescribed teaching and learning agendas (Crookes, 2015; Pennycook, 2004).

So far, I have discussed how the TSG teachers became more empowered through transformative knowledge, collaboration, and identity construction and how the learners got empowered through CP-informed pedagogies. Then I addressed the transformation of TSG and non-TSG teachers' perspectives on PD. In this part, I specifically discussed how these takeaways initiated a potential for social change in light of what TSG and non-TSG teachers addressed to sustain this new PD culture creating transformative and emancipatory pedagogies for them. Even though CP has a substantial mission to transform teachers, learners, and classrooms for the empowerment of oppressed groups, the main objective of this transformative pedagogy is to create a sound change and deconstruct the disempowering roles of social, cultural, political, and economic structures in the society (Freire, 1970; 1973; Crookes & Lehner, 1998). Hence, CP is assumed to lead to the democratization of educational policies and practices and liberation from indoctrinated pedagogies reproducing power inequities (Kincheloe, 2011a; 2011c). In this sense, I discussed how the takeaways from this PD program created new potentialities to initiate collective change (Burns, 2007) and how the hindrances addressed by the teachers could be resolved for a sustainable and transformative perspective at expanding circles of the educational and social system.

The TSG turned into a wider community after the TSG teachers disseminated their findings and documented their collaboration at the Seminar Day, which was open to all the stakeholders at the university. Increasing their visibility and revealing how they collaboratively could take control of their professional growth impressed the audience and encouraged them to reconsider their perspectives on PD. Having witnessed the impact created by the TSG, the teachers were more confident with their practices, and they asserted that this new PD culture had to be sustained as an institutional policy. Reminding the intersecting cycles of the educational process, the teachers believed that transformation at the initial stages of tertiary-level education and sharing diverse instructional practices among colleagues could impact the other stages and lead to considerable educational betterment in a pluralistic way (Kincheloe, 2009). For this reason, TSG is expected to be institutionalized and integrated into the curriculum in a non-bureaucratic way (Kareepadath, 2018) so that the teachers can legitimately and sustainably have more flexibility and authority to organize their PD practices within a community. The teachers also revealed that a more profound social change can be achieved by building reciprocal interrelations between the TSG and curricular content and objectives. By stating the need to "reshape the curriculum accordingly", the TSG teachers

believe that “It would be very beneficial and have more sustainable outcomes”. Having the authority to redesign the curriculum in light of the TSG outcomes can be an emancipatory practice increasing the teachers' agentive role in educational policies (Alateeq, 2020; Yulianto, 2015). Inclusion of teacher and learner voices in the curriculum (Barrow, 1984) and considering the curriculum planning as a people-oriented process can offer a sustainable framework for educational transformation, which might create the criticality to transform the oppressive realities (Shih, 2018). Legitimizing the teachers' hard work to generate transformative knowledge and include them in the educational decision-making processes democratically can make sustainable contributions to curricular policies and practices (Barrow, 1984). This reciprocal relationship between the TSG and the curriculum can also foster the critical praxis of the teachers in that they will have sustainable PD mechanisms to problematize instructional practices in light of new theories and theorize new practices with the help of collaborative inquiry skills within the AR process, which might amend the hegemonic indoctrinations of conventional curricula (Freire, 1970). As Aylin reminds, “they can continue these PD practices if the curriculum provides enough time and power for them to conduct AR and collaborate with their colleagues”.

As the teachers suggest, expanding the scope of social change is associated with their power to determine the institutional curricula. The teachers' restrictive role capsulizing them into the strict boundaries drawn by the authorities disables them from taking flexible actions (Kirk, 1986). As Kincheloe (2009) states, historically constructed hegemonic hierarchies disempower teachers to take the initiative to plan and execute their PD practices. Hence, TSG proves that language teachers can empower themselves by generating knowledge to re-constitute the curricular content. Having the flexibility and authority to sustain the TSG throughout an academic year (Nuske, 2014) can yield more liberatory actions to maximize the potentiality of social change in educational settings. Likewise, the teachers highlighted the role of visibility of their hard work in maximizing social change. The administrative support to organize the Seminar Day made sound contributions to the visibility of the AR studies conducted by the TSG teachers (Burns et al., 2022). Increased visibility also empowered the teachers in that they demonstrated that they could fulfil a transformative PD program despite their workload. Considering the criticism from other faculties about English teachers' contributions to the research inventory of the university, the TSG teachers could initiate a new perspective signaling their capabilities to conduct research and new practices for other faculties despite their curricular challenges. In line with Kareepadath’s (2018) study addressing the rigid conditions of the institutional norms and standards, the TSG teachers

could create the pathways for transformative teaching. For this reason, TSG teachers believe that making their work more visible can empower them and expand the scope of the change within the educational environment (Comber & Kamler, 2009) by proposing "school-wide discussions on the outputs and transformation of school policies". Besides, the TSG teachers' insights into the takeaways of the program show that TSG can be sustained as a continuous cycle of professional learning within a wider scope with new TSGs and new discussion platforms offering dialogic interactions between TSG and non-TSG teachers. For the transformation of society to promote more democratic educational practices empowering teachers and learners, new TSGs can be formed in an expanding cycle within the university ecosystems. Extending the dialogic gatherings (Barros-del Rio et al., 2021) with non-participant teachers can evoke new perspectives on the TSG outcomes and AR findings (Burns et al., 2022). Likewise, as the teachers suggested, building inter-institutional partnerships to shape a bottom-up change can drive the social change intended with the CP (Noffke & Somekh, 2009).

Although the TSG process revealed new potentialities to sustain a new PD perspective first at school and then within the whole society by expanding the scope of emancipatory educational practices, some impediments stemming from the curricular obligations and time constraints were found to be detrimental to creating an expected change. The intensity of the curriculum and weekly pacing limit the teachers to make flexible plans for their professional learning or instructional actions, which influences their autonomy to conduct AR plausibly. "Our hands are tied to make significant changes", Aylin says to describe the intensity. In addition to the exclusion of teachers from the curriculum design process because of the centralized dominance of policy-makers in determining educational policies (Kincheloe, 2011a; Zare-Behtash, et al., 2017), the teachers also suffer from the intensity of the curriculum since they are expected to teach English until the learners reach B2 level (British Council, 2015) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The teachers, especially the ones teaching low-proficiency levels of learners, struggle a lot to keep up with the curricular objectives, which deprives them of autonomous actions to invest in their professional growth. Lack of English learning and teaching practices and the ineffectiveness of the high school curriculum designed by the Ministry of National Education result in less proficient learners at university English preparatory schools (Demir-Ayaz et al., 2019; Ekoç, 2021). Hence, teachers have difficulty covering all the intensified curricular content and objectives to equip A1-level learners with B2-level proficiency according to CEFR standards, which is hard to achieve (British Council, 2015). Because of these problems,

learners still struggle in their departments despite completing the preparatory programs (Erarslan, 2019). Considering the macro-level educational realities impacting the instructional actions of the teachers, micro-level changes restricted to classroom settings may not be adequate to create a profound change in society (Kareepadath, 2018). Macro-level hindrances stemming from the social and political structures of the countries (Alateeq, 2020; Alharbi, 2021; Raddawi & Troudi, 2018) may be restrictive for teachers to take counter-hegemonic actions beyond the classroom. Hence, CP intends to lead to a large-scale social change to democratize educational and social lives, and teachers are expected to be pioneers of this transformation by empowering themselves and collaborating with community members to fight for educational and social betterment (Freire, 1998b; Kincheloe, 2008).

Likewise, the TSG teachers suffered from time constraints despite the practicality and flexibility of the program. Even though I was very responsive to their urgent needs to reschedule the meetings or retiming the tasks, their excessive lesson hours, extra unit duties, feedback time for students, exams, and school meetings, which is addressed by Eda as follows: "There are times when I feel drained. I even thought I should not have started this project for a while because there was so much to do at work". Limited staff and the overcapacity of the classrooms increased the burden on their shoulders, which caused fatigue and unwillingness for professional development. The TSG project, in this sense, increased the teachers' awareness that their on-site problems hinder their taking more proactive actions to shape their professional lives (Kincheloe, 2011a). In line with what Sierra Piedrahita (2016) points out, time constraints can deteriorate teachers' willingness to main such a long-term project. The problems stemming from the political and economic structures at the macro-level (Kincheloe, 2009) such as inefficient planning of educational policies, inadequate financial budget for education, and top-down educational policies (Zare-Behtash et al., 2017) can result in overcapacity in classrooms and limited educational staff, which detrimentally impacts micro-level educational settings. Regarding these problems, the critical takeaways from the TSG paved the way for the development of critical ontology agency to act on self and the world in a just and intelligent way (Kincheloe, 2011d), and the teachers became aware of the new possibilities for educational betterment. The administrative support to conduct the PD program and organize the Seminar Day event increased the visibility of the TSG; however, more administrative support is needed to minimize the detrimental effects of the workload hindering the teachers' willingness to be part of sustainable AR practices within a community (Burns et al., 2022; Parkhouse et al., 2023). In this sense, non-hierarchical collaboration and partnerships among community members can lead to a collective action that can yield increased individual

and social agency, as Drury et al. (2015) highlighted. A heightened sense of agency within a community (Vavrus, 2009) can foster collective consciousness to reposition themselves as emancipated actors of the process (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Junaidi, 2019). To minimize the macro-level impediments preventing them from more democratic and empowering education (Alateeq, 2020; Alharbi, 2021; Raddawi & Troudi, 2018), these new positionalities and the visibility of the pioneers of social change make their voices heard.

To summarize, the takeaways of the TSG as a continuous PD program made critical contributions to the teachers, learners, and the educational setting. Basing the PD program on a CP-informed framework, I aimed to design a PD program that would lead to critical consciousness of awakening (Shih, 2018) about the disempowering educational policies and practices, which would pave the way for critical empowerment of the educational stakeholders to take control of their learning and liberation from anti-democratic indoctrinations. In this sense, the teachers underwent a transformative process since they acquired new skills to generate collaborative knowledge in an inquiry-based manner and reconstructed their identities by investing in their researcher identity, which offered new positionalities and potentialities for their profession. The teachers' cognitive and pedagogical transformation impacted how their learners engaged with the educational practices because they were more empowered to voice their needs and reflect on the teaching process, which diminished power distance in the classroom. Dissemination of the takeaways of the TSG process and AR studies extended the impact size of the PD program in that other teachers at school became more aware of the transformative collaborative inquiry practices in language teaching and language teacher education. The dialogic interactions with other stakeholders created new possibilities to sustain a critical perspective in PD; however, the impediments stemming from the political, economic and social structures of the macro-systems, such as the curricular load, working conditions of the teachers, limited staff, overcapacity, and low proficiency level, hinder teachers from maximizing the scope of the social change that is intended through CP. Hence, in line with Junaidi's CP-informed PD projects (2019), intra-institutional and inter-institutional partnerships and collaboration can make the oppressed groups more visible and agentive to push a transformative change in education and society. As Parkhouse et al. (2023) address, building these partnerships and getting the administrative support from the stakeholders can increase the legitimacy of CP-informed practices and expand the scope of the change by allowing teachers to spend more time and effort. Therefore, in line with what is addressed by Zembylas (2018), CP can function as a decolonizing pedagogy to dismantle the Eurocentric foundations of educational practices in a transformative and empowering way.

5.1.4. The Place of the TSG in Light of Previous Studies

In this part of the discussion, I discussed the findings in light of the previously-conducted studies I mentioned in the literature review part. As there are various forms of TSGs in the field of EFL language teacher education, first, I briefly discussed my research findings in comparison to similar communities of practice such as professional learning communities (PLC), critical friends group (CFG), reflective practice group (RPG), and lesson study (LS) and other collaborative groups. Then I discuss the content, takeaways, and impediments of this TSG project by comparing it to previous TSG studies in the literature. Before a comprehensive analysis of previous TSG studies in light of the current study's findings, I intended to discuss similar forms of collaborative groups briefly. As these collaborative groups are structurally and functionally similar to TSGs, I wanted to acknowledge these forms of teacher collaboration to offer a holistic perspective before discussing TSG studies. This part of the discussion is followed by the comparison of this research to other TSG studies in the literature. In tandem with my research findings, all TSG studies are discussed in terms of the structure, content, theoretical foundations, takeaways and impediments. Then with the final part of the discussion, I intend to shed light on how the current TSG contemplated within the scope of this dissertation differs from other studies. The CPD tools integrated into the TSG such as AR, reflective practices, and digital tools, are also discussed in the final part.

5.1.4.1. The discussion of the TSG in relation to other collaborative teacher groups

Even though the number of TSG studies in PD of EFL teachers is limited, plenty of collaborative PD studies are implemented through different forms of collaboration such as PLC, CFG, RPG, and LS. In this sense, before I move on to the discussion of my findings in light of the TSG literature, I intend to discuss the current TSG takeaways in relation to other collaborative communities of practices to offer a broader and holistic perspective on teacher collaboration. In general terms, communities of practice aim to sustain teacher and student learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The current study's findings suggest that collaborative practice in a continuous cycle is vital to sustaining teacher development, which is strongly associated with effective learner outcomes (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). TSG experiences of the teachers show that this community of practice strengthened their sense of belonging to a community, shared practices, and their willingness to transform the educational context democratically, which is the essence of communities of practice (Servage, 2008). The teachers' sharing of responsibility collaboratively (Servage, 2008) and their AR experiences within the TSG decreased the pedagogical uncertainties. Likewise, Snow-Gerono (2005) shows that collaborative practices in a PLC can decrease the uncertainties teachers may face in

educational practices through collaborative inquiry-based practices. Another takeaway from the current TSG is the teachers' increased pedagogical knowledge. As the teachers engaged in TSG activities and bridged the theoretical readings and discussions with classroom-based AR studies, they could promote their pedagogical knowledge, which resulted in increased learner satisfaction as documented in the student data showing the learners' positive reactions to the AR process. The analysis of previous PLCs reveals similar takeaways. The use of PLC as a PD program yielded improved pedagogies and teaching skills (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008) in addition to better learning practices achievement by the learners (Berry et al., 2005; Phillips, 2003; Vescio et al., 2008; Wiley, 2001).

In addition to PLC, CFG, RPG, and LS studies acknowledge the transformative role of teacher collaboration performed in a process-oriented cycle. In this regard, Aktekin's (2019) study based on CFG composed of six Turkish EFL teachers revealed that the teachers' collaborative practices helped them to bridge the gap between theories presented in short-term PD workshops and practices implemented in the class. Aktekin's (2019) CFG focused on reflective and collaborative practices to negotiate classroom practices in light of external PD workshops. Even though the current TSG and Aktekin's (2019) CFG addressed similar takeaways in terms of collegiality and co-construction of teacher knowledge, my research was not limited to a post-workshop period because I intended to offer a lifelong PD perspective to promote the use of internal resources to research, collaborate, and disseminate the progress for a whole-school impact. Likewise, Aydın's (2020) PD study through an RPG and Uştuk's (2020) LS with tertiary-level Turkish EFL teachers revealed that collaborative practices lead to high collectivity, reflective and co-reflective learning and promoted teacher knowledge. The takeaways from these collaborative groups show the collective impact of teacher collaboration on the professional learning of group members. Even though these practices can play a significant role in intra-group bonds and collaborative learning, a sounder social change in educational settings can be achieved by maximizing the scope of potentialities, which makes the current TSG study different from these similar communities of practice. The TSG members, by building dialogic relationships with other stakeholders, opened new ways of thinking among the people who had never met TSG before.

The analysis of the other critical collaborative PD groups, which do not have a particular name addressing the form of the teacher community, revealed considerable similarities and differences regarding the TSG project's findings in terms of the professional takeaways, micro and macro-level impediments, and the content of the PD programs. Relying

on the social learning constructs of SCT and emancipatory principles of CP, the TSG teachers empowered themselves by reconstructing their identities. The teachers could reconstruct their existing identities by becoming more conscientious about how to take actions to challenge the centralized dynamics of curricular frames and transform their practices through collaborative inquiry–based mediation tools (Freire, 1970; Parkhouse et al., 2023; Vygotsky, 1978). In line with the focus of this study on the CP, Abednia and Crookes (2019) designed an online teacher community, and Ahmadian et al. (2021) formed critical discussion circles with in-service EFL teachers in Iran to raise their consciousness about CP without focusing on a specific subject or teaching practice. As part of a collaborative and reflective learning group, the TSG teachers reported in the current dissertation engaged with theoretical readings and discussions. They related theoretical knowledge to pedagogical practices in a process-oriented cycle in the study. Similarly, Abednia and Crookes (2019) and Ahmadian et al. (2021) acknowledge that the theoretical and conceptual knowledge about a new framework can be turned into professional takeaways through teachers' critical, reflective and dialogic practices on the knowledge and concepts. Similar to the findings in my research, as Abednia and Crookes (2019) addressed, the teachers benefit from the collaborative power of their communities to minimize the contextual challenges against implementing CP-informed practices.

The TSG project reported in this dissertation aimed to offer a lifelong learning perspective for the participant teachers (Day, 1999; Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012) so that they could adopt the psychological tools, including reflective practice, dialogic interactions, and AR, practised within the TSG process. Accordingly, I designed the TSG program to offer the materials and activities to mediate the conscientization of the SCT and CP. From a sociocultural and critical perspective, the CPD program intended to ignite a transformation in the professional learning habitus of the participant teachers by providing the affordances to engage in collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based practices through dialogic gatherings, reflective journal writing, and AR projects. Therefore, I did not prefer to narrow down the scope of the program to a particular subject to be studied within the TSG process, which is similar to the studies by Abednia and Crookes (2019) and Ahmediant et al. (2021). By offering the framework and tools for appropriation and mediation, I wanted the teachers to have the flexibility and authority to decide on the topic to be studied through AR (Clair, 1998), which yielded a variety of projects and diversified perspectives on new pedagogies. However, synthesizing my research findings with other critical collaborative PD groups, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, revealed that these studies focused on a specific subject from a critical perspective. Some teacher groups focused on social, political, and historical realities

in their studies, including the effects of Western-oriented teaching theories and practices on the Asian context (Yeh, 2005), social and political realities of Colombia (Torres-Rocha, 2023), and enactment of critical multiliteracies pedagogy in a Korean context (Kim et al., 2020). On the other hand, some teacher groups preferred to focus on pedagogical subjects such as teachers' teaching, cognitive and social presence (Shin, 2008), and problems based on a new teaching policy (Pineda & Frodden, 2008). Similar to my research, critical collaborative teacher communities to study a specific subject yielded significant takeaways for the teachers, including transformed positionalities (Yeh, 2005), social bonding among colleagues (Shin, 2008), transformed identities (Torres-Rocha, 2023), increased teacher autonomy through AR (Pineda & Frodden, 2008; Torres-Rocha, 2023), and transformed perspectives to PD and learners' needs (Kim et al., 2020). The analysis of the synthesized findings shows that the scope of the focal study of collaborative groups may vary depending on the contextual needs; however, collaborative practices within a teacher community yielded considerable contributions to the professional growth of the EFL teachers regardless of the subject matter. Considering the lack of experiences of the participant teachers in continuous PD, TSG and AR and their need for emancipatory theoretical frameworks to get empowered, I did not restrict the scope of the TSG to a particular subject about a teaching practice or theory. Even though specifying a single subject in a TSG can foster teacher learning in a more structured and practical way (Firestone et al., 2023), the planning of the TSG design helped me to sequence the learning and practising structures in a systematic way, which did not induce a random fluid of study topics. Hence, familiarizing the TSG teachers with the transformative concepts and AR can pave the way for more productive future TSGs focusing on more specific subject matters.

5.1.4.2. The discussion of the TSG in relation to other TSGs

In this part, I discussed the current study's findings in light of the previous TSG studies in terms of the applied models, the scope of the content, and the theoretical foundations. In addition, the takeaways and impediments of these TSGs are discussed. Ineffectiveness and irrelevancy of prior PD experiences (Çelik et al., 2023) made the TSG project more distinguishable from the conventional top-down PD tools for the teachers since they realized that TSG foundations offered them a contemporary and continuous learning cycle where they enacted collaborative reflective practises (Farrell, 2014), conducted action research (Clair, 1998; Johnson, 2009), and engaged in collaborative practices with their peers (Carroll, 2005). Reflective and collaborative practices on evidence-based data transformed the teachers' actions (Francis et al., 1994) and repositioned them as empowered agents who could take the

initiative to take control of their PD and make a sound change in their learning environments (Little, 1990; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1994). The teachers cognitively developed themselves due to the movement from social mediation to internal mediation, which led to the internalization of the new concepts (Johnson & Golombek, 2003). As Clair (1998) addresses, the TSG teachers achieved to reach three objectives of TSGs for their professional growth: (1) to access knowledge, (2) to transform PD perspectives, and (3) to minimize inequities in the class to maximize learning. Besides, in line with the essential requirements for success in a collaborative teacher community addressed by Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008), the TSG teachers could establish a collective vision, build trust, maintain the non-hierarchical group dynamics, embrace the collaborative power, appreciated the diversity, promoted critical feedback from peers, got out of their comfort zones to face new challenges, co-reflected on the learner data, documented their learning through reflection and dissemination of their findings, and got support from the administrators. By achieving these goals, the TSG members experienced a productive and emancipatory learning process, which was not limited to the inner circle of the group thanks to the dissemination of AR projects with other stakeholders (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008).

Even though it is known that teachers can have a massive chance to transform their practices based on what they learn in a teacher community (Lieberman & Miller, 2008), TSG as a CPD tool has yet to be studied in the field of professional development of language teachers. In line with my research findings, the limited number of studies based on the implementation of TSG as a CPD program revealed that the teachers' engagement in this kind of teacher community sustainably is key to scaffolded professional learning that is based on collaborative inquiry practices (Cho, 2014; Liu & Kleinsasser, 2015). TSGs can be carried out by enacting a prescribed model, and using a model can efficiently appraise the takeaways of the TSG, as implemented by Hung and Yeh (2013) and Li and Jones (2019). These studies differ from the TSG program I implemented for my research in that the former depends on an interconnected model of teacher professional growth by Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002), and the latter depends on the PD model by Desimone (2009) and MUSIC model of motivation by Jones (2009). Hung and Yeh (2013) documented the teacher change process as a result of the collaborative learning process within the TSG in four interconnected stages referring to external sources of knowledge, personal knowledge and beliefs, practical executions, and outcomes. The teacher change was traced within the interconnected movement from one stage to another, supported by the teachers' enactive practices (to implement new knowledge and practices) and reflective actions (to evaluate the effect of the new actions). Even though my

study differs from Hung and Yeh's (2013) TSG model for five primary-level EFL teachers in Taiwan in terms of the model used for the planning and analysis of outcomes, the findings are aligned since the TSG teachers in my study revealed a similar change trajectory. Collaborative practices among TSG members functioned as external sources impacting internal cognitive development and critical praxis, leading to sound changes in instructional practices and learner satisfaction. Also, enactive and reflective practices were essential components of the TSG, which signals that both studies revealed transformative takeaways.

Likewise, Li and Jones (2019) formed a TSG with three tertiary-level EFL teachers in China. They formulated the TSG on the key success components, including the content focus, duration, collective participation, active learning and coherence (Desimone, 2009) and motivational components addressing empowerment, usefulness, success, interest, and caring (Jones, 2009). I did not use these principles explicitly as the foundations of the TSG; however, the teachers' insights into the program show that the systematic planning of the TSG program and content, online and face-to-face dialogic gatherings, and the coherence of the program materials and activities worked well and mediated the collaborative inquiry practices of the TSG members, which is aligned with key foundations of an effective PD program (Desimone, 2009). My role as a facilitator to provide responsive mediation and the emancipatory tools of the program also contributed to the teachers' motivation to maintain the study despite their workload, which signals the affective aspects of the TSG process (Jones, 2009). Regardless of the peripheral differences between the models implemented, both TSGs functioned as a space for professional collaboration, which led to dialogic relationships with learners and inquiry-based data-driven actions to foster teaching and learning practices at the tertiary level (Li & Jones, 2019).

Apart from the varying models that can be integrated into TSGs, the content focus of the TSGs may differ. Although Firestone et al. (2023) state that TSGs are formed to focus on a single subject in line with a pre-planned schedule and sequence of activities, contextual needs and emergent expectations of the participant teachers might shape the scope and methods to be utilized in a TSG. In this sense, I did not prefer to narrow the scope of the subject matters studied in the current TSG. Having based the PD program on sociocultural and critical principles, the teachers had the liberty to conduct their AR studies in accordance with their actual needs. However, Álvarez (2020) formed a TSG with three in-service EFL teachers working at a language centre to offer a PD program to reconstruct the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding intercultural communicative competence. Likewise, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) designed a PD program based on social justice education for a TSG composed of nine

EFL teachers teaching at the secondary level. Also, the TSG study by Huang (2007) shows that in-service EFL teachers can get together and study to improve their English language skills and pedagogical content knowledge, and the inclusion of teachers from other subjects can contribute the collaborative learning in an enriched environment. Ermeling (2010) also shows that even the teachers teaching different subjects form a TSG and determine the scope of the study in line with their needs. In Emeling's study (2010), four teachers teaching at the secondary level formed a TSG and engaged in an inquiry-oriented PD program to identify their instructional needs and problems and collaborate to find solutions and reflect on the outcomes in a cycle of collaborative learning. Besides, the teachers' contextual needs might influence the TSGs' scope. Realizing the inefficiency of the conventional PD practices encouraged me to initiate a new perspective in PD and form a TSG where the teachers could co-construct emancipatory knowledge that could transform their educational ecosystem. Likewise, Clair (1998) formed two TSGs depending on the needs of the participant teachers. In this sense, while the first TSG members teaching at the secondary level worked on the instructional practices to promote English language teaching, the second TSG formed by teachers from various subjects at the elementary level focused on the home culture of ESL learners to provide culturally-sensitive teaching practices, which signals the role of contextual realities in shaping the scope of TSGs.

Considering the variety in the subject scope of the TSGs, these studies document that TSG is a flexible form of collaboration among teachers in that teachers are not expected to fit into one size. While Álvarez (2020) and Sierra Piedrahita (2016) determined the subject matter to be studied in the TSG beforehand and designed the sequence of activities accordingly, in my research, I only pre-planned the introduction of the conceptual frameworks that would be utilized throughout the term: sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy. Even though I planned the period for AR projects, the teachers autonomously participated in the AR process by determining their scope of needs. They collaboratively reflected on their progress till the end of the program, which is aligned with the content-wise flexibility addressed by Emerling (2010). This architecture of the program allowed the teachers to voice their minds and shape the program's content, which empowered their identities and enriched their pedagogical repertoires because they had the chance to reflect on multiple perspectives. However, the studies also remind us that no matter what content is covered within a TSG, teachers' collaboration to promote their professional learning through a TSG offers similar takeaways. The teachers raised consciousness regarding cultural bias (Álvarez, 2020), socially just educational practices (Sierra Piedrahita, 2016), collaborative power of generating pedagogical

content knowledge (Huang, 2007), collaborative inquiry (Ermeling, 2010), and remedies to contextual challenges (Clair, 1998). These outcomes achieved at the end of TSG processes remind the similarities of these TSGs to the current TSG in terms of the professional takeaways.

Apart from the varying models and contents in TSGs, the analysis of the previous studies in light of the current study in this dissertation also revealed that the foundations of TSGs can differ from one another in terms of the underlying theoretical framework on which the TSG is formed. TSGs do not have to be based on a theoretical framework because teachers can collaborate for their PD without relying on a theoretical framework. However, including a theoretical framework can offer a learning culture that could shape and frame professional learning activities systematically and sustainably. In my study, re-projection of the theoretical framework (SCT and CP) to the classroom settings enabled the TSG teachers to bridge their professional learning experiences with instructional teaching practices in a conceptually-relevant way, which lessens the cognitive burden in the teacher's mind (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). In this sense, the analysis of similar TSG studies shows that TSGs based on a theoretical framework are rarely studied in English language teacher education. Laying the foundations of the TSG on the SCT, Carroll (2005) formed a TSG composed of elementary-level teachers (K-5 teachers) and teacher candidates.

Similarly, Lambson (2010) formed a TSG based on sociocultural principles to provide a mediation space between novice and experienced primary school teachers. Even though the participant teachers are not English language teachers, I wanted to focus on these studies considering the functions of SCT in these TSGs. The interactive talk as an inter-thinking practice, mediated through sociocultural discourse analysis by the researcher, between in-service and pre-service teachers facilitated the teachers' professional learning (Carroll, 2005). Lambson (2010) also revealed that the sociocultural perspective provided the affordances for mediation between novice and experienced teachers so that experienced teachers could scaffold the development of novice teachers. In light of these findings, my research with tertiary-level EFL teachers signals similar sociocultural takeaways since the inter-thinking practices of TSG members, responsive mediation of the researcher (Carroll, 2005), and scaffolding practices among teachers from various backgrounds (Lambson, 2010) had a significant role in promoting teacher learning from sociocultural lenses. As learning is socially-constructed and it is an inevitable aspect of being in a social world and social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), TSG can evidently be seen as a community of practice for socially-

constructed learning practices that can develop shared concepts, tools, and perspectives for the ones who engaged (Wenger, 1998).

In addition to SCT, I utilized the CP as a theoretical framework in this study to maximize the impact of socially-constructed learning practices by transforming the educational context for sustainable and emancipatory teaching/learning practices. The analysis of the previous TSGs revealed that similar to the case of SCT, very few studies focusing on TSGs used CP as the theoretical foundation of the community. In this regard, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) formed a TSG based on a critical framework to work on social justice with nine secondary-level EFL teachers in Colombia. Similarly, Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo (2014) formed a critical TSG, including two teacher educators, three undergraduate teachers and two graduate EFL teachers, to promote critical language teaching practices in Colombia. These studies show that bridging the CP and teacher collaboration and reflection through TSGs helped the teachers to adopt a more conscious perspective towards social inequalities (Sierra Piedrahita, 2016) and a better individual conceptualization of CP (Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo, 2014). In my research, the teachers benefited from the collaborative dynamics of the TSG to conceptualize the CP despite the theoretical challenges of internalizing this pedagogy. My role in designing the materials and mediating the TSG meetings and collegial interactions within the TSG led to a better conceptualization of CP, as stated by Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo (2014). TSG, by offering collaborative and inquiry-based tools to co-construct knowledge, enabled the teachers to transform their perspective on classroom pedagogies and PD. This transformation process, aligned with these two studies, contributed to the consciousness-raising of the teachers to be more agentive and empowered to design their own way of development without being subjugated to top-down indoctrinations from more powerful agents. In light of these findings, TSGs seem to have comprehensive potentialities to facilitate the internalization of CP from the inter-mental cycle of collaborative practices to intra-mental conceptualization. Differing from the TSGs founded on CP principles by Sierra Piedrahita (2016) and Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo (2014), the current study utilized both SCT and CP as the foundations of the TSG, which allowed the teachers to benefit from socially-constructed practices to transform their orthodox perspectives and realize their potentialities to take collective action for social change (Drury et al., 2015).

The findings of the current study and previous TSGs are compared and discussed in relation to the varying models, content, and theoretical foundations. The takeaways of these TSGs reveal that forming a collaborative space to have dialogic meetings on pedagogical and theoretical issues about the teachers' profession enables them to develop shared values and

goals to be achieved collaboratively. The teachers' collective action and collegial support to pursue their PD and better learning experiences for their learners in a systematized way contribute to their professional agency. However, my research at the SoFL revealed some impediments that may inhibit the potentialities of the TSG. The teachers' being overwhelmed with the curricular workload and time constraints to create personal time for PD sometimes discouraged them from pursuing their PD goals. Institutional constraints such as curricular load, lesson hours, unit duties, exam and homework load, and lack of teacher autonomy barred teachers from maximizing their professional growth. Besides, macro-level impediments, including the standardized education policies, overcapacity of the classrooms, and language proficiency of the students, who are expected to be eligible for English-medium departments in one year, caused stress for the TSG teachers, which urged them to catch up with everything by leaving aside their personal and professional agency. The analysis of the previous TSG studies in terms of the impediments revealed that the researchers do not specifically document the hindrances inhibiting the teachers' PD motivation and performance, except for Sierra Piedrahita's study in Colombia (2016). In line with the impediments I signalled in my research, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) acknowledges that national education policies discouraging learners from taking English seriously and lack of contextual affordances impeding transformative actions are documented as detrimental factors hindering teacher change. Unlike my findings, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) also points out the role of socioeconomic factors in teachers' lives because having lower income and life standards does not motivate teachers to be part of a long-term PD program by disregarding their financial problems. The other studies highlight the substantial points that can contribute to the sustainability of the TSG in educational contexts, which are discussed below.

To minimize the impediments and sustain a continuous perspective in PD through effective implementation of TSGs, the findings of the current study suggest that institutional and macro-level actions should be taken to reduce the curricular burden on teachers' shoulders. In this regard, national education policies and practices should be reformed to increase teacher agency and autonomy, as Clair (1998) suggested. Based on the TSGs in the U.S., Clair (1998) acknowledges that standardized tests determine the degree of accountability and funding of the schools, which turn the teachers into technicians of predetermined curricular scope, which de-skills teachers and alienates them from their profession. In line with my research findings, unrealistic curricular expectations dehumanize teachers and leave no time for personal or collaborative PD practices. Hence, Clair (1998) makes similar suggestions for the sustainability of TSG in that she advocates significant changes at the national level should be

made, and administrative support should be provided for well-functioning TSGs that can extend the scope of the change beyond the classroom. As the findings in this dissertation suggest, institutional/administrative support is critical to sustaining TSGs since teachers need enough time and resources to achieve TSG objectives, which otherwise would not be possible considering their workload. In light of this suggestion, Ermeling (2010) highlights the role of distributed leadership, which refers to the collaborative governance of the PD process with the support of administration by TSG facilitators and members. In this study, the support from the administration made it possible for me to publicize the TSG project and conduct this long-term project at school. My leadership and responsive actions as a facilitator to seek remedies to emergent problems and non-hierarchical dialogic interactions among the teachers within the TSG maintained the distributed leadership (Ermeling, 2010). Despite my efforts to orchestrate the TSG (Lambson, 2010) and design and facilitate learning materials and activities to engage the teachers (Carroll, 2005) and evoke thoughts to discuss within the TSG (Huang, 2007), the findings show that more sustainable and transformative actions can be taken with more support from the administration.

Major changes at the macro-level (Clair, 1998) and administrative support to provide convenient conditions for TSGs (Ermeling, 2010) can lead to new opportunities to build inter-institutional partnerships (Hung & Yeh, 2013), which might make more sound contributions to social change potentialities of TSGs. These recommendations addressed by other studies for sustainable TSG programs also show that the impediments emerging from my research can be resolved if these prerequisites are taken into consideration by institutional and national policy-makers. One way to demand such an action can be by making TSGs and the PD outcomes of these more visible to other stakeholders. Differing from the other studies, in my research, the teachers' disseminating their studies with other stakeholders in the educational ecosystem had a positive impact since their colleagues and administrators were convinced that TSGs could function as a transformative tool to re-design educational policies and practices.

5.1.4.3. The unique role of the TSG case

Even though teachers take responsibility to contribute to their professional growth through cognitive constructionism by utilizing self-reflective tools and knowledge construction in an inquiry-based way, cognitive constructionism might work more efficiently if it is combined with social constructionism (McCarthy, 2023). According to McCarthy (2023), social constructionism practices in real-life social environments can promote teacher learning collaboratively. Collaborative research through shared inquiry is one way to develop dyadic, reciprocal, and meaningful relationships among stakeholders (teachers, learners, and

school), which is likely to result in the co-construction of new ideas and knowledge. Considering the potentialities of collaborative research in teachers' professional learning, the TSG project at SoFL for the tertiary-level EFL teachers functioned as a community of practice where the teachers could share theoretical and pedagogical ideas, develop innovative solutions, and co-reflect on their classroom practice (Borg et al., 2020). Making AR a substantial component of the TSG enabled the teachers to engage with collaborative research practices (McCarthy, 2023) and offered a new perspective for whole-school change (Burns, 1999). Regarding this function of the TSG concerning the previous studies, the TSG project, which is the basis of this dissertation, revealed transformative potentialities for collaborative CPD practices. The reasons behind these potentialities of the current TSG study stem from its theoretical foundations, collaborative, reflective and inquiry-based components, and social change opportunities resulting from the reciprocity of the TSG, which positively influenced the stakeholders of the educational ecosystem apart from the TSG members (Bardel & Erickson, 2023).

The theoretical foundations of the TSG examined in this dissertation makes it different from the previous studies in that the current TSG is grounded on two theoretical frameworks that were merged to design a holistic and sustainable PD perspective. According to Hargreaves (1995), teacher development is a complex process that is humanly constructed and constrained, so teachers cannot be expected to go through the same developmental process after a teacher education program. Hargreaves (1995) addresses the essence of understanding teachers' actions and the reasons behind these actions in their learning environment by shedding light on the practical realities of life. In addition to the complexity of teacher development, rapid changes in education, society, and culture require teachers to be part of a continuous cycle of change to adapt themselves to the changing dynamics and become more flexible, responsive and resilient (Clair, 1998). Considering the complexity of teacher development and the need for more flexible, responsive and resilient teacher PD practices, SCT offered the conceptual tools to mediate and appropriate teacher learning within the TSG. The detailed analysis of the teachers' learning and teaching backgrounds and their PD needs helped me to appropriate the PD program in relation to the practical needs of the teachers. Appropriating teachers' learning through object (PD materials and activities), peers (dialogic practices and inter-thinking practices with colleagues), and expert mediation (expert talk series with teacher educators and responsive mediation by the researcher), I intended to offer SCT-informed conceptual tools that the teachers could utilize in their learning and teaching practices in a continuous way (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Vygotsky, 1986). In this sense being in constant dialogic

interactions with their peers, experts and the researcher and the dynamic structure of the PD program that I re-calibrated constantly in accordance with their needs and schedules helped the teachers to foster their flexibility, responsiveness and resilience through a contextually-appropriate setting (Abakah, 2023).

However, grounding the TSG solely on the SCT framework would not be enough to have a holistic view of the educational ecosystem because teachers are not independent of macro-level influences affecting their personal and professional lives such as power distance, social equality, social and economic handicaps (Hargreaves, 1995). Macro-level social, political and economic factors can inhibit teachers' and learners' agency in determining their developmental pathways, which disempowers and alienates them from being involved in decision-making affecting their lives (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe, 2011a). Even though the participants of teacher collaborative practices can benefit from the collaborative practices in terms of new insights, knowledge, and perspectives, the takeaways of such practices should be complementary, considering the interconnected and reciprocal structure of these groups within their educational ecosystems (Ushioda, 2023). According to Ushioda (2023), reciprocity in collaborative research within a study group refers to the research's academic, social and ethical values requiring the collective benefit of all interdependent components of the educational setting. In this sense, CP, as an emancipatory framework that aimed to transform educational practices by shifting the learner and teacher agency, offered an enriched perspective to the TSG members to reposition themselves as change agents and publicize their intellectual properties co-constructed and developed through sociocultural tools.

Synthesizing CP with SCT allowed the teachers to generate power out of socially-constructed knowledge and share their progress with other interconnected stakeholders of the same ecosystem, which created a collective benefit for the whole-school change in PD culture (Burns, 1999; Ushioda, 2023). The TSG project, by merging SCT and CP, provided a collaborative learning environment where the teachers could experience sociocultural and critical learning. Socially-mediated learning practices that fostered collegiality were supplemented with critical learning experiences that prioritized raising the teachers' consciousness about societal power asymmetries. While Carroll (2005) and Lambson (2010) grounded the TSG studies on SCT, Sierra Piedrahita (2016) and Echeverri Sucerquia & Pérez Restrepo (2014) formed critical TSGs. However, the synthesized perspective on TSG in the current study yielded new perspectives in teaching and PD by documenting how critical and collaborative practices could create a new culture within the ecosystem. The teachers' collective action to make their collaborative work visible to the whole school allowed them to

reclaim their voice and signal the need for policy shifts for the sustainability of emancipatory educational practices (Audrain et al., 2023), which arose strong support from their colleagues to embrace the new culture of PD.

Aside from the theoretical foundations of the TSG, collaborative, reflective and inquiry-based components of the TSG offered a variety of PD tools enabling the teachers to transform their pedagogies. Considering the risks of isolation and attrition at school because of the workload, TSG raised stronger social bonds among the participant teachers and fostered collegiality (Audrain et al., 2023). Likewise, the AR Seminar Day event caused a collegial atmosphere among non-TSG teachers in that the collaborative work of TSG members evoked a dialogic exchange of ideas based on shared practice among non-TSG teachers, which revealed the essence of collegial network and solidarity to resolve pedagogical problems and generate transformative sources of knowledge without being at risk of isolation and attrition (Balgopal et al., 2022; Başar et al., 2023). Collaborative efforts of the TSG teachers to disseminate their projections to teaching is an outcome unique to the current study since the review of other TSGs in the literature was limited to intra-group sharing. In this sense, TSG, as a goal-directed and located mediation space, helped the TSG teachers to engage in dialogic thinking, externalize their experiences and internalize new systems of thinking in a socially-constructivist way (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). Similarly, TSG, a space for critical praxis, offered the opportunity to develop equitable and collaborative relationships among teachers, teacher educators, and learners and co-construct contextually-relevant knowledge to promote everyday practices, which yielded the diversity of perspectives brought to the table (Parkhouse et al., 2023).

As for the TSG teachers' experiences with AR and reflective practices in relation to their AR process, the current TSG takeaways show that a teacher community can function more efficiently in a goal-directed and located way (Johnson & Golombek, 2020). Integrating AR into the TSG program enabled the teachers to focus on a concrete objective to engage with and in research (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). The TSG was not limited to dialogic gatherings of the teachers since the program was supplemented with AR projects and a reflective cycle of learning, which provided the teachers to go through a praxis process bridging the gaps between theories and pedagogies discussed in TSG meetings. Considering the lack of influence of academic research on teachers' PD (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017), AR practice became an empowering tool to be aware of orthodox and hegemonic pressure of standardized curricular framers (Kincheloe, 2011c), the need for reform through agentive role of the teacher (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014), and the possibility of new positionalities as researchers rather

than technicians of the mandated curricular content (O'Leary, 2017). By challenging the status quo of conventional educational practices and PD programs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), the TSG teachers adopted new ways of thinking to promote their pedagogies (Burns, 2010; Burns & Richards, 2012). Even though tertiary-level EFL teachers work at universities considered research ecosystems, they may lack research skills and be deprived of their researcher positionalities. Engagement in AR in this sense enabled the TSG teachers to gain a researcher identity and use research as a PD component for continuous learning (Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016; Tanış & Dikilitaş, 2018). In a similar vein, Ermeling (2010) integrated AR into the TSG composed of non-EFL teachers. However, the other TSG studies show that AR has not been utilized enough within TSG settings, which signals the need for more field-based implications.

In relation to the role of AR, the teachers' reflective practices to retrospect on their previous learning/teaching experiences, introspect their ongoing TSG and AR progress, and prospect their future pedagogies contributed to the multi-dimensionality of this TSG project. Reflective thinking is a substantial component of teachers' continuous learning (Day, 1993). It makes the teachers build reciprocal relationships between their past, present and future and interrogate what they do and why they do it (Moon, 2013). Reflective practices while designing and implementing AR allowed the teachers to make meaningful relationships between the learner data and future projections of teaching since the TSG teachers could diagnose the points to be improved, monitor their actions while executing the AR, and synthesized the data to reconstruct their pedagogies (Kolb, 1984; Elliot, 1988). Considering the role of reflective practice in combining learning and thinking (Moon, 2013), I mediated the teachers' reflective practices by providing them with the reflective frames leading them to get involved in systematized reflection to systematize their thinking. Reflective frames, prepared in line with Farrell's (2015; 2019) reflective principles, to encourage teachers to reflect on the AR process and their entire PD progress functioned as a medium of mediation enacting the teachers' learning from their own thinking. From the perspective of these principles, the TSG teachers could make a holistic reflection to uncover their inner life, reflect on their teaching in an evidence-based way thanks to AR findings, build dialogic reflective thought with their peers, bridge the gap between theory and practice, reconstruct their dispositions, and eventually develop the willingness to utilize reflection as a way of life (Farrell, 2019). Hence, this TSG study makes a sound difference in the literature by particularly equipping teachers with systematized reflective lenses, which facilitated their professional learning and evoked a new perspective on PD.

Based on my own experiences throughout the TSG process, the use of technology to form, maintain and publicize the TSG materials, activities, and outcomes considerably contributed to the effectiveness of the entire process. Considering that technology has a substantial place in teacher education (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017), I benefitted from the affordances of digital platforms (e.g. MS Teams-based learning tools). Use of a digital platform to organize and implement all the PD activities, which was also supplemented with face-to-face gatherings at school, such as collaborative writing space for written online interactions, meeting rooms to organize periodical meetings and expert talks, classroom notebooks to keep reflective journal made this PD program more systemic and organized. Digital affordances to organize reflective and collaborative activities (Kessler, 2012) were inherent components of the TSG procedures, so these affordances brought a digital dimension to the conceptualization of the TSG (Hanson- Smith, 2006). The digital aspect of the TSG activities also lessened the burden on our shoulders to organize the activities flexibly because of the hybrid education, which required teachers to teach from home on particular days because of the pandemic effects. The flexibility offered by the technology enabled me to organize and monitor the process in accordance with the teachers' emergent needs (Kessler & Hubbard, 2017). In this way, the structure of the TSG was also aligned with AR studies implemented by the teachers because they also used digital platforms for their instructional practices and intended to promote their digital efficiency by developing technology-based AR projects for better learner outcomes (Salazar et al., 2010).

All in all, the TSG study implemented within the scope of this dissertation revealed considerable takeaways for the PD of EFL teachers in various ways. Compared to earlier TSG studies, this CPD model discussed in this section focused on something other than a particular model and content in order not to narrow down the flexibility of the TSG teachers, which resulted in the diversity of AR projects developed by the teachers. Using the TSG on sociocultural and critical concepts led to conceptual learning and theoretical enrichment in that the teachers could negotiate and reconstruct their pedagogies in a theory-informed way. Basing the TSG project on the principles of CP and SCT and enhancing the TSG process through teacher collaboration, AR, and reflective practice yielded emancipatory outcomes for the teachers despite the impediments addressed by them (Figure 5). Even though the impediments stemming from institutional and national factors inhibited the perseverance of the teachers, their collegiality and responsive mediation proactive to their emergent needs contributed to their wellbeing throughout the study. However, the impediments documented in this study offered a beneficiary perspective to discuss what is needed for a sustainable and transformative

TSG practice in light of the recent literature and the study's findings. Despite the impediments, the implementation of TSG at school demonstrates the unique place of this study in the literature in terms of collaborative, reflective, inquiry-based and technological aspects of the design and outcomes. This structure of the TSG enabled the teachers to maximize their scope of effect because they could disseminate their PD outcomes with other stakeholders in the educational ecosystem, which aroused new possibilities and potentialities. Contextually-relevant pedagogies emerging from the study offered dialogic interactions among educational practitioners and a transformative perspective showing the efficiency of relying on localized resources to design PD in a continuous and sustainable cycle.

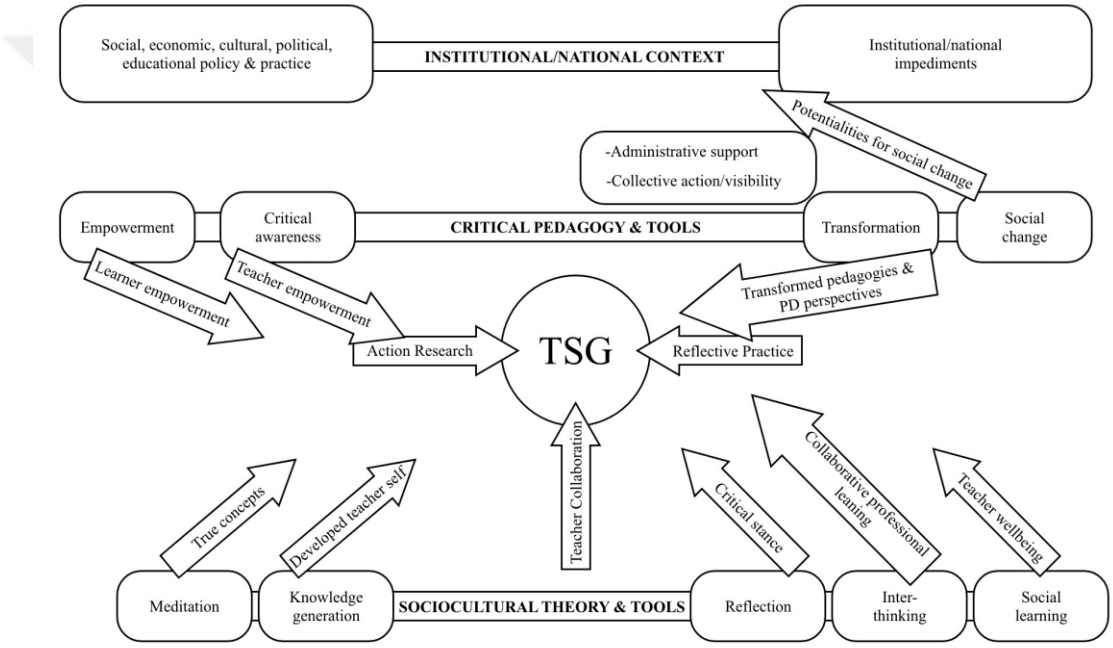

Figure 5: Overview of the theoretical frameworks and takeaways of the TSG

5.2. Conclusion and Implications

In this part, I summarize and finalize my research findings and the related discussion by referring to the potential implications for PD and recommendations for future research. In this sense, I first restate the problems that drove me to conduct this study and my research objectives. Then, I consolidate my research findings and discussion to foreground a holistic view of how the TSG functioned as a CPD tool to transform an educational context from a sociocultural and critical perspective, which is followed by the limitations of the current study, practical implications for tertiary-level PD policies/practices, and recommendations for further research on collaborative PD.

My previous studies on teacher education, my teaching experience as an English instructor, and the relevant literature in English language teacher education made me familiar with the problems EFL teachers face regarding their teacher education practices. This familiarity encouraged me to follow a pathway from teacher cognition to PD practices to diagnose and state the problems that initiate the current research. Teachers have a complex cognition system, including various beliefs, assumptions, and practices regarding instructional decisions (Borg, 2006). This complexity requires teachers to get involved in professional actions and activities enabling them to gap between the theoretical knowledge offered to them through teacher education and their instructional practices, which helps them develop consistent beliefs and practices in relation to their contextual needs (Sanchez & Borg, 2014). However, the difficulty of applying the theoretical knowledge learnt in pre-service education and the lack of theoretical knowledge of the teachers who do not have a pre-service background prevent EFL teachers from having opportunities to bridge their experiential teacher knowledge with theoretical knowledge (Atay, 2008). Besides, the top-down PD activities, generally prepared and organized as one-shot seminars/workshops/conferences by educational or commercial organizations (Johnson, 2009), may not meet teachers' contextual needs (Chang, 1998). Despite some process-oriented, needs-driven, inquiry and collaboration-based, and context-sensitive PD activities conducted in some higher education contexts, they do not meet the expectations considering today's needs (Aktekin, 2019; Atay, 2008; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016; Yılmaz & Arıkan, 2019). Hence, a PD program based on teacher collaboration through AR, research skills through AR, and teacher reflection through reflective practices was designed and implemented in the SoFL of a state university in Türkiye. With this PD program, a contextual PD approach was aimed to serve as a bottom-up tool utilized by the participant EFL teachers in accordance with their needs.

A TSG process might not have permanently influenced teachers' future projections and actions without a sound theoretical standpoint, which might have put the TSG at risk of being a one-shot activity for the teachers. However, building the TSG on the underlying principles of a sound educational framework would be helpful to frame the TSG with theoretically sound concepts and adopt new approaches/perspectives to sustain their professional learning and develop new pedagogies continuously. Hence, TSG was introduced from the sociocultural and critical lenses, which prevented the TSG from being perceived as a one-time activity. Laying the TSG on the principles of SCT enabled me to design a PD program offering a collaborative perspective to learn and social mediation tools to internalize learning new concepts (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Likewise, CP

allowed me to make the program more transformative to empower teachers and emancipate their teaching/learning contexts by creating the chance to lead social change (Freire, 1970; Gray, 2019). With these principles, I aimed to co-tailor the content of the TSG by mediating the teachers to focus on their actual needs and detect instructional areas they would like to improve through AR, collaboration, and reflective practice. In this sense, with this study, I first aimed to reveal teachers' pedagogical philosophies and their perspectives on PD, which helped me to analyze and compare the takeaways from the current study to their previously stated standpoints. Then, I intended to evaluate the teachers' insights into the TSG as a CPD model from sociocultural and critical perspectives, which allowed me to analyze how a TSG model built upon SCT and CP influence the tertiary-level EFL teachers' thoughts, pedagogies, and their institutional context in terms of the sustainability of this collaborative and transformative model.

To seek answers to the research questions, I utilized a wide range of data collection tools. I first conducted initial interviews with the participant teachers to investigate their teaching/learning background and PD experiences/expectations, which helped me to analyze to what extent program objectives/outcomes compromise with the teachers' needs and expectations. The semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall sessions at the end of the program provided insightful data to explore the takeaways of the TSG process in detail. The reflective practices (keeping a reflective journal) throughout the program offered an enriched data set to keep track of teacher development in relation to the TSG objectives. TSG meetings, expert talk series, and online discussion board interactions also provided valuable data to document the collaborative and transformative practices employed by the teachers. Besides, observation notes taken during the peer observation sessions and the researcher’s log enriched and diversified the data for a comprehensive analysis of the TSG project.

The analysis of the data revealed that the TSG project yielded professional learning outcomes in a consistent way regarding the participant teachers' contextual needs and expectations. Besides, the teachers' engagement with the TSG paved the way for sociocultural and critical takeaways, uncovering new potentialities for a broader change at the SoFL.

In line with the first research question seeking answers to the teachers' teaching philosophies and PD perspectives before the implementation of the PD program, the data revealed that the teachers found their pre-service teacher education inadequate for their professional readiness due to overemphasis on theory, inadequate practicum experiences, practicum in unrealistic classrooms, lack of guidance from teacher educators, and lack of coursebook practices. The teachers' institutional PD experiences before the TSG project did

not compensate for the inadequacy of the pre-service education since the institutional PD practices were based on top-down seminars that were mainly irrelevant to their actual needs. Despite the lack of professional learning opportunities, the teachers' experiential knowledge and self-directed PD practices enabled them to develop a learner-centred teaching philosophy foregrounding the role of learner autonomy in language learning. In this sense, the data showed that the teachers expected to get involved in more contextual and practice-based PD activities, providing space for peer collaboration and co-construction of new pedagogies that can foster their learner-centred teaching philosophies. Considering the teachers' needs and expectations, I discussed how the TSG allowed the teachers to experience a teacher-based PD rather than a trainer-based PD approach (Dikilitaş, 2015). Unlike a top-down perspective excluding teachers from the decision-making of the PD roadmap (Uştuk & Çomoğlu, 2019), the TSG teachers got more control over their learning process in a bottom-up way (Macias, 2017; Vangrieken et al., 2017). The TSG project prioritized the teachers' needs for their teaching environments (Francis et al., 1994). The teachers' insights into the PD program show that they could create more autonomous teaching environments to foster learner autonomy, which led to an enriched, lifelong learning perspective (Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012). As TSG tools such as collaboration, AR and reflective practice yielded increased teacher autonomy in curricular and instructional decisions (Alibakshi, 2015), they could create appropriate learning environments to foster learner autonomy as well. Hence, considering the outcomes obtained from the TSG process, the teachers considered the TSG consistent with their pedagogical and professional perspectives.

With the second research question, I intended to shed light on sociocultural takeaways from the TSG project, and the teachers' insights revealed that one-semester experience within a TSG enabled them to engage with a sociocultural learning environment offering the opportunities for mediation, knowledge co-construction, reflection, and inter-thinking. With these opportunities, the teachers could form true concepts to enhance their pedagogies, develop a teacher self based on their emancipated role in knowledge generation, develop a critical stance to the teacher self by constantly reflecting on their teaching, collaborate with their peers for their professional growth, and contribute to their wellbeing. I discussed these takeaways from the SCT perspective and emphasized the sociocultural principle that human cognitive development is achieved through socially mediated practices responsive to cultural, local and individual needs (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). TSG, in this sense, offered the mediation tools (reading materials as mediational artifacts, socially-mediated TSG meetings, discussion boards, expert talks, researcher's mediation, reflective journal, AR) and socially-

mediated spaces to reconstruct and transform their perspectives and pedagogies collaboratively and internalize the socially co-constructed knowledge for cognitive development (Johnson, 2009). Hence, this PD program provided the TSG teachers with the affordances to conceptually develop psychological tools and transform their cognition and pedagogies by bridging theoretical and experiential knowledge through social mediation, which yielded the development of teacher self and enactment of a critically reflective stance to sustain the developed teacher self in a continuous and collaborative cycle of learning.

With the final research question, I delved into the critical takeaways from the TSG project and discussed these takeaways in terms of the potentialities for a broader social change from the perspective of CP. The data from the TSG teachers showed that the teachers could generate emancipatory knowledge, engage in collaborative practices, and reconstruct their identities, which led to an empowerment process for the teachers. Besides, the teachers could transform their PD perspectives and instructional pedagogies, allowing new learner empowerment opportunities. The teachers' disseminating their outcomes and takeaways from the TSG process with other stakeholders at the SoFL opened new horizons for potential social changes in their educational ecosystem. From a critical perspective, I discussed these takeaways in terms of the potentialities for social change and the impediments hindering these potentialities. In this sense, the current TSG project revealed that enacting emancipatory PD practices such as collaboration, reflection, and AR through joint activities liberated the teachers from the orthodoxy of the standardized PD perspectives and pedagogies mandated by the mainstream ideologies and institutes (Freire, 1970; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2011). The TSG teachers' attempts to transform their teaching helped the learners make their voices heard for instructional decisions and become more empowered in their learning process, which is a transformative action against decontextualized teaching/learning practices (Gray, 2019; Kincheloe, 2009; Parkhouse et al., 2023). The teachers' disseminating their AR outcomes, which they conducted throughout the TSG process, gave them a more agentive role, considering their power in researching, generating knowledge, and sharing it with other stakeholders at the SoFL. The colleagues and administrators who participated in the AR Seminar Day as the audience could also have the chance to revisit their practices and perspectives in light of the AR research projects presented by TSG teachers. Hence, AR Seminar Day showed that emancipatory PD practices like TSG can function as a tool to consider collective action as a way for broader social change in educational ecologies (Drury et al., 2015; Karl, 1995). However, the impediments stated by the teachers, such as workload, overcapacity of classrooms, limited teaching staff, and extra duties, might prevent teachers

from getting involved in a long-term PD program that can pave the way for a sound change. The restrictive effects of these impediments on the flexibility and autonomy of the teachers are seen as deteriorating conditions to be eradicated for more room for transformative PD and pedagogies.

In line with the nature of qualitative inquiry, this study does not aim to generalize the findings, which could be regarded as a limitation from a positivist/post-positivist lens. As I adopted a qualitative research paradigm and conducted a qualitative intrinsic case study to particularly focus on a natural learning/teaching setting with volunteer participants, I used qualitative data collection sources and analysis. Even though it is also one of the strengths of the study since the qualitative paradigm and the theoretical frameworks (SCT and CP) complemented each other to unfold the complex nature of teacher learning from a multivocal and in-depth perspective, lack of a quantitative perspective prevents this study from making statistical inferences and generalizations regarding the takeaways of this study. However, the findings could be transferred to other research contexts. To strengthen the rigor, trustworthiness and credibility of the methodological design (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), I provided a rich description for every stage of the study and setting for transparency; I avoided pre-determined claims to be submissive to the authenticity of the data; and I relied on the multidimensionality of the realities rather than making bold claims without appropriate evidence (Holliday, 2015). Besides, I used triangulation not only for data sources and participants but also by integrating different data investigators and data collection methods. Likewise, the use of peer debriefing, member checking, external audit, and researcher reflexivity enabled me to strengthen the credibility of the current research's methodological design and findings.

Based on the research findings and my first-hand experiences throughout the process, this study has various educational and socio-political implications to establish and sustain a continuous perspective in teacher education. From the educational perspective, the current study reveals that pre-service language teacher education needs to meet the expectations of EFL teachers participating in this study. A transformative approach to reconstructing pre-service programs in a more collaborative, practical, and inquiry-based way can equip teachers with essential pedagogical skills to serve their needs during their teaching profession. The teachers' insights show that pre-service programs should offer life-long theoretical perspectives and opportunities to have first-hand teaching experiences to bridge these theoretical perspectives and practical teacher knowledge without relying too much on heavy theoretical knowledge delivered in a cellular and non-contextual way (Akcan, 2016; Farrell,

2012). In this sense, life-long theoretical perspectives promoting teacher collaboration, teacher research and teacher emancipation are needed to contextualize teacher knowledge and learner transformation in a continuous learning cycle.

Similarly, the TSG program outcomes demonstrate essential implications, particularly for tertiary-level in-service EFL teachers. Revisiting the PD policies and the curriculum taught at schools of foreign languages at universities and reforming the orthodox approaches to create more room for teacher flexibility and autonomy is one of the most salient implications that need to be considered for more transformative teaching practices (Alibakshi, 2015; Francis et al., 1994). Despite the lack of plausible work conditions, the teachers could benefit from the TSG affordances and transform their perspectives. More plausible work conditions after curricular and policy-based regulations can encourage more teachers to take part in transformative and continuous PD practices such as TSG and AR and disseminate their takeaways with other stakeholders, which can contribute to the educational and institutional quality of schools and ignite new potentialities for social change.

The TSG program also revealed the need for socio-political implications to flourish learning environments for teachers and learners. The psychological and social wellbeing of the teachers was noticed to be closely related to the opportunities to make autonomous decisions for their pedagogies. Enacting sociocultural learning through teacher collaboration and empowering teacher identities through knowledge generation is a demanding process considering the teachers' workload. This problem underlies the overcapacity of classrooms, limited teaching staff, and institutional regulations restricting teacher autonomy, which addresses the essence of socio-political implications to overcome the contextual challenges the teachers face. A national policy to overcome the overcapacity problem and appoint more EFL teachers to universities might result in less populated classrooms and less workload, which can create room for flexibility and autonomy to utilize lifelong PD programs sustainably (Burns et al., 2022). Besides, nationwide educational policies aiming to increase the quality of language teaching at primary and secondary-level schools can prepare learners more efficiently, particularly for the universities where the medium of instruction is English, which can also decrease the number of students who need one-year preparatory courses before they start their degree programs (Demir-Ayaz et al., 2019; British Council, 2015; Ekoç, 2021).

All in all, despite the conditions impeding the enactment of TSG in a more sustainable nature, the TSG project documents that PD programs tailored to the on-site needs of EFL teachers can offer sound potentialities for professionally and pedagogically new positionings. Collaborating with colleagues based on a process-oriented program supplemented with clear

objectives/procedures and researcher/expert mediation to conduct AR provides teachers with new learning sites to experience co-construction of knowledge, co-reflection on classroom pedagogies, and collaborate with other stakeholders to expand the cycle of teaching/learning transformation. In this sense, creating more room to encourage such collaborative actions and cooperation with experts to construct theoretically and practically sound pedagogies must be one of the priorities needed to be considered at SoFLs.

Finally, based on my field experiences as a researcher and my analysis of the current study, I recommend several directions to further research to diversify individual and institutional takeaways from continuous PD programs. First, future studies should focus on the possible permanent effects of such collaborative practices at the individual and institutional level in the long term since it is vital to observe whether transformative programs reach their objectives and lead a sound change in future classroom practices and institutional curricula. The reasons for failures to adopt transformative outcomes should also be investigated to identify the underlying factors preventing the new actions from being implemented. Second, inter-institutional studies allowing a large-scale collaboration among EFL instructors can be explored since this kind of collaboration can offer more resources and perspectives to collaborate and create more potentialities for social change. Third, considering the curricular load of the EFL teachers, new forms of TSGs that require teachers to focus on a single subject collaboratively should also be explored. Forming several TSGs, each focusing on a different subject, can lessen the burden on teachers' shoulders and incorporate more teachers into the PD process by revealing more perspectives to be disseminated. Finally, experts and researchers' collaborating with teachers during PD activities and monitoring their progress (Nguyen, 2017) offered new perspectives for teacher learning and teacher-researcher partnerships. Hence, dialogic and collaborative partnerships between teachers and researchers and mentoring trajectories should be explored for the sustainability of professional growth in in-service EFL teacher education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.

STUDENT'S CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Information			
Adı ve Soyadı	Serhat Başar		
E-postası/Web Sayfası			
Bildiği Yabancı Diller	English and Spanish		
Uzmanlık Alanı	English Language Teaching, English Language Teacher Education		
Education			
	University	Department	Year
Bachelor's Degree	Boğaziçi University	Foreign Language Education	2016
Master's Degree	Boğaziçi University	English Language Education	2019
M.A. Thesis Title	EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Their Practices in Grammar Teaching and Corrective Feedback: A Case Study		
M.A. Thesis Supervisor	Prof. Dr. Sumru Akcan		

Akademik Eserler

(Makale, kitap, kitap bölümü, bildiri, poster, sergi, konser vb. eserlerden kaynakça yazım kurallarına göre en fazla 10 eser yazılmalıdır.)

Tezden üretilen yayınlar * ile işaretlenmelidir.

ARTICLES

Başar, S. (2020). Teacher cognition in grammar teaching: A case study in a Turkish EFL context. *International Journal of Modern Education Studies*, *4*(2), 57-80.

Başar, S., Çeliktürk, H., & Çomoğlu, İ. (2020). English language teachers' insights into continuous professional development: A cross-case exploration. *The Literacy Trek*, *6*(2), 55-80.

Başar, S. (2021). Exploring EFL teachers' decision-making skills: Departure from lesson plans. *ELT Research Journal*, *10*(1), 61-82.

*Başar, S., Çomoğlu, İ., & Dikilitaş K. (2023). Teacher study groups as a collaborative platform for action research: an ecological perspective. *Professional Development in Education*. DOI: 10.1080/19415257.2023.2283429

BOOK CHAPTERS

Başar, S., Kuzu, E., & Çomoğlu, İ. (2023). Reflection and collaboration in EFL teacher professional development in Turkey: A systematic review. In B. Gün & E. Üstünlüoğlu (Eds.), *Exploring the principles of reflective practice in ELT: Research and perspectives from Turkey* (pp. 6-31). Equinox.

Başar, S., & Işık, M. (2023). A systematic review of electronic feedback practices in EFL educational setting in Turkey. In Ö. Özer & C. Yükselir (Eds.), T*eaching in online and blended learning environments: Emerging trends in English language teaching* (pp. 101-120). Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık.

PROCEEDINGS

Başar, S., & Kuzu, E. (2020). An Investigation of the Effects of Language, Gender, and Addressee on Request and Apology Strategies. 2nd Internatıonal European Conference On Interdıscıplınary Scıentıfic Researches. Ankara, Turkey.

Başar, S., & Kuzu, E. (2020). Exploring In-Class Oral Communication Strategies: An Interaction-Based Study in Turkish EFL Context. 3rd Internatıonal Bıltek Conference On Scıence, Technology & Current Developments In Socıal Scıences, Adana, Turkey. * Başar, S., & Çomoğlu, İ. (2022). Teacher Study Groups as a CPD Model: Takeaways from a Tertiary-Level Project. 3rd Internatıonal Scıence, Educatıon, Art & Technology Symposıum. İzmir, Türkiye.
Alanıyla İlgili Bilimsel Kuruluşlara Üyelikler
TESOL Türkiye
Alanıyla İlgili Aldığı Ödüller
N/A

APPENDIX 2.

Permissions for Research

Formal Permission of the Ethics Committee

T.C.
DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
HUKUK MÜŞAVİRLİĞİ

Sayı : E-87347630-659-122158
Konu : Serhat BAŞAR

ACELE
08.10.2021

EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

İlgi : 20.09.2021 tarihli ve E-67493393-302.08.01-111924 sayılı yazınız.

İlgide kayıtlı yazınıza istinaden Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulunun 29.09.2021 tarihli toplantısında alınan 2 sayılı karar ile Enstitünüz Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Öğretmenliği Doktora Programı öğrencisi Serhat BAŞAR'ın "Technology-supported teacher study groups as a model of continuous professional development for tertiary level EFL teachers: A case study/Yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sürekli mesleki gelişimi için bir model olarak teknoloji destekli öğretmen çalışma grupları: Bir durum çalışması" başlıklı çalışması için yapacağı uygulamanın etik açıdan uygun olduğuna karar verilmiş olup, alınan karar Makamımızca onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Prof.Dr. Nükhet HOTAR
Rektör

06.10.2021 Bilgisayar İşletmeni : Merve ÇÜRÜK
07.10.2021 Ayrıkat : İrem TUNCER TIRAŞ
07.10.2021 Hukuk Müşaviri V. : Sezgi ÖKTEM SONGU
08.10.2021 Genel Sekreter : Engin BASMACI

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Doğrulama Kodu: 7DD7B3D3-4E89-4584-9A66-7998230CDDE
Doğrulama Adresi: https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/
Adres: Kültür Mahallesi, Cumhuriyet Blv No:144, 35220 Konak/İzmir
Bilgi İçin: Merve ÇÜRÜK
Bilgisayar İşletmeni

Formal Permission of the University

Evrak Tarih Sayısı: 19.10.2021-E.40285

T.C.
İZMİR YÜKSEK TEKNOLOJİ ENSTİTÜSÜ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-38020665-900-40285 19.10.2021
Konu : Durum Çalışması

Sayın Öğr.Gör. Serhat BAŞAR
Öğretim Görevlisi

İlgi : Personel Daire Başkanlığı' nın 16.10.2021 tarihli ve 38852 sayılı yazısına istinaden.

İlgi yazıda belirtilen *"Technology-supported teacher study groups as a model of continuous professional development for tertiary level EFL teachers: A case study/Yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sürekli mesleki gelişimi için bir model olarak teknoloji destekli öğretmen çalışma grupları: Bir durum çalışması başlıklı çalışması"* Müdürlüğümüzce uygun görülmüştür.
Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Sinem BEZİRCİLİOĞLU
Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Müdürü

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik İmza ile imzalanmıştır.
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Adres:İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Urla, İzmir 35430
Telefon:0 --) Faks:0232 750 6404
e-Posta:ydyo@iyte.edu.tr Elektronik Ağ:http://ydyo.iyte.edu.tr/
Bilgi için: Gökhan DEMİR
Unvanı: Bilgisayar İşletmeni
Tel No: (

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

APPENDIX 3.

Consent Form

GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIMCI ONAM FORMU

Doç. Dr. Hatice İrem ÇOMOĞLU ve Serhat BAŞAR tarafından yürütülen "Yükseköğretim kurumlarındaki İngilizce öğretmenlerinin sürekli mesleki gelişimi için bir model olarak teknoloji destekli öğretmen çalışma grupları: Bir durum çalışması" başlıklı **araştırmaya** davet edilmiş bulunuyorsunuz. Bu araştırmaya katılıp katılmama kararını vermeden önce, araştırmanın neden ve nasıl yapılacağını bilmeniz gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle bu formun okunup anlaşılması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Eğer anlayamadığınız ve sizin için açık olmayan şeyler varsa, ya da daha fazla bilgi isterseniz sorabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen **gönüllülük** esasına dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya **katılmama** veya katıldıktan sonra herhangi bir anda çalışmadan **çıkma** hakkında sahipsiniz. **Çalışmayı yanıtlamanız, araştırmaya katılım için onam verdiğiniz** biçiminde yorumlanacaktır. **Görüşmelerde** size sorulan soruları yanıtlarken kimsenin baskısı veya telkini altında olmayın. Bu sorulardan elde edilecek bilgiler tamamen araştırma amacı ile kullanılacaktır.

Araştırmayla İlgili Bilgiler:

a. Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışma, öğretmenlerin teknoloji destekli bir şekilde sürekli mesleki gelişimini sağlayarak öğrenme ve öğretme süreçlerini etkili hale getirmeyi, öğretmenlerin kolektif bir şekilde çalışarak ve yürütecekleri eylem araştırmalarıyla deneyimsel bilgilerini edinecekleri teorik bilgilerle yeniden inşa etmelerini, politika yapıcılar için alternatif modeller teşvik etmeyi ve bu modelin uygulanmasında Türkiye alanyazınına katkıda bulunmayı hedeflemektedir.
c. Araştırmanın Nedeni: ☐ Bilimsel araştırma ■ Tez çalışması
d. Araştırmanın Öngörülen Süresi:Ocak 2022-Haziran 2022 (6 ay)
e. Araştırmaya Katılması Beklenen Katılımcı/Gönüllü Sayısı:5-10
f. Araştırmanın Yapılacağı Yer(ler):İzmir Yüksek Teknoloji Enstitüsü Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu

Çalışmaya Katılım Onayı:

"Yukarıda yer alan ve araştırmadan önce gönüllüye / katılımcıya verilmesi gereken bilgileri gösteren Aydınlatılmış Onam Formu adlı metni kendi anadilimde okudum ya da bana okunmasını sağladım. Bu bilgilerin içeriği ve anlamı, yazılı ve sözlü olarak açıklandı. Aklıma gelen bütün soruları sorma olanağı tanındı ve sorularıma doyurucu cevaplar aldım. Çalışmaya katılmadığım ya da katıldıktan sonra çekildiğim durumda, hiçbir yasal hakkımdan vazgeçmiş olmayacağım. Bu koşullarla, söz konusu araştırmaya hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın gönüllü olarak katılmayı kabul ediyorum. Bu metnin imzalı bir kopyasını aldım."

Katılımcının (Kendi el yazısı ile)

Adı-Soyadı:.....

İmzası:

(Varsa) Velayet veya Vesayet Altında Bulunanlar İçin;

Veli veya Vasisinin (kendi el yazısı ile)

Adı-Soyadı:.....

İmzası:

***Not**: Bu form, iki nüsha halinde düzenlenir. Bu nüshalardan biri imza karşılığında gönüllü kişiye verilir, diğeri araştırmacı tarafından saklanır.*

APPENDIX 4.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for TSG Teachers Before the TSG Program

1. Who are you? How do you describe yourself? (identity)
2. How did you learn English? (background information on learning process)
3. How was your pre-service teacher education? (good and bad aspects of undergraduate education)
4. How do you describe yourself as a teacher? (teacher identity)
5. What is your teaching philosophy? (teaching practices)
6. What kind of problems do you generally have in your classrooms? how do you handle them if any? (classroom problems and their solutions)
7. What do you think about the previous PD activities you took part in? (effectiveness of previous PD)
8. What do you think about the PD events offered by your institute?
9. What do you need/expect from PD events in general?
10. Why did you want to participate in this CPD project?
11. What do you expect from the project?
12. What do you think about the problems in PD?
13. What do you do for your own professional growth?

APPENDIX 5.

Reading Materials for TSG Teachers

Burns, A. (2005). Action research: An evolving paradigm?. *Language Teaching*, *38*(2), 57-74.

Ferrance, E. (2000). *Action research*. LAB, Northeast and Island Regional Education Laboratory at Brown University. http://www.lab.brown.edu/

Groenke, S. L. (2009**).** Social reconstructionism and the roots of critical pedagogy: Implications for teacher education in the neoliberal era. In *Critical pedagogy and teacher education in the neoliberal era* (pp. 3-17). Springer.

Johnson, K. E. (2006). The sociocultural turn and its challenges for second language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, *40*(1), 235-257.

Johnson, K. E. (2009). *Second language teacher education: A sociocultural perspective*. Routledge. (Chapters 1 and 7)

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Kincheloe, J. L. (2011a). Exposing the technocratic perversion of education: The death of the democratic philosophy of schooling. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.). *Key works in critical pedagogy* (pp. 1-19). Sense Publishers.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2011b). The knowledges of teacher education: Developing a critical complex epistemology. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.). *Key works in critical pedagogy* (pp. 227-243). Sense Publishers.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2011c). Meet me behind the curtain. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.). *Key works in critical pedagogy* (pp. 85-99). Sense Publishers.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2011d). Critical ontology: Visions of selfhood and curriculum. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.). *Key works in critical pedagogy* (pp. 201-217). Sense Publishers.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2012). Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: Evolution for survival. *Counterpoints*, *422*, 147-183.

Luo, C. (2008). An action research plan for developing and implementing the students' listening comprehension skills. *English Language Teaching*, *1*(1), 25-28.

Pardede, P (2019). Seeing action research process in a practce. In *Proceeding of EED Collegiate Forum 2015-2018. "EFL Theory and Practice: Voice of EED UKI*, Pardede, P. (Ed). Jakarta: UKI. pp. 282-295.

APPENDIX 6.

Action Research Reflection Questions

(Adapted from Farrell's (2015b) Framework for Reflecting on Practice)

Level 1: Reflection on Philosophy (before the action research plan)

Rationale: It examines teacher-as-person because professional practices inside/outside the class are guided by teachers' basic philosophy that has been developed since birth

Aim: to explore self-knowledge by reflecting on our background, where we have evolved, heritage, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background, family, and personal values

Reflection: ……

Level 2: Reflection on Principles (before the action research plan)

Rationale: teachers' instructional practices are mainly implemented (subconsciously in general) based on their underlying beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes about teaching and learning in addition to their philosophy in Level 1

Aim: To increase consciousness by reflecting on teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes concerning learning and teaching

Reflection: ……

Level 3: Reflection on Theory (before the action research plan)

Rationale: teachers' philosophy and principles have an influence on their theories of practice that is implemented in the class. These theories may come from either pre-service teacher education or teaching experiences.

Aim: to construct new theories of practice in the light of the reflection on philosophy and principles by reflecting on the activities/lessons that they want to implement in the class.

Reflection: ……

Level 4: Reflection on Practice (after the action research plan: reflection step of the action research)

Rationale: teachers 'practices are influenced by their philosophy, principles, and theories. In this sense, reflection-in-action (while teaching), reflection-on-action (after teaching), and

reflection-for-action (before teaching) leads to more informed practices that are in line with Level 1, 2, and 3

Aim: to improve instructional practices by reflection on practice with examination of observable actions such as teaching, student reactions, and non-reactions.

Reflection: ……

Level 5: Reflection beyond Practice (after the action research plan: reflection step of the action research)

Rationale: teacher practices are not isolated from larger contextual factors such as moral, political, and social issues.

Aim: to explore the impact of moral, social, and political issues on practice through critical reflection

Reflection: ……

Reference

Farrell, T. S. (2015b). *Promoting teacher reflection in second language education: A framework for TESOL professionals*. New York: Routledge.

APPENDIX 7.

Reflection Questions for Teacher Reflective Journal

Week 1: Reflection on Reading Materials and the 1st TSG Meeting

(Sociocultural Theory, Teacher Study Groups, and Critical Pedagogy)

Guiding Questions:

- What have you learned about Sociocultural Theory, Teacher Study Groups, and Critical Pedagogy?
- What are your personal thoughts about these theories?
- How do you evaluate the first TSG Meeting in terms of your professional development?

Reflection:
……

Week 2: Reflection on action Research Materials and the 2nd TSG Meeting

(Action Research Readings, samples)

Guiding Questions:

- What have you learned about Action Research?
- What are your personal thoughts about Action Reserch?
- How do you evaluate the second TSG Meeting in terms of your professional development?

Reflection:
……

Week 3-4: Reflection on Action Research Plans, Expert Talks, and Collaborative Feedback

Guiding Questions:

- What have you learned about designing an action research plan?
- What do you think about the expert talk?
- What do you think about the collaborative feedback that you got from your colleagues?

Reflection:
……

Week 7-8-9-10: Reflection on the Implementation of Your Action Research

Guiding questions:

- What have you experienced throughout the action research process?
- Have you experienced any challenges? What are those?
- What are your thoughts about action research steps?

Reflection:
……

Final Reflection on the whole PD program

Guiding Questions:

- What have you learned about yourself and our teaching/learning?
- What do you think about working collaboratively for your PD?
- How do you think action research and teacher study group functioned as PD tools?

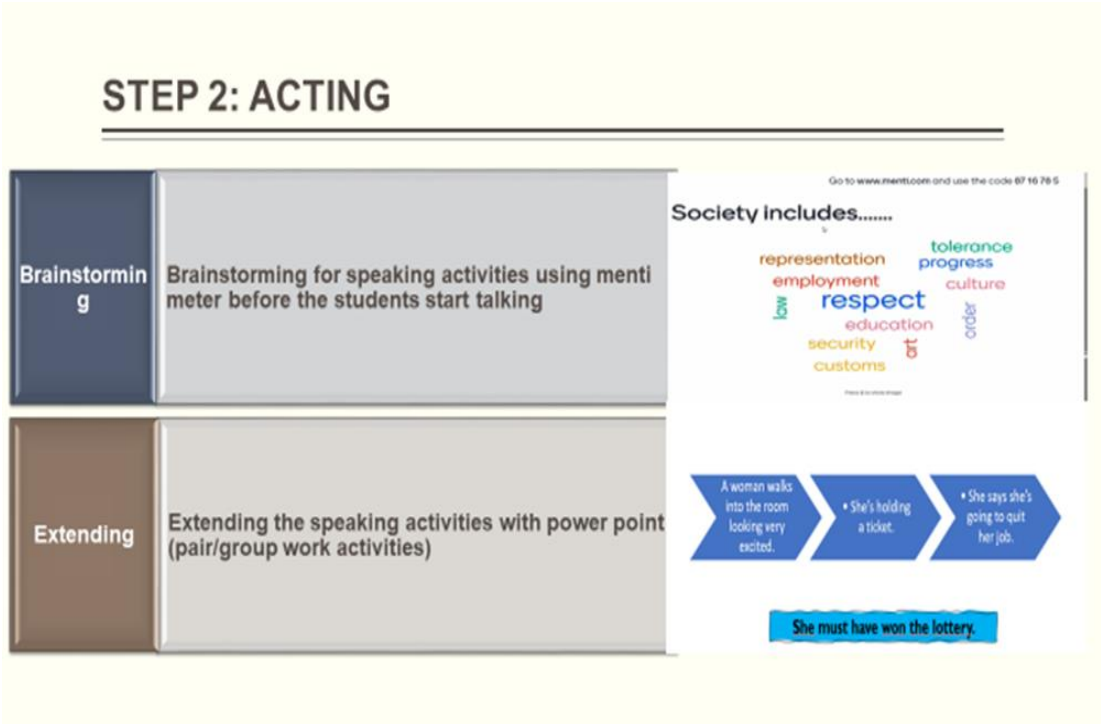
Reflection:
……

APPENDIX 8.

Extracts from Teachers' Action Research Projects

Extracts from Sibel's Action Research Steps





Extracts from Buket and Cansu's Action Research Steps

STEP 4: REFLECTING

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

a. Advantages of screencast feedback

ITEMS	Mean
1. Receiving feedback through screencast videos helped me reshape my ideas	4.46
2. Receiving feedback through screencast videos helped me organize my writing	4.69
3. Receiving feedback through screencast videos helped me vary sentence structure	4.38
4. Receiving feedback through screencast videos is personal	4.38
5. I found screencast videos helpful because I can go back and forth	4.76
6. I found screencast videos helpful as I understand where I have lost marks	4.92

b. The appropriateness of sound, time and language of screencast feedback

ITEMS	Mean
7. The sound of the instructor in the videos was clear	4.76
8. The time of the videos was enough to understand what to revise in my writing	4.61
9. The language used in giving the feedback was easy to understand	4.92

STEP 4: REFLECTING

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

1. Describe what you like in screencast feedback? Why?

"Bence daha açıklayıcı oldu ve eksik olduğum yerleri anlamamı daha iyi sağladı."

"Geribildirim vermek isteyen hoca uzun uzun yazmak yerine videoda anlık olarak ders anlatır gibi aklına gelince direkt söyleyebiliyor informationlarini ve önemli noktalara parmak basabiliyor. Uzun uzun yazmaktan da kaçındığından bu informationlar aklına gelmeyebilir."

"I liked that we went back and listened to the part we didn't understand."

"Video benimle birlikte yeni okuyor gibi olmanız fikirlerinizi unutmadan en temel haliyle alabilmeme yardımcı oldu ve bu benim çok hoşuma gitti."

"I liked it because it was like the teacher was talking to me. That's why I understand everything what she said and recommended me to make revisions."

"Geri bildirim veren kişinin anlatmak istediklerini ve verdiği geri bildirimleri daha anlaşılır kılıyor."

Extracts from Aylin's Action Research Steps

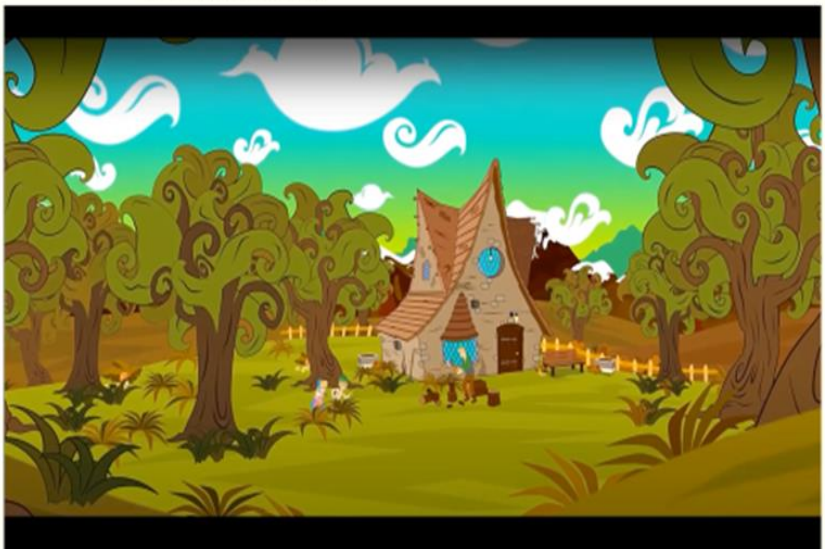
STEP 2: ACTING

Procedures of My Action Research: Developing DS

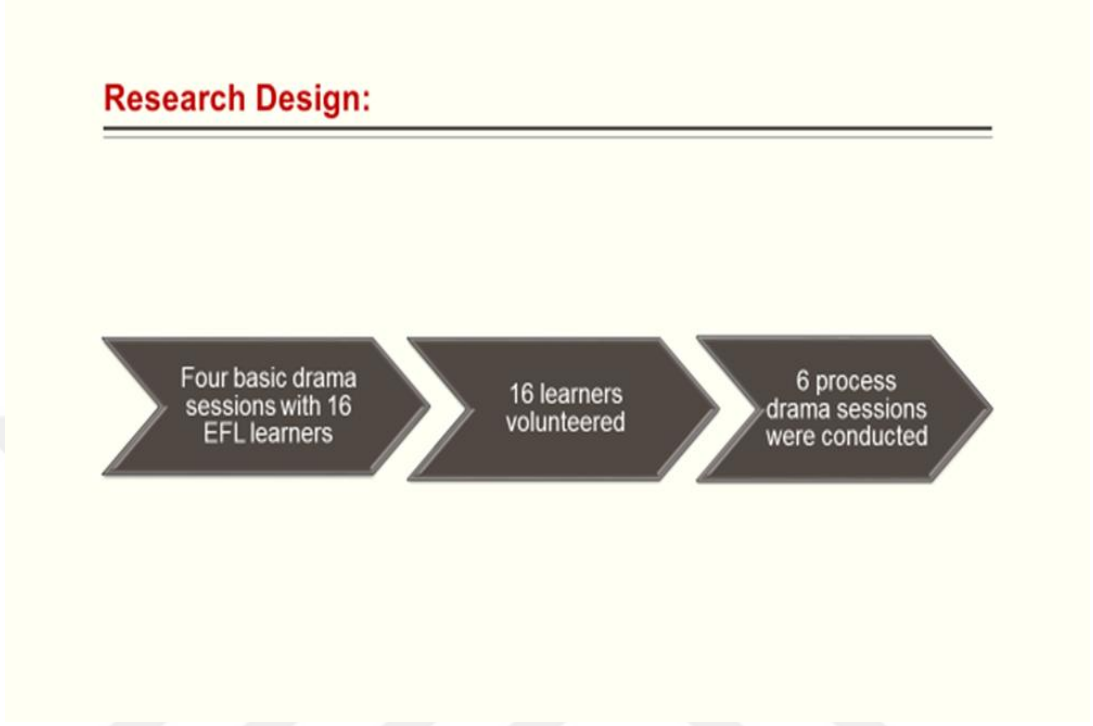
Stages of the Project	Activities
Start: **Project Planning**	1. Preparing driving questions 2. Planning the formative assessment 3. Checking digital resources 4. Deciding on grouping strategies
Stage 1: **Project Launch**	5. Stimulating students' motivation and sharing concerns 6. Identifying expectations 7. Framing the rules, procedures, and deadlines
Stage 2: **Guided Inquiry and DS Design**	8. Training the use of digital tool (*https://animoto.com)* 9. Aiding the design of the DS 10. Scaffolding the development of the material
Project Conclusion	11. Sharing their products 12. Reflecting on the process and the product of DS

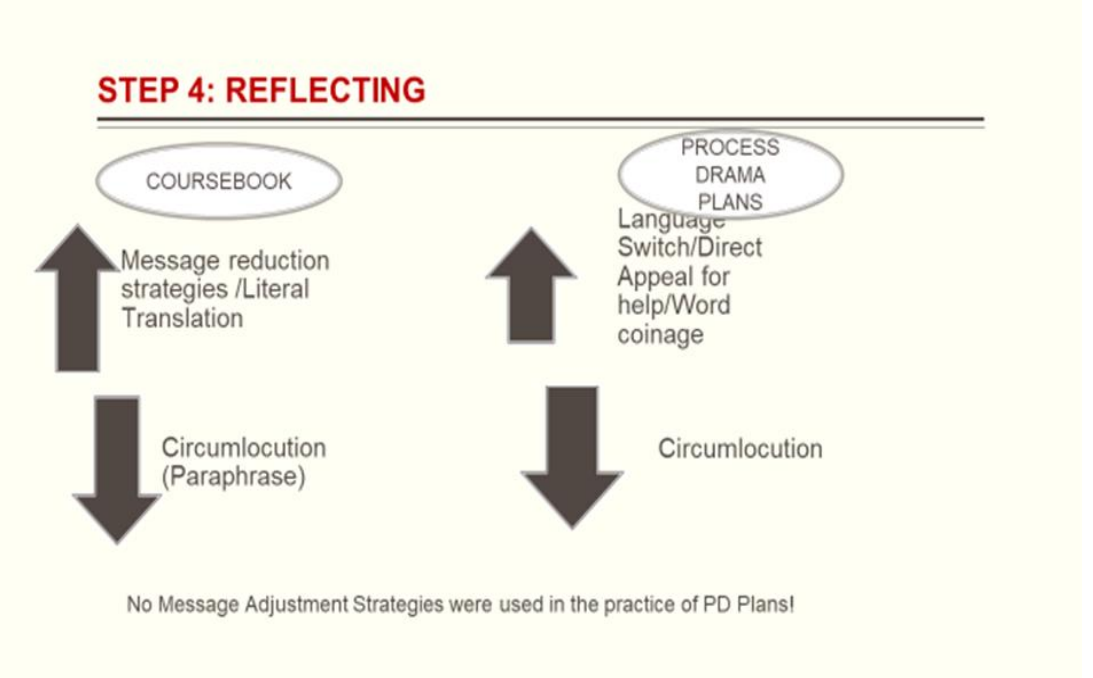
APPENDIX

A Sample Digital Story



Extracts from Zeynep's Action Research Steps





Extracts from Eda's Action Research Steps

Methodology

- Data collection tools:
- - **Pre test:** including 3 parts, 11 questions in total. (8 questions – multiple choice /3 of them open ended) – Appendix 1
- - **Observation:** a worksheet about guessing meaning strategies is distributed to the students. In the classroom, we focused on these strategies, context analysis, prefix/suffix and studied on some examples. (Appendix 2)
- - **Post test:** including 3 parts 14 questions in total. (5 questions – multiple choice / 9 of them open ended) Appendix 3
- Students were also asked if they thought that these strategies had been helpful to them or not.

- What did the students say?
- Except one student who said «It's not working for me because some words have a special meaning and we can't guess.», students agree that these strategies are helpful.
- They stated:
- «yes, it's helpful and enjoyable to me. I think such examples develop us.»
- «They are helpful because we cannot know all the meanings of the words, it is also the same for our mother tongue.»
- «They helped. We should have studied these strategies earlier in this term.»

APPENDIX 9.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for TSG Teachers After the TSG Program

This semi-structured interview aims to gain insights into the CPD program's takeaways based on the TSG instructors' perceptions, thoughts, and experiences.

1. What do you think about the initial phase of the program? (theoretical readings on AR, SCT, CP)
2. What do you think are the implications of these readings for your teaching philosophy, instructional practices, and research process?
3. How do you think TSG meetings function? Can you explain with examples?
4. What do you think about the integration of SCT and CP into research and teaching practices?
    - What are your feelings about collaboration practices with your colleagues and mediation with the experts? (SCT)
    - How do you feel about your PD practices from the critical perspective? (CP)
5. What do you think about your self-reflection and collaborative practices within the TSG?
6. From your perspective, how would you describe/explain TSG: Action Research Projects as a CPD model?
7. How did you feel throughout the process?
8. What are the ……. regarding this program?
    - Strengths
    - Weaknesses
    - Challenges
9. What are your takeaways from this CPD program concerning your future teaching and research practices?
10. How do you think your students and institution benefitted from this program?
11. If you were the conductor, how would you design the program? What would you like to change?
12. In what cases do you think this program would function better?
13. What do you think about the role of action research in your future career path?

APPENDIX 10.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for non-TSG Teachers

This semi-structured interview was conducted to have insights into the takeaways from the TSG: Action Research Project Presentations based on the audience's perceptions, thoughts, and experiences.

1. How do you generally develop yourself professionally?
2. What kind of PD practices have you got involved in so far? How did they impact your professional growth?
3. What are your feelings about the PD policies and practices of your institution?
4. What do you think about the initial phase of the program?
    - project announcement
    - calling for participants
    - the content of the program
5. What do you think about self-reflection and collaborative reflective practices within the TSG? Would these practices contribute to your PD if you applied them for yourself?
6. Based on your impressions, how would you describe/explain TSG: Action Research Projects as a CPD model from your perspective?
7. What was your first reaction to your colleagues' AR projects? Could you explain?
8. What are your takeaways from your colleagues' AR projects as an EFL instructors? Could you explain giving specific examples from the projects presented?
9. What are the ……. regarding this program?
    - Strengths
    - Weaknesses
    - Challenges
10. How do you think your students and institution (*curriculum design, learning outcomes/objectives, course materials*) can benefit from this program?
11. What kind of research would you conduct if you took part in this project? Why?
12. In what cases do you think this program would function better?
13. What do you think about the role of action research in your future career path?
14. How would you evaluate this program compared to your previous PD practices?

APPENDIX 11.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Students

1. **Reflection on Experience:**
    - Can you share your overall experience with the new process (action research) in your class?
    - How do you feel your teachers' new actions and activities (action research) contributed to your learning experience?
2. **Impact on Learning:**
    - In what specific ways do you believe the action research influenced your understanding of the course material?
    - Can you provide examples?
3. **Teacher-Student Interaction:**
    - How did the action research change the dynamics of teacher-student interaction in your class?
4. **Student Engagement:**
    - Were there any strategies implemented during the research that you believe impacted student engagement?
5. **Personal Growth:**
    - Reflecting on the action research, do you think it contributed to your personal and academic growth? If so, in what ways?
    - Were there any specific skills or competencies you developed as a result of the action research?
6. **Long-Term Impact:**
    - Looking ahead, do you believe the changes implemented during the action research will have a lasting impact on your approach to learning or your perception of education?
7. **Recommendations for Improvement:**
    - Are there specific aspects of the action research process that you believe could be improved upon for better outcomes?

