Personal Practical Knowledge and Effective Teaching: A Study of Turkish Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

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∽   The main aim of this study was to investigate English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' personal practical knowledge concerning their perceptions of effective teaching. The qualitative descriptive study employed semi-structured interviews and observations to investigate the impact of personal practical knowledge on the perceptions of teaching effectiveness among English as a foreign language teachers in Turkey. Seven English as a foreign language teachers currently teaching in three public education institutions participated in the study. Inductive content analysis was used to analyse the findings, which revealed that the characteristics of effective teaching, as practised by teachers in their settings, included classroom dynamics, students' motivation, teacher engagement, assessment and engagement strategies in education, and an empowering environment for active learning.

Keywords: professional development, teacher perception, teacher knowledge

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Osebno praktično znanje in učinkovito poučevanje: študija turških učiteljev, ki poučujejo angleščino kot tuji jezik

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Glavni cilj te študije je bil raziskati osebno praktično znanje učiteljev angleščine kot tujega jezika v povezavi z njihovimi zaznavami učinkovitega poučevanja. V tej kvalitativni deskriptivni študiji so bili uporabljeni polstrukturirani intervjuji in opazovanja, da bi raziskali vpliv osebnega praktičnega znanja na zaznave učinkovitosti poučevanja med učitelji angleščine kot tujega jezika v Turčiji. V študiji je sodelovalo sedem učiteljev angleščine kot tujega jezika, ki trenutno poučujejo v treh javnih izobraževalnih ustanovah. Za analizo ugotovitev je bila uporabljena induktivna analiza vsebine, ki je pokazala, da značilnosti učinkovitega poučevanja, kot ga učitelji izvajajo v svojih okoljih, vključujejo: dinamiko v razredu, motivacijo učencev, zavzetost učiteljev, strategije ocenjevanja in vključevanja v izobraževanje ter spodbudno okolje za aktivno učenje.

Ključne besede: profesionalni razvoj, zaznave učiteljev, znanje učiteljev

Introduction

Education is a process that develops with the coordination of many components, one of the most important of which is undoubtedly teachers. Richards (1996) states that teachers deal with more issues than curricular content while teaching; they have to implement their personal theories reflecting their understanding and belief regarding how teaching gets better and how they can achieve improvement. Similarly, Borg (2011) considers teachers as "active, thinking decision makers" (p. 218).

Verloop et al. (2001) state that "…an understanding of teacher knowledge may be useful to improve teacher education and to make educational innovations more successful" (p. 441). In order to effectively develop teacher education programmes, it is imperative to grasp the multifaceted nature of teacher knowledge. Scholars often refer to teacher knowledge using various terms, such as personal knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Verloop et al., 2001), practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1991), and personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985).

Teacher knowledge encompasses different dimensions. For instance, Fenstermacher (1994) categorises teacher knowledge into two main types: practical knowledge and formal knowledge. Practical knowledge stems from teachers' hands-on experience in the classroom, while formal knowledge refers to theoretical understanding acquired through academic study, research and professional development activities.

Another framework, proposed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), divides a teacher's experiential learning journey into three distinct stages: knowledge for practice, knowledge in practice and knowledge of practice. Knowledge for practice entails the acquisition of the theoretical frameworks, pedagogical approaches and foundational concepts essential for effective teaching. It serves as the groundwork for teachers' instructional endeavours. Knowledge in practice, on the other hand, evolves through the daily experiences of teaching. Teachers glean insights, strategies and techniques from their classroom interactions, as well as through collaboration with colleagues during in-service activities. This practical knowledge is dynamic and is constantly refined through reflective practice and ongoing professional development. The accumulation of knowledge for practice and knowledge in practice leads to the development of knowledge of practice, which represents a deep understanding of the intricacies of teaching gained through years of experience and reflective engagement. Teachers possess a rich repertoire of strategies, a nuanced understanding of student needs and the ability to adapt flexibly to diverse instructional contexts.

The focal point of the present study lies within the realm of teacher knowledge, with a specific emphasis on personal practical knowledge (PPK). While the terms "teacher knowledge" and "personal practical knowledge" are sometimes used interchangeably, it is crucial to recognise the nuanced distinctions between them. Teacher knowledge serves as a broad umbrella term, encompassing a wide array of understanding and expertise within the teaching profession. In contrast, personal practical knowledge delves deeper into the individualised experiences and contextual insights that shape a teacher's practice. As articulated by Clandinin (1989), PPK embodies the accumulated wisdom derived from an educator's prior experiences, while acknowledging the contextual nature of this knowledge.

Within the broader landscape of education, teacher knowledge has been a subject of inquiry across various disciplines and perspectives, from chemistry education (Vinko et al., 2020; Wei & Liu, 2018) to physical education (Ennis, 1994; Ferry et al., 2022), mathematics teaching (Carpenter et al., 1996) science teaching (Aydemir, 2014; Ngaisah et al., 2018), preschool teaching (Horppu & Ikonen-Varila, 2004) and higher education (Sandoff et al., 2018; Süzer, 2007). Moreover, scholars have explored the multifaceted dimensions of teacher knowledge from different perspectives, such as professional development (Cladera et al., 2021; Van Velzen et al., 2012) and classroom management (Tartwijk et al., 2009). These investigations aim to underscore the pivotal role of teacher knowledge in shaping pedagogical practices, informing curriculum development and enhancing student learning outcomes.

Among the various facets of teacher knowledge, practical knowledge, enriched by experiential learning, has garnered significant attention over the past three decades (Clandinin, 1985; Golombek, 1998). Studies focusing on pre-service teaching have underscored the importance of sharing PPK with aspiring educators, highlighting its instrumental role in mentoring and teacher education initiatives (Faez, 2011; Kodele & Mesl, 2024; Mukeredzi & Manwa, 2019; Zanting et al., 1998). By imparting insights gleaned from real-world classroom experiences, educators contribute to the professional growth and development of novice teachers, fostering a rich ecosystem of knowledge exchange within the educational landscape.

PPK has also been studied in different fields, such as science teaching (Duffee & Aikenhead, 1992; Lee & Chang, 2010; Yıldırım, 2008; Yurdatapan & Savaş, 2014), primary mathematics instruction (Carpenter et al., 1996), preschool teaching (Horppu & Ikonen-Varila, 2004; Leijen et al., 2015) and foreign language teaching (Kaymakamoglu, 2019; Süzer, 2007; Swart et al., 2017). Perspectives such as reading comprehension in a foreign language have been

investigated by determining the importance of contextual issues through PPK (Rahmany et al., 2014), while classroom management in multicultural classes has been examined by focusing on the terms of respect, rapport and a positive class atmosphere through rules (Tartwijk et al., 2009). The way teachers build their PPK is also investigated in many studies (Arıogul, 2007; Leijen et al., 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011; Sandoff et al., 2018). The main concept of these studies has been to identify how teachers build their practical knowledge by specifying probable links between teachers' PPK and their perception of the environment.

The overarching objective of the present study is to contribute to the ongoing research exploring the intricate nature of teachers' PPK and its potential role in elucidating various dimensions of effective teaching practices. In order to achieve this aim, it is important to examine effective teaching, as teachers' perceptions of effectiveness serve as a crucial lens through which their PPK can be comprehended. For instance, Brown and Atkins (2002) emphasise the importance of aligning assessments of teaching effectiveness with individual teaching goals. This underscores the subjectivity inherent in defining effectiveness, as teaching objectives can vary significantly between educators based on their instructional philosophies, contextual factors and student populations. Consequently, teachers' and learners' conceptions of effective teaching may evolve in response to changing educational objectives and priorities.

Research has also revealed the dynamic and context-dependent nature of perceptions of effective teaching. Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) conducted a study examining English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of effective teacher characteristics within the Turkish context, highlighting variations based on disciplinary backgrounds and educational contexts. Similarly, Robinson and Lewis (2017) explored the characteristics associated with effective and ineffective teachers in urban schools, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of teaching effectiveness and the impact of contextual factors on instructional practices.

In addition to exploring perceptions of effective teaching, it is crucial to examine the sources and content contributing to teachers' PPK. Scholars such as Golombek (1998) categorise the content of PPK into domains such as self-knowledge, subject matter expertise, instructional strategies and contextual understanding. Levin and He (2008) emphasise the central role of teachers' beliefs in shaping their instructional practices, while Arıogul (2007) and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011) highlight the significance of prior learning experiences and contextual factors in the development of PPK among EFL educators. Moreover, effective teaching is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions beyond perceptions of effectiveness. Scholars have identified time and

classroom management, professional development and knowledge of teaching issues as essential components of effective teaching practices. Studies such as Minor et al. (2002) have investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions of effective teaching, further highlighting the diverse array of characteristics associated with effective educators.

By synthesising insights from studies examining effective teaching and the sources of teachers' PPK, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between PPK and effective teaching practices. Through this inquiry, the research seeks to contribute to the enhancement of teacher education programmes and the refinement of instructional practices in diverse educational contexts. Despite the existence of numerous studies examining the intersection of PPK and effective teaching across various educational domains, there appears to be a notable gap in research focusing on EFL teachers. To the best of our knowledge, no longitudinal study has been undertaken to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of effective teaching through the lens of PPK.

The present study therefore endeavours to fill this gap by investigating the benefits of incorporating awareness of PPK into effective teaching practices among EFL teachers. By examining the knowledge base emphasised by EFL educators in their perceptions of effective teaching, the research aims to shed light on the intricate dynamics between PPK and pedagogical effectiveness in the context of language instruction. Addressing this research question is crucial not only for advancing our understanding of effective teaching practices within the realm of EFL education, but also for informing teacher education initiatives aimed at cultivating a deeper appreciation of the role of PPK in enhancing pedagogical outcomes. Ultimately, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights to the field of language education and to foster the continual improvement of teaching practices among EFL educators by addressing the following research question:

- Which knowledge domains do EFL teachers focus on more through their perceptions of effective teaching?

Method

Participants

Sim et al. (2018) determined that the recommended number of participants for phenomenological studies is from three to ten. The present study was conducted among seven experienced EFL teachers across three public education institutions in Turkey, as the focus was to gain in-depth information about the phenomenon of effective teaching through PPK. Purposive and criterion sampling were utilised to select the study participants. In addition to actively

teaching EFL courses, the participating teachers also served as mentors for pre-service teachers in English Language Teaching (ELT) departments, which was the criterion for the aim of the study. Such teachers are required to acquire a certificate by attending a mentor training programme carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MONE) and are involved in both teaching and mentoring. The participants who were selected purposefully for the investigation of PPK through their effective teaching perceptions were drawn from the limited number of teachers who had acquired this mentoring certificate. All of the participants signed a consent form indicating that they were participating in the study on a voluntary basis.

As shown in Table 1, five of the participants were female and two were male. Their ages ranged from 32 to 50 years. In terms of education, four had graduated from a Faculty of Education, while three had graduated from a Faculty of Arts and Sciences; one held a master's degree, while the others held bachelor's degrees. One of the participants had 8 years of teaching experience, four had 11–16 years, and two had 20–25 years; one taught in a high school, while the others taught in secondary schools.

Table 1

Demographic features of the participants

Code	Gender	Age	Experience	Department	Qualification	School
T1	Female	37	14	Education	Bachelor	Secondary
T2	Female	37	15	Arts and Sciences	Bachelor	Secondary
T3	Male	50	25+	Education	Bachelor	High school
T4	Female	32	8	Education	Bachelor	Secondary
T5	Female	49	20	Arts and Sciences	Bachelor	Secondary
T6	Male	40	16	Arts and Sciences	Master	Secondary
T7	Female	34	11	Education	Bachelor	Secondary

Interviews and observations were conducted in the participants' home institutions, where they were teaching more than 24 hours per week. All of the participants utilised course materials standardised by MONE, employed smartboards and facilitated various skills-based activities. The specific work and teaching environments, the learners' individual differences and the teachers' individuality may have affected the latter's PPK.

Instruments

Data were collected via observations and three semi-structured interviews. Before data collection, a form was prepared to document basic demographic information about each participant. This information included gender, age, faculty of graduation, teaching experience and previous training attended.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The question content for the first semi-structured interview was prepared before the interview session. The basic criterion for the interview questions was their relevance to the teachers' PPK about effective teaching. After developing an initial set of questions, these were reviewed by a field expert with a doctorate in educational sciences to ensure the credibility of the study. The goal of this review was to determine whether the interview questions correlated with the study's main research question. Following the expert's review, the final interview questions were determined, comprising seven open-ended questions. When necessary, some extra questions could be asked to clarify the participants' responses; thus, the interview was semi-structured. Based on the transcriptions and content analysis of the first round of interviews, the interview questions for subsequent sessions were developed so as to expand and explore the initial responses. The semi-structured interviews took place over the course of one academic year. Table 2 presents the date range, meantime and number of words employed within each set of interviews.

Table 2

Summary of date range, meantime and number of words in interviews

Interviews	Date Range	Meantime	Number of Words
1st round	October–December 2018	200 mins	8,067
2nd round	March–April 2019	250 mins	13,252
3rd round	May 2019	120 mins	4,870
Total	Eight months	570 mins	26,189

The recordings, totalling 570 minutes in duration, included 26,189 words, which were transcribed *verbatim*. The first round of interviews included 8,067 words, the second comprised 13,252 words and the third had 4,870 words. All of the interviews were semi-structured in order to gather the participants' opinions, beliefs and perceptions regarding teaching effectiveness more accurately.

Following the first round of interview transcription, the second round of interviews was conducted in order to elaborate the responses from the first

round. Again, all of the interview questions were reviewed by a field expert prior to being finalised. The second round of interviews included 12 questions. After the second round, classroom observation commenced. The third set of interview questions was then developed following the same procedures as the first two sets, and five questions were included in this third interview set. The responses were transcribed *verbatim*.

The transcriptions of each interview recording were crucial to the data collection process, as listening to the participants repeatedly enabled the researchers to become more familiar with their individual experiences and different perceptions of teaching effectiveness.

Classroom Observation Form

Each participant was observed for two hours of classroom teaching. This enabled the researchers to observe the participants with different groups of students throughout the two-hour teaching period. Classroom observation in this study was based on the notion of "non-participant observation", in which researchers do not participate in the activities or situation of the observation context (Fraenkel et al., 2012). An observation form was employed during the classroom observation to observe the consistency between the expressions that were stated in the interviews and the in-class activities, and to investigate the EFL teachers' PPK in effective class teaching. The purpose of each observation was to determine whether the participant applied the things that s/he had mentioned in the interviews. As Connelly et al. (1997) point out, what the research subject says and what s/he does in the classroom needs to be studied as a whole. Thus, the things that the participants did actively during teaching were noted down on the observation form in line with the research goal.

Research Design

The present study employs a qualitative descriptive design. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research explores a human or social problem via inductive or deductive "patterned or [thematic]" meaning-making. The methodology of this study is grounded in phenomenology and aims to describe a specific phenomenon, that is, effective teaching in the actual study within shared experiences. Experienced teachers' perceptions of effective teaching from the perspective of PPK are described in the study, so it is an example of phenomenological research. Creswell (2007) states that "... a phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (p.

57). Interviews and observations were conducted to gather data regarding in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of teaching effectiveness. Shared perceptions of teaching effectiveness were considered among teachers from three different state institutions in Turkey.

Inductive content analysis was utilised to categorise the interview responses and observation notes. Following the transcription of the interview recordings, the responses and observation notes were analysed by listing the attributes identified by each participant. Categories of attributes were then created. Afterward, categories of attributes and related transcriptions were given to three raters enrolled in a master's programme at the researchers' home institution. In collaboration with the researchers, the raters identified correlations between the categories of attributes. The data collected in the interviews and observations were then examined and the participants' responses were arranged into categories. Similar utterances produced by the participants were collected under a code and then reviewed in terms of their frequency of use. Finally, a field expert reviewed the analysis results. The participants were coded as T1, T2, etc., but were also assigned pseudonyms. Table 3 contains the pseudonyms used for each participant, as referenced in the analysis of the results.

Table 3
Pseudonyms for the participants

Code	Pseudonym
T1	Zehra
T2	Berna
T3	Bekir
T4	Zuhal
T5	Asu
T6	Tufan
T7	Defne

Credibility

In order to ensure credibility, the study employs the "prolonged engagement" strategy, which involves maintaining contact with the participants over an extended period. A field expert was also consulted throughout the data collection process to supplement this form of credibility. Transferability was ensured by describing the participants' features and workplace environment in depth. In case the researchers decide to conduct a similar study among another group of participants, the data collection process is elaborated to ensure confirmability.

The findings derived from data analysis of the EFL teachers' PPK of teaching effectiveness cohere with the data sources, while the study's main aim is consistent with the data collection tools utilised. Finally, the involvement of graduate-level research assistants as well as field experts in the data collection and analysis stages supports the credibility of the data collected in the study.

Results

Regarding the characteristics of effective teaching as practised by the surveyed teachers in their settings, the following five themes emerged: classroom dynamics, students' motivation, teacher engagement, assessment and engagement strategies in education, and empowering environment for active learning. Within these basic themes, more specific sub-themes were identified. Presented in Table 4, these sub-themes were determined by taking into account the opinion of an expert.

Table 4

Themes and codes in qualitative analysis

Themes	Codes
Classroom Dynamics	Improving students' development, practices, students' language production, teachers' supportiveness, interactive practice with students, language development, collaborative development, learning with language, interaction between native speakers, learning by teaching, educational development
Students' Motivation	Teachers' supportiveness, learning with language, developing insight, educational development, conversational techniques, interactive practice with students, insight, modelling practice, language development
Teacher Engagement	Challenging practice, overviewing plans, collaborative development, assigning students, developing material, involving parents
Assessment and Engagement Strategies in Education	Test results, feedback, interactive practice with students, learners' interest
Empowering Environment for Active Learning	Learning by teaching, learner-oriented, developing physical conditions and teachers' supportiveness

Frequency was used to denote the number of participants who mentioned a specific thematic code, and the highest frequency themes included *language development*, *active participation* and *teachers' supportiveness*. The thematic codes and frequencies are displayed in bar chart form in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Definition of teaching effectiveness
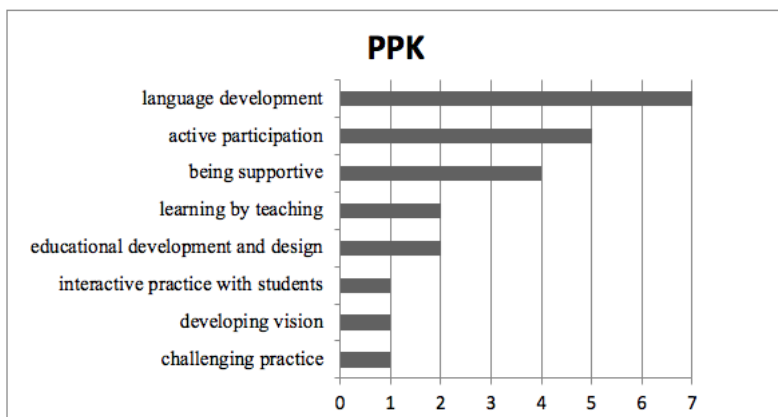
In terms of defining teaching effectiveness, the most frequent aspect was *language development* (f: 7). All of the participants referred to language development in their definitions of teaching effectiveness, highlighting the fact that effective teaching leads to the development of all language skills, particularly speaking. For example, Bekir expressed that "effective teaching is a teaching model that includes four basic language skills, but speaking should be more heavily loaded. A learner should understand what he listens to and reply to it with his courage" (Bekir-Interview 1). Additionally, Tufan asserted, "If learners can express themselves or their lives from 'A' to 'Z', then we can talk about effective teaching. Their language development shows us effective teaching" (Tufan-Interview 1).

From the classroom observation, it was clear that the teachers utilised worksheets, smartboard presentations and supplemental activities to foster the students' language development, allowing students to speak, play or interact to encourage their active participation. When the students got into difficulty while performing, the teachers were supportive. Zuhal let her students answer some challenging fill-in-the-blanks activities allowing the students to come up with answers by focusing on the sentences.
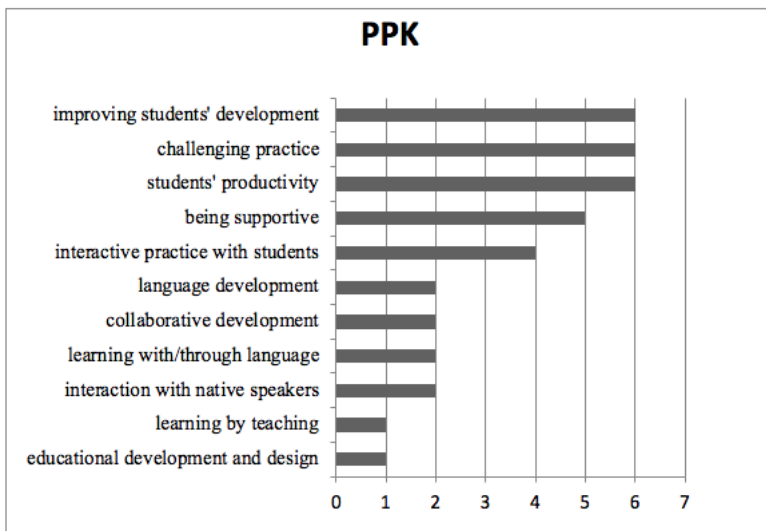
Classroom dynamics

While investigating the participants' PPK through their perceptions of effective teaching, the theme of classroom dynamics emerged, which shows the environment within which the classroom community of teachers and students

interact as well as their means of interaction in that environment. In order to explore this theme, the participants were asked to provide clarification regarding what they considered to be effective teaching practices. The PPK codes and frequencies are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Classroom Dynamics

In terms of classroom dynamics, the most common themes were *improving students' development*, *challenging practice* and *students' language productivity* (f: 6). Nearly all of the participants referred to these themes in their conceptions of effective teaching. Regarding *improving students' development*, they asserted that effective classroom teaching leads learners towards self-improvement. Zehra's and Berna's comments indicate the importance of the syllabus and the language level in this improvement. Zehra explained, "First, considering the framework of the syllabus, I determine which activities I will use for improving each learner's development according to them" (Zehra-Interview 2). On the other hand, Berna explained the following:

> In different classrooms, the teacher needs to consider learners' classroom community. For example, when I use an activity that includes a difficult item, I try to teach it simply, not giving details. It is already challenging for them. However, in another classroom, I teach everything about that specific grammar item because they understand all of it. (Berna-Interview 2)

Classroom observation indicated that the participants empowered learners to express themselves and that they respect the value learners bring to the classroom. They also allowed learners to utilise technology throughout the lesson; for example, Defne, Zehra, Asu and Berna allowed learners to use smartboards. Defne and Zuhal also used group work activities for collaborative development.

Students' Motivation

The theme of students' motivation also emerged in the participants' perceptions of teaching effectiveness. In order to expand this theme, questions focused on specific means of engaging students. The codes and frequencies are presented in Figure 3.
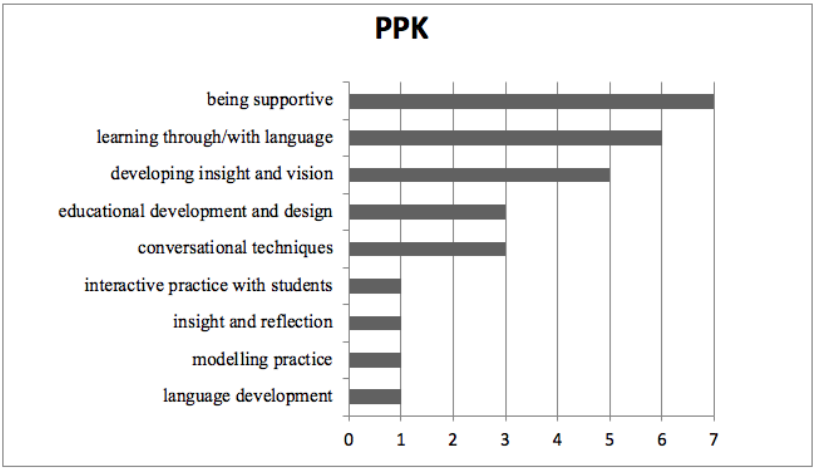
Figure 3
Students' Motivation

Figure 3 demonstrates that being supportive, learning with/through language, developing insight and vision, educational development and design, conversational techniques, interactive practice with students, insight and reflection, modelling practice, and language development were referenced to increase learner motivation. The most frequently referenced issue in terms of motivation was being supportive (f: 7). All of the participants referred to supportiveness in their perceptions of student motivation within effective teaching, emphasising that learners should value the class and the teacher and that teachers should be

supportive in order for learners to derive this value. Supportiveness was linked to terms such as "loving", "endearing" and "appealing". Engaging learners' backgrounds and interests was also cited as a practice for increasing motivation. Tufan's, Defne's and Zuhal's comments demonstrate their perceptions of motivating practices. Tufan states, "At the beginning, if the teacher endears himself/herself to students or gets their interests in the class, then s/he accomplishes the most important goal both for learners and the teacher" (Tufan-Interview 2). Similarly, Defne explains, "In this generation, students love visuals. They are important to them, so I provide a video at the beginning of the class to support them or I use a smartboard to get their attention; otherwise, they could get bored easily" (Defne-Interview 2). Finally, Zuhal claims, "In order to get learners active, you need to find a variety of activities that address different learners" (Zuhal-Interview 2).

In terms of classroom observation, it was interesting that Zehra and Defne fostered the students' motivation by appealing to their personal experiences. Moreover, Zehra and Bekir employed positive language to encourage the learners and were especially sensitive about being positive in order to better support them, often smiling at them. In addition, Defne, Zehra and Berna used smartboards, visuals and videos to motivate the learners. They made an effort to use technology during class because their students were interested in smartboards.

Teacher Engagement

Another quality referenced in the context of teaching effectiveness was teacher engagement, which emerged from the participants' perceptions of being prepared for the class in order to be effective. The codes and frequencies related to teacher preparation are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Teacher Engagement
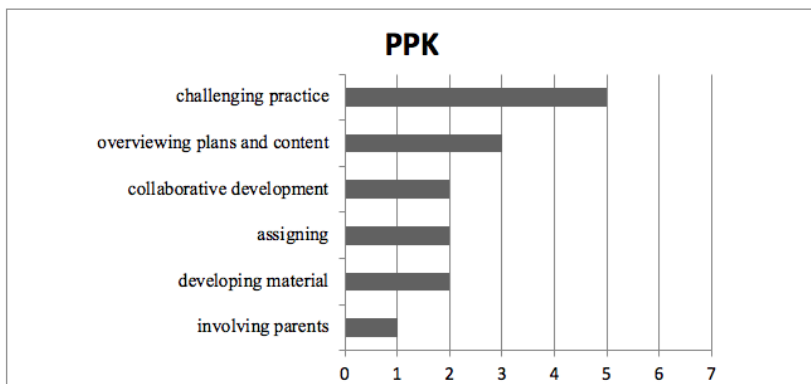
As shown in Figure 4, the themes of teacher engagement included challenging practice, overviewing plans and content, collaborative development, assigning, developing material and involving parents. The most frequently referenced theme was challenging practice (f: 5). The teachers felt responsible for preparing for each class by creating practices, exercises, questions or tests related to syllabus content. They also felt responsible for encouraging students to study more. Thus, they prepared challenging activities such as worksheets and questionnaires to keep the learners focused. These exercises were slightly difficult but achievable, thus meeting the students' needs: they were neither too easy nor too hard for the learners' level, making them appropriately challenging. The second most emphasised issue was overviewing plans and content (f: 3). In order to prepare for each class, the teacher should identify the lesson's steps, activities and content. Collaborative development, developing materials and assigning/giving homework were also mentioned by the participants (f: 2). The participants felt that collaborative development in cooperation with their colleagues helped them to improve their field knowledge and classroom teaching practices, as demonstrated by Bekir's and Defne's comments. Bekir explains the following:

> For example, the present perfect tense is a difficult grammar item to teach because there is no cover in Turkish. Many years ago, I learnt from my Spanish colleague to use two circles with an intersection to teach it. That really works for me even today. In that, my student does not like listening to me for hours. (Bekir-Interview 2)

Similarly, Defne explains "I find or create some new worksheets, presentations or videos before the class. If there is a song related to the topic, then I try to find it" (Defne-Interview 2).

Preparing student-appropriate activities was highlighted as an important aspect of teacher engagement. Some of the participants emphasised the importance of collaborating with colleagues to create these tailored activities. In an effort to enhance her teaching effectiveness, Asu informed one student's parent about their performance on a test and called another parent to report that their child had not completed their homework.

Assessment and Engagement Strategies in Education

Assessment and engagement strategies in education were also major themes related to teaching effectiveness. In order to explore these issues, questions related to an effective teacher's assessment methods and engagement

strategies were also discussed. The thematic codes and frequencies are displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Assessment and Engagement Strategies in Education
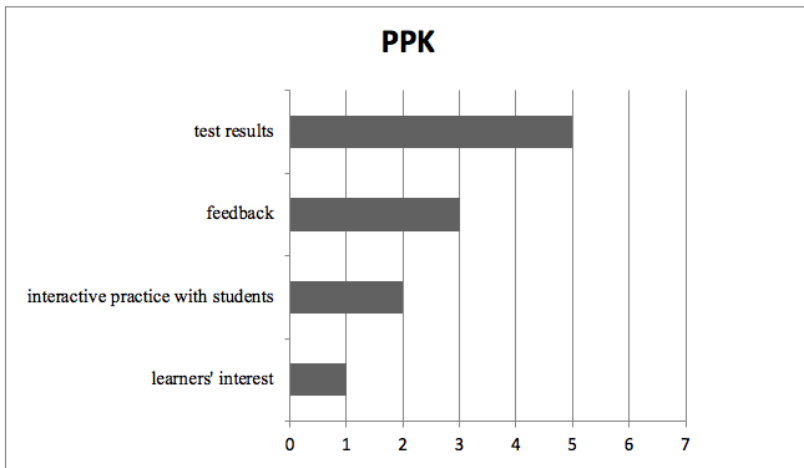
As shown in Figure 5, test results, feedback, interactive practices with students, and learners' interests were referenced as ways of assessing the teachers' own effectiveness. Test results were the most emphasised theme (f: 5). Most of the participants were teaching eighth graders in secondary school settings. These students were preparing for a final exam called the High School Entrance Exam (HSEE), which includes ten multiple-choice questions in English, so the teachers wanted to prepare the learners for this exam. Throughout the term, practice tests were administered and the teachers evaluated the results as a means of judging their teaching effectiveness. Moreover, they adapted their teaching methods and content focus based on the results. It was remarked that administrators also viewed the test results in order to gauge both teaching and teacher effectiveness. For example, if the students earned high marks, their teacher may be offered the opportunity to teach more successful classes the following year. On the other hand, some of the surveyed teachers did not regard test results as an accurate indicator of teaching effectiveness, as some students studied at home, where they were able to take additional practice tests. Thus, some of the participants thought that test results were not directly related to effective teaching, as other factors like study habits may also play a role. Zehra stated, "I think that effective teaching is not directly related to test results

because students study at home, too. They may get private courses" (Zehra-Interview 2). Similarly, Bekir explained, "During the class, I ask the students some questions related to past topics. I understand whether it is taught effectively or not according to students' replies" (Bekir-Interview 2).

Test results were clearly an important factor in assessing teaching effectiveness. Some of the participants even congratulated students who earned high scores in tests, while learners who earned low marks were advised to study more diligently and answer more multiple-choice practice questions prior to taking tests. These students were assigned additional practice tests and exercises and were encouraged to revise new vocabulary. The teachers provided feedback when students asked how to improve their test scores. Zuhal and Zehra effectively assessed their teaching methods through student interactions, as interaction between students leads to more effective teaching. Tufan assessed his teaching effectiveness by engaging the students' interest.

Empowering Environment for Active Learning

Another theme related to perceptions of teaching effectiveness was teachers' empowering the environment for active learning. As defined by the participants, environments that need to be empowered included limited time for language classes, the washback effect, busy teachers (who have many issues to deal with), memorisation, analytical approach habits, and limited access to target language input. The participants were consequently asked some questions related to overcoming challenges. The thematic codes and frequencies are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Empowering Environments for Active Learning
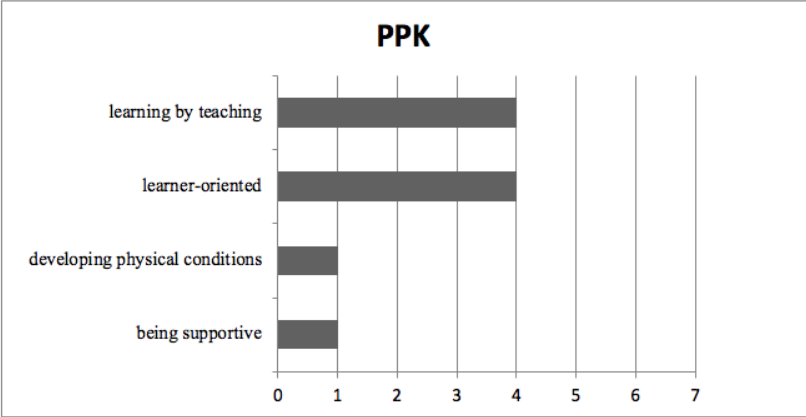
As shown in Figure 6, the participants referenced learning by teaching, a learner-oriented approach, developing physical conditions and being supportive as effective strategies to create an empowering environment. Learning by teaching and a learner-oriented approach were the most emphasised behaviours (f: 4). The participants compared their own learning conditions with current situational problems surrounding their learners. For example, it was remarked that a lack of course material was overcome by technological developments. Furthermore, the teachers learned how to overcome such problems with teaching experience.

Other behaviours that the participants emphasised as effective reactions to empowerment issues were arrangements for learners within the curriculum framework. While taking into account the syllabus, learners' individual differences such as their language proficiency level and their ages were also considered. Thus, learner-oriented was added as a code under this issue (f: 4). Berna's, Tufan's and Zuhal's comments indicate learner-oriented teaching practices. Berna expressed the following:

> It is so difficult to overcome systemic problems because there is an exam at the end of the term. I cannot implement speaking activities. For example, I try to teach the subject according to the learners by using materials, or I know that they learn vocabulary instead of grammar. I regulate everything in the class by considering them. (Berna-Interview 3)

Similarly, Tufan stated, "I think not having a special language classroom is a systemic problem. For instance, we need extra equipment for listening. The teacher should try to solve this problem by meeting with parents" (Tufan-Interview 2). Zuhal explained, "In order to overcome problems, I try endearing the class. For example, I use games that the students like" (Zuhal-Interview 2)

In Zuhal's classroom observation, the students were arguing about a problem they had experienced during the break period, and one of the students reported it to Zuhal. This was a systemic problem for Zuhal due to limited class time. She tried to solve the problem of class disruption by redirecting the students' attention to an interactive game on the smartboard, and succeeded in overcoming the problem by using an interactive game that the learners could enjoy.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the nature of PPK among EFL instructors through their perceptions of teaching effectiveness. The findings indicate that perceptions of effective teaching relate to both teachers and learners. According to

both groups, effective language teaching involves the ability to improve learners' language performance, encourage active language use among learners, provide teacher support and build relationships with students, and practise teacher engagement. These findings align with previous research on PPK (Chen, 2005; Chetcui, 2009; Chou, 2008; Dorovolomo, 2004; Gholami & Husu, 2010; Rahmany et al., 2014; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011; Sandoff et al., 2018; Tang, 2010; Tsang, 2004) and effective teaching (Arslan, 2014; Barnes & Lock, 2013; Brown, 2009; Chireshe, 2011; Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015; Sakamoto, 2012). The results demonstrate that EFL teachers' PPK impacts their teaching effectiveness. Consequently, teachers can be guided to use recent developments in English language teaching, such as technological and methodological advancements, to enhance their learners' language competence across the four skills. The participants also mentioned limited class time and external interference as factors affecting teaching effectiveness.

Improving students' development, providing challenging practices and encouraging students' language production were the issues most frequently emphasised by the participants in defining effective language teaching in classrooms. Additionally, while discussing students' development and the provision of challenging practices, the participants highlighted the differences between students. These results are similar to a study by Chetcuti (2009) investigating gender differences in science teachers' PPK, which found that teachers focused on learners' individuality, particularly cultural and social background, rather than gender differences. Parker and Rennie (2002) and Johnston (1992) emphasised learners' individual needs and found that establishing good relationships with learners was essential to determining individual needs. Similarly emphasising challenging practices as a form of student development, Dorovolomo (2004) conceived of the teacher as a "tour guide" who guides student tourists to various activities, locations or sites. The teacher also guides learners to challenging practices according to individual student needs. It can be said that teachers should be supported in using classroom dynamics more effectively in order to train their learners to be more autonomous.

Another finding of the present study, which correlated with existing research on teaching effectiveness, pertained to teacher support and learner motivation. For example, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011) states that "language teaching should no longer concentrate just on learning the system of the target language but also motivate learners to develop their social and intercultural skills" (p. 365). In the current study, being supportive was the most emphasised issue in teacher perceptions of motivation. Without teacher supportiveness, it is difficult to engage students, who need to feel valued on a personal level. A study by DeVries and Beijaard (1999) similarly found that learners' positive emotional

dispositions created through a positive classroom atmosphere impacted their motivation. Tartwijk et al. (2009) observed similar results in multicultural classrooms. Moreover, a study by Richards (1996) demonstrated humanity and trust as forms of learner motivation, while Bremner (2020) underlined positive relationship-building between teachers and students. Motivation is an important issue to increase learners' productivity in the target language, which is why teachers should be educated about how to create a positive atmosphere in language classrooms, enabling language learners to develop positive attitudes towards language learning and come to value such learning.

Regarding teacher engagement, the results of the present study correlate with several other studies that have asserted the importance of teacher engagement for effective foreign-language teaching. For example, in a study by Barnes and Lock (2013), respondents thought that an effective language teacher should actively prepare for each class; thus, "good preparation" was rated highly as an attribute for effective teaching (p.24). Similarly, Dorovolomo (2004) valued "thorough preparation" as a means of achieving lesson goals and creating positive learning conditions (p. 12). Sandoff et al. (2018) also underlined the significance of teacher engagement with regard to teaching effectiveness. Similarly, Barnes and Lock (2013) found that students also overwhelmingly favoured teacher engagement. Chilla et al. (2024) valued teachers' preparedness for digital inclusion in a foreign language teaching context. On the other hand, Sakamoto (2012) highlighted the "ill-preparedness" of EFL teachers in terms of training, finding that several teachers who lacked sufficient training were underprepared. Therefore, teachers should be supported in planning content for lessons and designing effective activities during their pre-service education. Additionally, teacher educators could design their lessons in such a way that pre-service teachers are given enough opportunities to practise lesson design.

In terms of teacher engagement, the most emphasised aspect of the current study was the creation of supplemental materials and practices. The surveyed teachers stated that they felt responsible for preparing additional practices, exercises, questions and tests to supplement the material in the syllabus. One effect of designing these additional practices was increased engagement and motivation among learners. Parallel to this finding, a study by Cherishe (2011) found that effective lecturers were perceived as those who delivered extra handouts, used additional teaching materials, explained lessons clearly and delivered them well.

Assessment and engagement strategies in education were among the themes that emerged in the surveyed teachers' perceptions of teaching effectiveness. Test results, feedback, interactive practices and individualised practices

were all emphasised within this theme. In particular, the teachers focused on test results to assess teaching effectiveness. Moreover, the washback effect was viewed as one cause of this emphasis on test results. Duffee and Aikenhead's (1992) investigation of science teachers' PPK of student evaluation found that assessment techniques differed from one teacher to another and that students' daily work significantly impacted each teacher's assessment method. The participants in the current study did not highlight the aspect of daily performance in their conceptions of effective assessment, instead focusing on test results as a means of teaching effectiveness, partly due to the mandatory testing requirements (an entrance exam) that are integral to their students' transition to high school.

Another significant theme that emerged in perceptions of teaching effectiveness was teacher behaviour in the context of empowering environments for active learning. In this regard, the focus was on systemic problems, including limited time for language classes, the washback effect, memorisation, the education system and limited access to the target language. The results indicated that the teachers perceived learning by teaching, learner-oriented teaching, development of physical conditions and supportiveness as effective reactions to these systemic problems. These findings correlate with those of Gholami and Hulu (2010), who emphasised the value of learning by teaching, explaining that "generally, teachers justified their practice by their experience" (p. 1524). Rahmany et al. (2014) also highlighted learning by teaching and learner-oriented teaching, noting differences between teachers' PPK due to contextual issues. According to them, teachers used individualised ways of teaching, which involved utilising personal experience to overcome new problems. In another study, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011) explored inexperienced teachers' construction of teaching methods through PPK and found that the discourses of teachers may be either "restricting" or "opening" (pp. 369–71), with restricting discourses being described as involving "restrictions, limitations, and norms" (pp. 369–71). The emphasis on systemic problems in the present study may be viewed as restricting discourses, as they create obstacles for teachers. In Ruohotie-Lyhty's study, teachers' means of dealing with restrictions were referred to as "teachers' agency" instead of PPK (p. 324).

According to the results of the present study, a variety of issues comprised EFL teachers' PPK in terms of teaching effectiveness. The most frequently referenced themes were language, learner, context, material and teachers. Language development was also emphasised, as it relates to all aspects of language teaching. In summary, teachers' characteristics, practices and experiences determine their current and future teaching effectiveness. PPK enables

greater self-awareness and teaching effectiveness among teachers. Thus, PPK can be said to have certain implications for teachers, learners, teacher educators and material designers. Teachers could be given more opportunities to raise their awareness about their own practices. When they reflect on their personal practices, they can improve their personal practical knowledge, which might contribute to teacher learning. Similarly, in teacher education programmes, pre-service teachers could be trained in strategies related to taking responsibility for their own learning and being open to change, while some courses could be designed so that pre-service teachers are taught how to increase their professional learning. Teacher educators could guide pre-service teachers in their teaching practice so that they learn how to raise their own awareness about their professional development. Material designers could provide activities that teachers can use more creatively in their classrooms. This may also be an opportunity for teachers to develop themselves while using materials. Teachers should be provided with opportunities to use the same material in different ways with different language proficiency levels of groups in various contexts. This may also encourage teachers to develop themselves individually. While the findings of the present study may offer important insights, it could be expanded in a few main ways. First of all, a greater number of participating EFL teachers may offer a means of generalising the findings among different groups. Moreover, additional studies could focus on EFL teachers' PPK of teaching effectiveness in terms of distinct language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

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