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An Ethnographic Investigation of Activity Modifications in EFL Classrooms*

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ABSTRACT

Task-based pedagogy states that learning is the outcome of an interaction between the student, the teacher, and the activity. Therefore, for the learner to be successful, the teacher must have full command of this interaction and be able to modify the activity in the best interest of students. In our experiences and observations of classrooms, we have noticed that the level of this interaction and modifications vary among language teachers.

The present ethnographic study attempts to identify potential sources of EFL teachers' activity modifications by exploring the teachers' perceptions of the natures, aims, and requirements of a given language-learning activity. The knowledge of potential sources of mismatch between teacher intentions and the natures of activities help to inform EFL teachers about language-learning activities at hand; as a result, the desired outcomes of teaching activities are achieved.

To guide this study, three research questions were constructed regarding a) the types of activity modifications in EFL classes, b) the number of modifications and its relationship to the number in years of teaching experience, and c) the themes behind the reasons for modification. For these purposes, EFL teachers' classroom activity modifications were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Six in-service language teachers of a university-level preparatory class were visited and their activity modifications were recorded on the Activity Modification Sheet. Later they were interviewed to discuss these modifications. The results of the current study reveal the types of modifications made in language classes and suggest four major themes pertaining the reasons for activity modifications: *clarification, time management, student feedback,* and *professional collaboration*. However, the results also demonstrate the lack of a statistically significant relationship between the participants' numbers of modification and their numbers in years of teaching experience.

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Keywords:
EFL teaching activities, activity modification, classroom dynamics.

Introduction

Foreign language learning and teaching extensively has been subject to general instructional theories and applications. Therefore, the changes in instructional focus in general education present further implications for language classrooms. For instance, recent improvements in instruction have brought certain changes in education, specifically in language teaching and learning. Whereas the traditional approach emphasized the provision and delivery of content, the modern approach concerned itself primarily with the enhanced role of learners, hence its common reference as the learner-centred approach (Fullan, 2007). It is important to realize that this new approach in language classrooms has resulted from a broader paradigmatic shift in education.

These instructional changes also bring transformations pertaining teachers and their roles in foreign language classrooms. Within all educational approaches, teachers assume various roles to fulfill their

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professional duties (Choudhury, 2011). One of the most commonly acknowledged descriptions of the teacher's role in modern classrooms is, as given by Littlewood, that of a facilitator of learning rather than an instructor of traditional views (1981, p. 92). Within the field of language teaching and learning, this perspective has gained increasing recognition, especially with the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching practices. Language teachers as facilitators are expected to perform certain sub-roles in order to successfully facilitate learning. These teachers are recognized as active decision makers who play a fundamental role in classroom activities and events such as planning, anticipating, judging, diagnosing, prescribing, and problem solving (Borg, 2006).

Teacher Autonomy

All teaching approaches share one main characteristic which is required for their successful implementation in classrooms: teacher autonomy. Autonomy generally is defined as an individual's capability to make decisions and employ them which determine his or her actions. Two main components, i.e. willingness and ability, control this capability (Littlewood, 1997, p. 428). Through autonomy, teachers are constant learners—reflective, self-evaluative professionals who plan, execute and evaluate activities and events with the goal of improving teaching and learning practices. Also, autonomous teachers tend to hold an increased meta-cognitive capacity for improved teaching expertise as well as a higher sense of responsibility for investigating potentials, detecting opportunities, making sound judgments, and taking part in actions individually and as a group. In contrast to the language teacher's role from a traditional perspective, the role of an autonomous teacher entails designing a student-centred classroom rather than a teacher-centred classroom in which the teacher is regarded as a dominant authority figure; moreover, teaching tasks rather than learning tasks are of primary focus (Choudhury, 2001).

Among the many other definitions and descriptions of teacher autonomy and characteristics of autonomous teachers, one comprehensive explanation by Smith and Erdogan (Smith & Erdogan, 2008) lists the dimensions of teacher autonomy in language teaching as follows:

In relation to professional action:

A. Self-directed professional action
B. Capacity for self-directed professional action
C. Freedom from control over professional action

In relation to professional development:

D. Self-directed professional development
E. Capacity for self-directed professional development
F. Freedom from control over professional development

Autonomy has been proposed to comprise six dimensions in two major areas, specifically dimensions in relation with professional action and dimensions in relation with professional development. In the first field, autonomous teachers tend to assume a professional role through which they continuously seek for development opportunities in a reflective and self-managing process. By the same token, they possess the capacity to improve themselves with these opportunities and implement what they perceive will benefit their classroom and teaching (Little, 2000; Lamb, 2008). Another important dimension is the freedom from control over professional development. In certain institutions, teachers are not always allowed to act freely when taking actions toward improving professional development, which brings a constraint on teachers' autonomy. The dimensions in relation to professional development require autonomous teachers to have intrinsic motivation towards identifying development opportunities and using these opportunities.

The outside controls and constraints play an incapacitating role in teachers' autonomous actions for professional development. In some cases, this role may even affect teachers to the extent that they perceive themselves as powerless in behaving autonomously; therefore, they develop negative attitudes towards their profession (Lamb, 2008). On the other hand, teachers develop an autonomous learning behaviour in time and they continuously contemplate the implications of this autonomy in language teaching and the learning process. They bring their own sets of tools to develop autonomy such as their past experiences as learners and teacher-learners (Jiménez Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2007). These tools not only help them develop and improve their autonomy but at the same time support teachers' need to reflect on their autonomy and professional development.

Activities in Language Education

There have been many uses and definitions of the term "activity" in the language teaching field. Although there are certain distinctions between them, for the purposes of this specific study we employed all tasks, exercises, activities, and duties in the sense that they refer to the same concept as activities. Therefore, the definitions and explanations regarding activities, in a way, cover all of these in this study. However, it is significant at this point to make clear that there are certain distinguishing characteristics of tasks common (Willis, 2005).

1. In carrying out a task the learners' principal focus is on exchanging and understanding meanings rather than on practicing form or pre-specified forms or patterns.

2. There is some kind of purpose or goal set for the task, so that learners know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the task, for example to write a list of differences, to complete a route map or a picture, to report a solution to a problem, to vote on the best decorated student room or the most interesting/memorable personal anecdote.

3. The outcome of the completed task can be shared in some way with others.

4. Tasks can involve any or all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

5. The use of tasks does not preclude language-focused study at some points in a task-based language lesson, though a focus on specific grammar rules or patterns will not generally come before the task itself, as this could well detract from the real communicative purpose of the subsequent interaction.

All of these listed characteristics can apply to several different types of tasks, including listing tasks, ordering and sorting tasks, comparing tasks, problem solving tasks, personal experience-sharing tasks, and creative tasks (Willis, 1996). Despite all of these common characteristics of tasks, activities that require learners to use language structures and patterns they have just been taught may not be considered as tasks in this sense. This is because the main focus in these activities is not always on the understanding of the meaning or exchange of it. Most of the time, the principle focus in such activities is not on learners expressing and exchanging their own meanings but on practicing pre-specified language forms or functions and displaying their ability to 'produce' these patterns (Skehan, 1998, p. 95).

One of the most efficient educational frameworks derived from modern educational paradigms for the theory and practice of teaching second or foreign languages is the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The use of realistic tasks in language classrooms brings "together the various dimensions of language, social context and the mental processes of individual learners that are key to learning" (Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009, p. 11). In general, TBLT can be described as a collection of ideas associated with the modern philosophy of education, theories of second-language acquisition, pragmatic conclusions on successful instructional techniques, and the requirements of language education in existing societies. Although the potential value and promise of TBLT to promote language education to appears, to a large extent, to be engaging for many teachers and researchers, considerable diversity in theoretical scope, applied practice, and research have been observed with regard to the nature of TBLT.

In a similar vein, considerable attention has been devoted to task design and task-based syllabus design. According to Gilabert (2007) two different agendas have inspired research into task features. The first one is the interactionist perspective which has concerned itself with establishing what kind of modifications can be applied to tasks so that teachers might facilitate learning by generating specific conversational episodes. These episodes are regarded as negotiations of meaning, which is of principal importance for successful completion of tasks and therefore for thriving learning processes. Gilabert (2007) also observed that studies of TBLT and the features of tasks have been particularly interested in the elements of tasks that could direct interactive and meaningful production among students. The specific examples given in these tasks were clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks. Through the use of these tools, tasks can lead to more effective language use and acquisition in English as a Foreign Language classes.

Activity Modification

English language teachers, more than their counterparts in other subject matters, have benefitted from textbooks that improve their teaching and learning processes. These textbooks are essential in language classes as they provide ample opportunities for a coherent syllabus and structure to the teaching and learning process (Allen, 2015). However, preparing a full textbook from scratch is an arduous job and it requires a lot of time, training, and skills as well as language proficiency. In situations in which required time and personnel are not available, institutions tend to use textbooks prepared by prestigious publishing companies. In most non-native contexts, course materials and textbooks mostly are imported from native-speaking countries. This use of foreign materials increases the risk that elements of the materials are unsuitable for the needs of the learners in that non-native country and culture. Therefore, it is the language teacher's responsibility to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of course materials on teaching and learning processes and to adapt the materials appropriately (Calvert & Sheen, 2014).

TBLT suggests that language learning is the output of a rather spontaneous interaction among the activity, the student, and the context of the activity. Therefore, this interaction and its effectiveness determine the success of the learning process, and if there is a mismatch between these components, academic achievement is jeopardised. In other words, the success of learning depends largely on the degree to which teacher intention and learner interpretation of a given activity converge (Kumaravadivelu, 1991). This convergence is of primary importance for the successful completion of teaching and learning activities—if students do not fully grasp the activity, its instructions, context and requirements, it may not be possible to achieve desired learning outcomes. Therefore, as teachers and curriculum planners, our principal objective is to understand probable sources that lead to the mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation of the activity.

The present study attempts to investigate the learning activities that were carried out in a language class at a tertiary-level intensive English program. This investigation reveals some potential sources of mismatch by exploring the learners' and teacher's perceptions of the nature, the goals, and the demands of selected language-learning activities. It is argued that knowledge of potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation will help us sensitize ourselves to the interpretive density of language-learning activities and help us facilitate desired learning outcomes in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Littlewood, 1997; Choudhury, 2011).

Methodology

This ethnographic study aimed to investigate activity modifications of EFL teachers and their reasons as to why they modified that activity. Participants were six EFL teachers selected on the basis of convenience sampling and they participated voluntarily. Two ethnographic research techniques were employed in the data collection procedure. These were classroom observations and interviews, which are detailed in the following sections.

Context of the Study

In terms of foreign language education, Turkish higher education institutions provide two mainstream curricula designated by the relevant regulations in the Higher Education Act (1981). These are intensive language programs (ILP) and freshmen English courses. Intensive English courses are mostly provided at universities in which English is the medium of instruction throughout their curriculum. In the current situation, students who are placed at universities in which the medium of instruction is English are admitted to the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) for ILP to study the language 20-30 hours per week, depending on proficiency levels. They are supposed to master language skills prior to beginning their undergraduate studies. Around 2,000 students register at SFL in 80 classes. There is school-wide curriculum and common testing for students. Therefore, teachers strictly must follow the syllabi prepared by module coordinators.

Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of the current research is to investigate the activity modifications in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and the reasons behind them. To achieve these goals, three research questions guided the study:

1. What are the types of modification done in the classes?

2. Does the number of modifications change with years of teaching experience?

3. From the interview, what are the themes pertaining the underlying reasons for activity modification?

Participants

The participants of this study are six in-service language teachers who consented to being observed in the classroom and interviewed after the observation. The demographics pertaining to participants are given in the table below:

Table 1. Participant demographics

Female #	Male #	Teaching experience-mean	Teaching major #	BA degree #
4	2	10.66 years	**4**	**6**

As could be seen in Table 1., the participants were four females and two males, and their teaching experiences ranged from one to twenty years with a mean of 10.66 years. All instructors held BA degrees, four in English Language Teaching and two in English Language and Literature. They were selected based on convenience sampling, which enables the most productive sampling when the participants are known to the researcher and voluntarily participate (Dowson, 2002, p. 49).

Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

The present study employs an ethnographic research paradigm to analyze the activity modifications in foreign language classes within a tertiary-level ILP programme at a SFL. The researcher adopted a comprehensive approach in which English language teachers' classrooms were visited for three consecutive classes and their activity modifications were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Mentoring and peer visits are familiar tools of professional development at the SFL; therefore, the researcher's visit to classrooms and observations did not induce stress or tension for teachers or students. In this framework, two data collection procedures were followed to gather information regarding activity modifications in EFL classrooms.

Classroom observations. In ethnographic studies the group's activities are investigated through systematic collection of naturalistic data, and interviews with participants about the observations (Anton, 1996). Before anything else, the participants were informed about the nature of the study and consented to be a part of it. The researcher visited classrooms as observer and used an observation checklist, *the Activity Modification Sheet*, to examine quantitatively the activity modifications performed during the teaching hour. The observer filled out the Activity Modification Sheet whenever the teacher modified an activity while teaching. Certain information was noted on this form including but not limited to the activity name, type, modification, modification type and time of modification. The collection of this information constructed the observation data of the classrooms.

Semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview format was employed because it is less intrusive to those being interviewed as it encourages two-way communication. The interview starts with a general conversation and moves on to the specific items about the subject (Galletta & Cross, 2013). The interview sessions began with a brief explanation about the study and the purpose of the interview along with questions about the instructors' general education views. Then, the underlying reasons as to why they had changed the activities were investigated. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for further analysis. As part of the interviews, each of the six instructors analyzed the Activity Modification Sheet completed by the researcher in his or her classroom. The instructors stated their comments and objections, if any, regarding the noted modifications. The researcher then asked questions about the reasons why instructors had modified activities and how it had affected student learning. Therefore, the modifications and the reasons presented in this paper were negotiated and discussed with instructors for the sake of reliability and their benefit.

The use of a semi-structured interview served two major purposes in this study. First, the participant and the researcher reviewed the checklist and examined the modifications detected by the researcher. One participant included one modification, and three participants objected to the modifications or stated their

reservations about them. Therefore, three modifications were excluded from the list and the remaining modifications were verified by the participants. Secondly, the interview aimed to unearth the underlying reasons for the modifications which were agreed upon in the first part. Further, in-depth questions investigated the reasons why the participant modified each activity.

In conclusion, the interview session provided more reliable data on the researcher's classroom observations regarding activity modifications. All modifications were verified by the participants. Furthermore, this interview presented the fundamental reasons as to why teachers make modifications to activities in English language classrooms.

Findings

When a teacher plans to do a new learning activity or to use an activity from the textbook, he or she should consider options for improving it. Options for improving it may involve adding, eliminating, or modifying various activities or processes that students might complete. These changes may not be necessary for successful completion of the activity, but they are expected to improve the language practice throughout the activity.

The planning of an activity is quite important for EFL classes. Before committing to the planning and use of the activity, it is important to reflect on the characteristics of the activity. For example, some activities are simple and easily implemented into most classrooms. Other activities are highly structured and involve students in many learning processes. However, because of varying conditions, resources, and characteristics of students and schools, it is likely that some modifications will need to be made before most activities are implemented. Any activity can be modified to become more appropriate.

It is quite common for a teacher to feel that adding one or more learning experiences absent from the original activity would make the activity more exciting and educational for students. Changes of this nature may require other considerations relating to time allotment and resources. For example, sometimes it is desirable to shorten an activity by removing or simplifying certain activities or processes. Modifications may also result in some processes being completed ahead of time by the teacher or in special help being given to students at the time they are involved in completing the activity. As a teacher modifies activities to accommodate new ideas and constraints, the activity may eventually become significantly different from its original form.

This study investigated the modification types performed in English language classrooms in the given context. The findings are therefore organized based on research questions and presented as follows

3.1 Findings for research questions # 1. What are the types of modification performed in the classes?

The classroom observations and detailed analysis of the results of Activity Modification Sheets revealed some modification patterns at SFL. The major categories of modification types and their numbers of use are given in the table below.

Table 2. Modification types and numbers of modification in the classroom

	Instructor 1	Instructor 2	Instructor 3	Instructor 4	Instructor 5	Instructor 6
Experience in years	7	14	5	1	20	17
Rephrasing the instruction	18	12	8	14	6	5
Re-wording the items	5	1	4	4	3	2
Simplifying parts	3	2	0	3	2	7
Changing cultural elements	2	1	2	1	0	0
Accommodation of new parts, ideas	1	0	1	1	2	0
Removing parts, ideas	2	0	1	2	1	1
Changing the activity type	2	0	1	0	1	0
NA	1	1	0	0	1	0
Total number of modifications	33	16	17	25	15	15

The types of modification employed by the instructors are displayed in Table 2. Each instructor was observed for three consecutive classes and their modifications were recorded on the Activity Modification Sheet checklist by the researcher. Later, after the class, the modifications were classified as they are given in the table above. The numbers of total modifications and types of modifications are also given in the table. It is seen that the instructors completed 16 to 33 activities in three consecutive classes. On the same day when instructors were observed, an interview was done with the instructor to talk about the modifications he or she had made. The basic purpose of the interview was for the instructor to reflect on his or her activity modification and, therefore, to elicit underlying reasons for the modifications.

3.2 Findings for research questions # 2. Does the number of modifications change with the number in years of teaching experience?

In order to investigate the possible relationship between the participants' numbers of modification and their teaching experiences in years, a Pearson product moment correlation was employed. The results of this analysis suggested that there was not a significant relationship between age and the number of modification ($r = .02$).

3.3 Findings for research questions # 3. From the interviews, what are instructors' reasonings for modification?

The semi-structured interview procedure was used to confirm the activity modification with the teacher and to further elicit the reasons for modification and underlying themes. In the interview, the data from the classroom observation was shared with the participants and they were asked to explain why they had modified the activity and how it had affected student learning. The themes underlying activity modifications in EFL classrooms are:

Clarification

One of the major themes underlying activity modification was clarification. Instructor modification of activities to make them more comprehensible for students corresponds with the theoretical foundations of language teaching. Krashen (1982) clarifies that the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he or she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his or her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, in his terms, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he or she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'. Since it is impossible for all learners to exist simultaneously at the same level of linguistic competence, clarifications in the classes observed reportedly stemmed from the fact that the instruction given for activities and some language content of the activities were above students' proficiency levels.

The instructors emphasized that not all students in their classrooms had the same language knowledge needed to fully grasp the nature of the activities and that they had difficulty understanding items even in some grammatical drills. Instructor 3 stated the following:

> *...I knew that the students did not understand what the instruction of the activity required them to do and, therefore, I tried to make it clear to students by rephrasing the instruction.*

Making the activities comprehensible to students includes not only rephrasing the instructions and items but also providing, as needed, background information about the activity and its context. Instructor 2 believed the following:

> *...using extra information on the activity context helped students improve their performance. Students understood most aspects of the activity and what was expected for successful learning, when the context was clarified for them.*

One interesting point about the clarifications made by the instructors observed was their use of the native tongue, in this case Turkish. When asked about the use of their native language in the classroom, Instructor 3 stated the following:

> *I sometimes translated (instructions or/and the content) into Turkish, especially when I was teaching to lower proficiency level groups.*

Time Management

Time management is one of most important factors in language classrooms. Teachers always plan ahead for their classes. There is no doubt about the advantages of pre-class planning. However, teaching and learning, especially in language classrooms, is an active and dynamic process. There are numerous aspects that play significant roles in this process; therefore, teachers are expected to be flexible and accommodating to the changing atmosphere of language classrooms.

In SFL, there are around 2000 students enrolled at ILP in 80 classes. There is school-wide curriculum and common testing for students. Therefore, the teachers strictly must follow the syllabi prepared by module coordinators. Instructor 6 commented on this aspect:

> *No matter how well organized you are and how handy lesson plans you regularly get, there is always a chance of having a slow learner in your classroom. As you need to address those students, too, sometimes you might fall behind schedule or your daily plan. Therefore, you might need to delete some parts of the activities that all the students could complete very well and save time for more challenging activities.*

Student Feedback

The students' views about the activity were also taken into consideration by the instructors when making modifications on the activities at hand. Different feedback types and sources were revealed from the responses in the interviews with instructors. Two different types of feedback were observed—namely, direct and indirect. Direct feedback refers to students' oral or written feedback about the activity, whereas indirect feedback entails the attitudes they display towards it.

Frequently, the instructor's major feedback source was direct feedback from either the students whom she previously had taught or those whom she was teaching at the time of observation. Based on the feedback of prior students, the instructor modified the activity when she used it in her new student group. For instance, Instructor 5 stated that with her day class students she cut the activity short as the student in her evening class found it too challenging and, thus, boring.

Low motivation and interest, sitting uncomfortably, and yawning were seen by instructors as indirect feedback. Instructor 5 stated that

> *she had problems concentrating on the activity when she saw students sitting uncomfortably in their chairs and yawning.*

Professional Collaboration

Teachers' lounge discussions provide a context for teacher collaboration. During such interactions, bridges of support for improving classroom teaching and learning are constructed between and among educators. Teachers exchange their views and experiences on a number of issues including the difficulty of the curriculum, the perceived low ability of many students, their own teaching experiences and contextual factors which influence teachers' motivation. These exchanges might shape teachers' ways of thinking and, thus, affect their teaching practices.

The findings of the interview revealed that teachers modify activities on the basis of their colleagues' experiences in other classrooms. As there is a very structured syllabus at SFL, instructors teaching the same modules and proficiency-level groups perform similar teaching activities in their classes. Hence, the teachers' lounge at SFL provides a rich environment for peer support and collaboration.

The instructors made it clear that they exchanged information about the teaching activities in their classrooms and sought improved teaching methods. For example, Instructor 1 stated that

> *She always tried to ask other teachers, especially the more experiences ones, about their classrooms. She changed the group work activity into a pair work because another instructor doing the same activity complained her about how much time it took and students did not benefit from the group work as the number of students was quite high.*

Therefore, she decided to change the group work activity into one involving pair work in order to avoid the problems experienced by her colleague.

Discussion and Conclusion

Task based methodology has been investigated in detail; however, there seems a lack of comprehensive research into different aspects of activity modifications in EFL context. In Turkey, almost all intensive language programs (ILP) utilize textbooks as a major classroom resource; therefore, teachers are expected to closely follow the textbook and to perform standardized tasks and activities rather than prepare their own teaching tasks and activities. For this very reason, it is crucial for language teachers to critically analyze the activities given in textbooks and modify them as needed (Prestage & Perks, 2007; Choudhury, 2011). Consequently, effectively modifying activities for the needs of learners critical for affecting the success of English language learners. This study confirmed that language instructors at SFL closely followed their students and their classroom dynamics, making various modifications as was necessary.

One major purpose of this study was to identify the modifications that English language instructors make in English language courses within a tertiary-level ILP program and to decipher teachers' rationales for the modifications. It has been demonstrated clearly in the literature that in cases demanding teachers follow a textbook, it is important for those teachers to possess the skills required to effectively analyze and modify activities as necessary for an improved teaching and learning process (Prestage & Perks, 2007). This study has revealed that English language instructors make several different types of modifications, including rephrasing the instruction, re-wording the items, simplifying parts, changing cultural elements, accommodating new parts-ideas, removing parts-ideas, and changing the activity type.

Another purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between the number of modifications and the number in years of teaching experience; furthermore, this study investigated teachers' rationales for the modifications. A lack of relationship between task modification and demographics has been noted in the literature (Djapoura, 2005; Calvert & Sheen, 2014). Similarly, in this study an analysis of the number of modifications made by individual teachers and teaching experience in years revealed that there is not a significant relationship between age and the number of modifications. The reason for this could be because of the fact that all the instructors participating in the current study were full-time teaching staff at the institution, and they all had similar backgrounds except for the number of years they had been teaching. In line with this, the results revealed that all the instructors made similar categories of modification types and more or less the same number of modifications.

The rationales and knowledges that the teachers used while they were modifying activities were investigated through semi-structured interviews. The interview procedure was used to confirm the activity modification with the teacher and to further elicit the reasons for modification and underlying themes. In the interview, the data from the classroom observation was shared with the participants and they were asked to explain why they modified the activity and how it worked for the students. In their responses, they identified their underlying motivations for activity modification. The logic behind sharing the observation data with the participants and asking them to further analyze the data was two-fold. First, the inclusion of the participant in the analysis procedure provided the research with inter-rater reliability of the analysis. Second, the participants were able to benefit from the current research by studying the underlying motivations for their activity modifications.

In these interviews, four different themes were identified which help us to understand the possible factors that have an impact on EFL teachers' activity modifications. The interviews with the instructors about their use of modifications in observed classes as well as the analyses by the researcher and by each instructor also demonstrated that teachers share similar rationales for their activity modifications. The two-fold analysis of the interviews provided the current study with an inter-rater reliability figure of r=80 as only the themes detected by at least four out of five raters/instructors were included in the study. These themes related to rationales for modification were clarification, time management, student feedback, and professional collaboration. It is clear that the instructors in this study had required skill sets for effective activity modification and had developed these skills through their pre-service training at teacher education institutions and improved them with experience.

Through this study, the researcher observed a lack of comprehensive research into activity modifications as part of classroom dynamics. More research is needed to understand the nature of modifications, and the interactions that necessitated the modifications.

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