English In-Service Training during Times of War in Syria

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□ ABSTRACT□

This paper is a part of a larger research that examines and presents an analytical and descriptive study to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of in-service training programs in supporting Syrian English language teachers to overcome the impacts of the military conflict on teaching English as a foreign language. This research is based on a questionnaire in which 400 Syrian English language teachers participated. One of the most important results of the questionnaire is that these programs, despite their importance, are viewed negatively by Syrian English language teachers for many reasons. Therefore, English language teaching suffers from stagnation and lack of development; and it remains dependent on teachers' individual skills and personal points of view that are not based on academic scientific programs capable of achieving any remarkable progress in teaching English, especially during times of military conflict and confronting terrorism.

Keywords:Teaching English as a foreign language in Syria, Syrian EFL in-service teachers, in-service training, teacher education, teacher professional development programs and education during times of military conflicts, war, education.

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فاعليّة البرامج التدريبيّة للغة الإنكليزية أثناء الخدمة في فترة الحرب في سورية

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□ ملخّص □

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة تحليلية وتوصيفيه لتقويم مدى فاعليّة وكفاءة البرامج التدريبيّة أثناء الخدمة في مساعدة معلّمي اللغة الإنكليزية السوريين في التغلّب على الآثار السلبية للحرب على تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية. يعتمد هذا البحث على استبيان شارك فيه 400 مدرّس لغة انكليزية في سورية. ومن أهم نتائج الاستبيان أنّ هذه البرامج رغم أهميتها لا تلاقي قبولاً من قبل المعلّمين أنفسهم لأسباب كثيرة لذلك يعاني تعليم اللغة الانكليزية من الجمود وعدم التطور ويبقى معتمداً على مهارات فردية ووجهات نظر شخصية لا تستند على برامج علمية أكاديمية كفيلة بتحقيق نقلة نوعية بتعليم اللغة الانكليزية وخاصة خلال فترة الحرب ومواجهة الإرهاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في سورية؛ مدرسو اللغة الانكليزية السوريين اثناء الخدمة؛ التدريب أثناء الخدمة؛ تأهيل المدرسين؛ دورات تطوير المدرسين، التعليم اثناء الصراعات العسكرية؛ الحرب؛ التعليم.

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Why is this research necessary?

The scale of the research articles on EFL in-service teacher training programs in some Arab countries in general and Syria in particular shows that not much has been dedicated to investigating the training needs of Arab/Syrian in-service EFL teachers and the success rate of the programs they undergo. This survey on Syrian EFL in-service teacher development programs is the first to be administered in Syria since the beginning of the conflict in 2011; it highlights that in-service EFL teacher preparation programs in Syria can be described as nonsystematic and inadequate. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that other studies have been carried out in different fields of English language teaching in Syria such as Khoja (2018) and Mohamad (2019).

Introduction

The issue the research is focusing on is related to English language teaching as a foreign language taught by non-native English teachers during times of conflict in Syria. This research presents a study oriented towards evaluating how effectively in-service English as foreign language (EFL) development programs assist Syrian EFL teachers overcome the negative impacts of the military conflict on EFL teaching. In order to determine whether new measures have been implemented in regard to improving English language teaching and assisting Syrian English language teachers during this period of instability or not, data were collected via a questionnaire. The questionnaire attempted to identify concerns, perceptions, points of view related to teachers' experiences, their EFL learning/teaching and their development programs. The results from this study are intended to assist in improving future in-service course offerings and EFL classroom instruction in Syria.

Such an orientation highlights and examines the best approaches to construct the scaffolding mentality of EFL teachers and how to reconstruct the traditional methods adopted   by experienced teachers in a manner that is suitable with the changing educational environment of the classroom. Due to the current crisis, a portion of the students have disrupted education and come from war-torn areas. Yet, Syrian EFL teachers scaffold English in the same manner they were accustomed to before the crisis. Therefore, the research questions that this study addresses are: 1- What are Syrian English language teachers' perspectives in regard to their in-service development programs? 2- How can the Syrian English language teachers be assisted in their development programs to create effective learning environments for students during times of military conflict?

Literature Review

Theoretical Frameworks/Previous Research/Backgrounds

Cross (1995) postulates that it comes at the expense of the quality of teacher preparation and, hence, the quality of learning to put untrained teachers into classrooms merely to meet increased demand or to expand access to schooling. This negatively affects the quality of education (p. 33).

The solution that the Ministry of Education in Syria came up with is to design mandatory EFL in-service teacher training to introduce what it deemed as

modern teaching methods and to identify obstacles that hinder effective English teaching. Nevertheless, these development programs became a burden to EFL teachers. They were designed by education administrators and supervisors with complete negligence and absent communication with the EFL teachers themselves. Thus, no goals in relation to EFL teachers' knowledge and behavior are defined; no needs analysis is carried out because these training programs are annual routines; no consideration is allocated to teachers' level of education or professional competence.

Bailey (2004) and Roberts (1998) refer to professional development as a framework that includes practices that teachers receive training on, in the aims of achieving in-service professional growth. These practices are interrelated with teachers' ongoing learning to improve their classroom instruction and enhance their students' learning. Professional development is built upon two crucial elements: problem solving and practice monitoring. Professional development for in-service teachers should not revolve around theory and lecturing but rather on a practical underpinning.

Burns (1999), Bell (1991), Wallace (1998), Richards (1998), Moon (2004), Darling-Hammond et al. (2009), and Darling-Hammond (2017) emphasize that high quality in-service training programs will result in the professional development of teachers. Thus, teacher development is crucial for the progress of education in any society; it has become more urgent to keep up with the vast and rapid technological advances and learning methodologies that have become part of many Western classroom environments. The theoretical framework for in-service teacher programs is very rich with research. Ten Dam and Blom (2006) point out that "teacher education is changing at a rapid tempo" (p. 647). Unfortunately, in the past eight years with the so-called Arab Spring tearing countries apart and with military conflict spreading to fight off international terrorist organizations that is not the case in several Arab countries, such as Syria, Iraq, the Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Somalia, Tunisia where English is a foreign language and not an associate language.

Although Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) emphasize that a teacher is not confined to being a 'technician, consumer, receiver, transmitter, and implementer of other people's knowledge' (p. 16), it is found that EFL teacher training programs in Arab countries appear not to be evolving with this vision. These programs are paralyzed with a mentality that can be described best in the words of Schulz and Mandzuk (2005) when they explain that "inquiry is trivialized if it is understood only as a project, or if its purpose is primarily to tinker with and perfect certain skill sets" (p. 330). Teachers should be trained not to be only responsible but also response-able. "If we are truly committed to preparing teachers who are knowers, thinkers, leaders, and change agents—and we must be committed to this—then we need to take up Dewey's challenge to help our teachers become thoughtful and alert students of education" (Schulz and Mandzuk 2005, p. 330). Hence, EFL in-service training programs should not aim merely at imitating previous programs or reinventing the wheel, but rather the attention must be focused on assisting teachers to understand and adapt to the various complexities that associate the teaching profession. From a socio-cultural perspective on learning, these in-service training programs should encourage teachers to be active participants in educational practices in the most

competent way possible. This requires that teachers have their own professional identity which should be respected and taken into consideration when developing in-service training programs. This is not the case in some Arab countries. The majority of EFL in-service training programs are designed with disregard to teachers' practical needs.

The majority of the articles on Arab EFL in-service training programs concluded with a negative impression and belief about Arab EFL teachers. Al-Issa (2017), Al-Wreikat, Abdullah, and Kabilan (2011), and Alibakhshi, and Dehvari (2015), Ali (2018) asserted that the EFL teachers expressed this attitude in regard to the in-service training programs they underwent. This could be due to alienation of teachers when designing these programs. Another aspect is the repetitious nature of the content. Diab (2009), Al-Wreikat and Abdullah (2010), Fareh (2010), Asassfeh, Alshaboul, and Alodwan (2012), and Personn and Yigitoglu (2015) emphasized that the teachers believed that they were being trained on the same methods and techniques with no real change or development. Only two articles, Orr (2011), and Alibakhshi and Dehvari (2015) reported a positive attitude to certain aspects of the training. The first was a research conducted in Lebanon where the teachers reported positive attitudes towards their trainers and the aspect of lesson planning (Orr, 2011. p. 10). The other was on Iranian EFL teachers. The researcher reported that continuing professional development "was also perceived to be improving current professional skills to continue to perform effectively in the work setting" (Alibakhshi and Dehvari 2015, p. 10),

Research Methodology
Questionnaire

In order to measure the addressed inquiry with precision, a quantitative approach was adopted. To answer the two research questions and to ensure objectivity, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher as in instrument for data collection from the targeted research population: EFL Syrian English language teachers teaching in Syria during the ongoing military conflict. The design of the questionnaire started in October 2017; it went through a rigorous drafting process before the pilot test was performed. The questionnaire design is a cross-sectional study. It is intended to examine multiple groups of teachers: novice, moderately experienced, and very experienced (based on the number of years they have been teaching) at a certain point in time: since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. This emphasizes how they view the effectiveness and necessity of training programs.

Several factors informed the items of the questionnaire. First, being an EFL teacher myself with 20 years of experience in teaching English for academic purposes and for communicative purposes both nationally and internationally, provided me with insight and firsthand knowledge and background of the Syrian English language teaching context especially during the conflict and with best practices applied in other countries. Second, the continuous informal exchanges with several Syrian EFL supervisors and Syrian EFL teachers prior and during the conflict offered broad perspectives of the population being targeted in the survey regarding their experiences and views. Third, the essential stages that Guskey (2016) emphasized on for educational evaluation were reflected in the survey: participants'

reactions, participants' learning, organizational support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes.

Method

The questionnaire was administered in the summer of 2018. It was posted in June and results were collected in August. It was designed using Qualtrics. An anonymous link was generated and posted on three social media pages. A brief description of the questionnaire and its goals preceded the link. The questionnaire employed a quantitative approach with one open-ended question at the end.

Sampling

The EFL teachers in Syria are the population targeted in this questionnaire. The sample is a diverse one; it includes Syrian English language teachers with various backgrounds and experiences in teaching. There is a very large population of English language teachers; it is difficult to identify and include every member of this population. Therefore, the internet was used to reach out to as many EFL teachers as possible. Since it is an internet-based questionnaire, it is a non-probability sample; this convenience sampling is used. It was left up to each individual to choose to participate in the questionnaire. Using this, each member of the population of English language teachers, then, had an equal chance of being selected as a subject to be surveyed if they chose to participate in the questionnaire. A request was posted on three different social media pages that have over 58000 members combined with at least a third being EFL teachers and others who have the intention of becoming EFL teachers in the future. According to Fricker (2016), "in non-probability questionnaires the bias has the potential to be much greater, since it is likely that those who opt in are not representative of the general population. Furthermore, in nonprobability questionnaires there is often no way to assess the potential magnitude of the bias, since there is generally no information on those who chose not to opt in" (p. 168). However, because it was crucial to target a population with professional knowledge of the research issue, EFL teaching, a nonprobability sampling approach was chosen. Thus, I am not targeting all the EFL teacher population, but rather as many as I can reach out to; I do believe that the questionnaire is not biased, i.e., all those who took it are Syrian EFL teachers.

The questionnaire was distributed online via a Qualtrics link. The Syrian EFL teachers who chose to participate in the questionnaires completed the questionnaire between mid-June and August 2018. By August 10th, 400 participants had taken the questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument was designed in English. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items. Items 1-7 focused on background experience, education, and training. The 5-point Likert-scale was used for items 6 to 14. The items focused on EFL teachers' perceptions of their in-service professional development and their English language classes. Item 15 was an open-ended question that dealt with the teachers' opinions of challenges they wanted to highlight and might not have been mentioned in the questionnaire.

Analysis

To analyze the data, Syrian EFL teachers' responses were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were used to present the data. For the open-ended question, content analysis was conducted by the researcher to identify what other concerns and perceptions the participants voiced regarding challenges of

teaching during times of military conflict and professional development programs. Content analysis quantifies and analyzes the occurrences and meanings of certain words or concepts. This "research method is applied in qualitative, quantitative, and sometimes mixed modes of research frameworks and employs a wide range of analytical techniques to generate findings and put them into context" (White, & Marsh, 2006. p. 41)

Findings

The descriptive analysis of the items that underscore the central issue of this research are presented. This ensures objectivity and provides the audience with a comprehensive understanding of the results.

The Syrian EFL teachers who completed the questionnaire are divided into four categories manifested in section one. The first group is pre-service EFL teacher-trainees that represented 8.15%. This group consists of student-teachers who are attending the Postgraduate Certificate in Education program (PGCE) and are teaching in school as part of their semester long practicum and early childhood teachers from 1st to 4th grades in their senior year who are teaching as a prerequisite for their graduation. The second is EFL elementary school teachers (also known as Basic education cycle 1) which represented 24.44%. The third category is EFL Preparatory school teachers (also known as Basic education cycle 2 for grades 7-9/ Middle school) which represented 34.81%. The final category is EFL Secondary school teachers (grades 10-12/ High school) which represented 32.59%.

In item 5, when teachers were asked about in-service training programs they attended since the beginning of the militarized Syrian conflict in 2011, 36.23% (the largest percentage) was none. 17.39% mentioned they attended only one. 16.67% chose twice. 11.59% mentioned three times. 8.70% attended 4. 4.35% attended 5, while only 5.07% attended 6 and more.

The teachers were asked in item 6 about the areas they received the most training in during the past 7 years. They were requested to rank them according to the amount of training they received (1 meant that they received substantial training in this area; 6 meant that they received no training in this area). The highest percentage range was mostly in the 'moderate' choice reaching in some areas up to 50%. However, there were areas that ranged between 5-20% where teachers' choices were none especially in training on new teaching applications, using technology in classrooms and managing instruction.

Item 7 focused on the importance of the training EFL teachers received during their career. They were asked to consider all the training they have described and rank the areas according to how important the training was in their career. Most of the areas ranged above 50% in teachers' ranking while training on new teaching applications and managing the classroom were the lowest in percentage receiving less than 40 %.

Item 10 focused on the issues that Syrian EFL teachers face when undergoing teacher preparation programs in times of militarized conflict. 59.22%, the highest percentage, strongly agreed that the programs were too theoretical. 51.46% strongly agreed that designers of the in-service training programs do not ask for teachers' opinions on what they need training on. 50% strongly agreed that teachers are not encouraged to pursue their graduate studies. 43.14% strongly agreed that training programs do not take into consideration the current crisis. 41.75% strongly agreed that the syllabus does not accommodate the levels of the new arriving students. 40.78% strongly agreed that teachers are not offered any guidance on how to teach students who escaped conflict areas. 45.19% strongly agreed that the training programs do not address teachers' needs. 44.23% strongly agreed that the duration of these programs was too short. 39.62% strongly agreed that these programs did not provide enough training. 38.83% strongly agreed that the timing of these programs was not appropriate for many EFL teachers. 35.92% somewhat agreed that there were no sufficient incentives for taking these programs.

In item 11, the questionnaire touched upon the teachers' perspectives in regard to the students especially the issues that were amplified during the past 7 years. The points rotated around students' motivation, participation, interaction, grades, absences, etc. The teachers' choices focused on the "strongly agree" option which ranged between 36-86% for most of the items. 86% for students focusing on grades rather than learning, 81% for students' dependence on translation to Arabic, 79% for students not using English outside the classroom, 61.62% for students having interrupted learning due to the conflict, 54% for Students lacking motivation to learn English, and 53% for Students not participating because of their fear of making mistakes. The "somewhat agree" option was the choice for student-tension rising receiving about 44% and 32.32% for absences increasing due to the militarized conflict.

Item 12 inquired about the issues that EFL teachers have in regard to the textbook during the past 7 years. It appears that nearly 66 % of the teachers agree that the books are too dense to be taught during the regular academic year because the number of weekly sessions, according to 76% of the teachers, is not sufficient. Regardless of this, 44% disagreed that the content of the textbooks are above student levels. However, 66% agreed that the design of the exercises is not adequate for the current classroom conditions nor does the structure of the EFL textbooks address students with different levels of language mastery. 44% agreed that the textbook is not multi-skill oriented. Over 70% of the teachers were not consulted when designing and revising drafts of the EFL textbooks.

Item 13 highlights the issues that EFL teachers have in regard to teaching methods they have used during the past 7 years (during the militarized conflict). Most of the teachers, over 70%, viewed their knowledge as adequate and suitable for teaching oral and literacy skills. More than 80%, agreed that they use different approaches depending on students' mastery levels with some, about 54%, use Arabic (the L1) when needed for explanation and clarifying mistakes. 85% focus on teaching different language skills, while 72% focus on teaching grammar. Over 90%

emphasize the importance of oral communication in English in class. 86% evaluate their students' skills throughout the semester.

Item 14 concentrates on the issues that EFL teachers have in regard to teaching resources and teaching aids during the past 7 years. The points ask whether technological aids are available, usable, and up to date. In addition to training received for these aids and whether there is sufficient time for the use of these applications and tool or not. More than 80% agreed that the teaching aids were outdated. 67% pointed out the lack of audio-visual tools in their classrooms. Over 75% asserted the lack of smart boards and internet accessibility in their classrooms. Over 73% confirmed that their schools do not provide supporting material for EFL teaching. Nevertheless, 55% pointed out they are using teaching aids in their instruction and some about 45%, have received training on using them.76% agree to the absence of a library with English books for extended reading.

Item 15 was an open-ended question. Syrian EFL teachers were asked to write a comment about other ways (besides those mentioned in the questionnaire) they feel challenged in teaching English to their students, and how professional development programs might help them meet those challenges. Content analysis was performed to quantify the responses. The written comments were coded according to the topic they are related to. The number of repetitions was counted and percentages calculated. The comments were arranged into the following categories: skills and teaching methods 20%, classroom environment 15%, issues related to students 2%, teaching aids 9%, textbooks 3%, professional development 26%, and other 2%. Some of the comments were restatements of what was already presented in the questionnaire. The significant aspect was that they were all criticisms with negative implications.
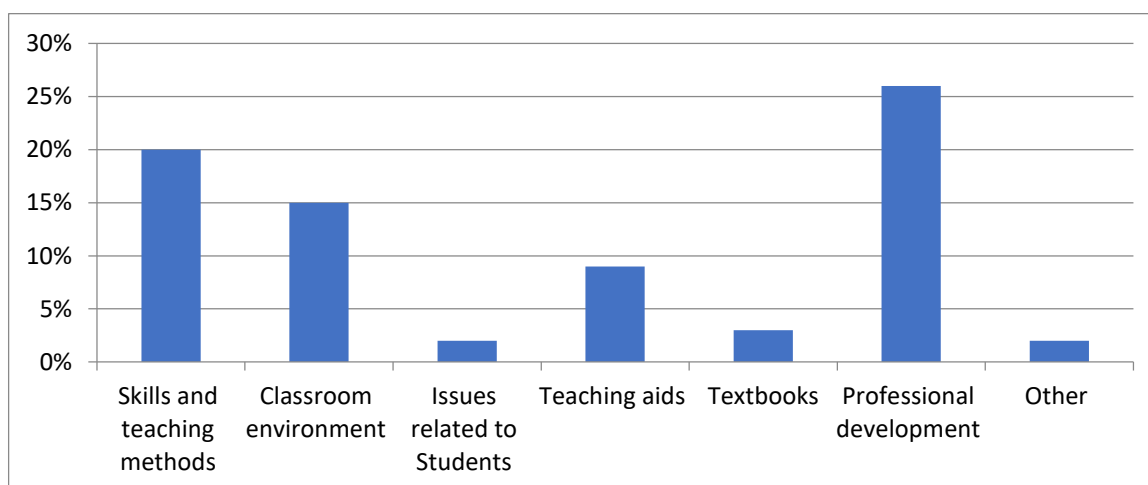

Figure 1. Content analysis of EFL teachers' responses to the open-ended question

Discussion

The role of in-service training programs should be one that encourages inquiry and dialogue in regard to approaches to teacher education as a way of enhancing teachers' critical view about their own practices especially in times of military conflict. Teachers' collaboration should be oriented in these sessions towards seeking

the advice of their peers and exchanging experiences. These programs should highlight drawing on research to deepen teachers' knowledge. Moreover, teachers, towards the end of the program, must be able to adapt their teaching in ways that support their student learning in the most effective way possible taking into account the disruptions that might have occurred in some of their students' education due to the 7-year-old crisis. However, in most of the EFL in-service training programs, in Middle Eastern countries in general and Syria in particular, this is not the case. According to the surveyed Syrian EFL teachers, these programs can be described as mostly being a top-down approach to teacher development. These programs are imposed on EFL teachers by the administration and EFL supervisors who define the focus of the skills that they think need upgrading, but for some reason have failed to take into perspective the impact of the conflict on the educational system, especially EFL teaching.

When examining Syrian EFL teachers' responses, it became clear that these teachers needed support but did not receive it. There were many shortcomings with these programs. The first issue raised in regard to these programs was their structure. There was no alteration in the manner of delivering the content of professional development sessions between pre-conflict and during the conflict. They were mostly based on lecture-style rather than workshops. Al-Wreikat, Abdullah, and Kabilan (2011) in their research conclude that "most of the in-service training courses for EFL teachers are not properly organized. This study shows that a serious problem hinders the effectiveness of the in-service training courses" (p. 190). Furthermore, Choi and Lee (2007) in their study were doubtful whether these programs actually educate teachers as professionals. To that point, Al-Wreikat and Abdullah (2010) argue that for training programs to be successful for EFL teachers, there has to be an assessment of their needs which will provide the appropriate foundation for structuring these programs around the knowledge and skills these teachers need. "Teachers who attended or are currently attending in-service training courses must be given some role in determining the training topics and activities that they actually need" (p. 24).

Moreover, Ali (2018) pointed out that the participants in her study would have preferred to work on "constructive teaching methods (group works, project-based learning)" (p. 197). This is a general attitude in the Syrian EFL teachers' reactions to the in-service training programs in the open-ended response. They believed that most of their training was structured around traditional teaching approaches that were not up to date with some elements of the curriculum, with the level of the students, or with the current ongoing conflict. The teachers' conception of how the system views them, according to Abednia (2012) "amounts to reducing oneself to merely helping learners improve their L2 skills by following empirically proven techniques" (p. 713). Furthermore, although Syrian EFL teachers were asked to train their students on both oral and literacy skills, which are usually highlighted in the training programs, teachers were required to finish the textbooks by the end of the school year by following the school plan verbatim; thus, they did not have time to practice oral skills; they did not have the teaching aids in class to assist them; and they did not even have electricity due to the constant power outages. Moreover, the training programs did not take into consideration the repeated interruptions during

the school year and the students' absences due to the ongoing military conflict. According to the surveyed teachers, the supervisors during the training programs emphasized the importance of finishing the textbooks as a sign of achievement.

In their study on Arab EFL training programs, Al-Haq and Alimoush (2016) criticized the drawbacks in the in-service training programs. Their research asserted that these programs

"were not based the needs of in-service EFL teachers, inappropriate time organization in terms of duration and timing; trainers need to be more qualified; training was not held regularly; training centers need some necessary facilities; training programs had a limited impact on practice with little follow-up; and were not modernized in terms of meeting new and challenging needs of modern times such as information technology and critical thinking strategies" (p. 52).

According to the questionnaire, the teachers were not being trained on new literacy strategies. Most teachers exhibited traditional instructional techniques when teaching text comprehension. These techniques did not take the oversized class size into account or students' varying levels resulting from the conflict; students had interrupted education depending on geographical area they were residing in and based on the severity of the conflict in that area that forced many families to relocate to safer areas resulting in overcrowded classrooms. Al-Wreikat, and Abdullah (2010) emphasize that "EFL trainers and teachers should be deeply trained on teaching techniques … Special focus should be given on various teaching techniques for the different text types" (p. 25). This assertion that such programs did not deliver what was expected is further highlighted by Fareha (2010) who explained that "teacher-centered methods and inadequate assessment techniques are among the major problems that render EFL programs unable to deliver as expected" (p. 3600). A reason for such a failure as Orr (2011) explains is that these programs do not create a "link to practical classroom application." (p. 11).

Another shortcoming of the Syrian in-service development programs during the conflict was that they were too short. Syrian EFL teachers emphasized this in their responses. Darling-Hammond et al., (2009) explain, that for professional development programs to be productive, there is a need to invest over a duration of six months to a year with at least 30 to 100 hours of training. In Syria, the EFL training is either two consecutive weekends or five workdays. This justifies why teachers reacted negatively to receiving sufficient practice on new teaching approaches; thus, resulting in falling back to traditional approaches in classroom language teaching, such as, heavily focusing on grammar, translating texts, and providing students with a prewritten paragraph for memorization in response to the witing exercise in the textbook.

Limitations

Due to the nature of the study, being exploratory, there were certain limitations. First, 400 participants completed the questionnaire; thus, the conclusions cannot be generalized to all Syrian EFL teachers because of this sample size. Other teachers might have different experiences resulting in a change of the findings.

Therefore, a larger sample size will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the Syrian EFL teachers' conditions during the militarized crisis. Another limitation is that the questionnaire does not target EFL supervisors who are responsible for administrating in-service training programs. Their point of view could further clarify the reason for the failure of these programs or why the Syrian EFL teachers believe they have had no impact on their classroom instruction. The third limitation is that none of the teachers who took the questionnaire were able to complete the final request, item 16, in regard to keeping a journal to record their classroom approaches and methods of teaching. The reason the teachers were not able to perform this was the timing of the questionnaire. It was administered during the summer school-break and teachers had no classes. At this point, the questionnaire became completely quantitative in structure and analysis.

Conclusion

The present status of EFL teacher development in Syria, especially during the militarized crisis, is neither adequate nor efficient. Ironically, one of the most important stages of the professional development of English language teachers is in-service training. It is during this stage that teachers can enhance, expand, and link new theories with classroom pedagogy, i.e., teachers develop valuable learning experiences. However, unproductive training programs, which do not have the teachers' needs at their core, affect these teachers' level of proficiency which can be a major contributor to the poor quality of classroom instruction.

The questionnaire of EFL Syrian teachers has asserted that these in-service training programs, during the 7-year militarized crisis, have had very little impact on their EFL teaching. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017) highlight the importance of providing an environment for professional development to occur and be effective. Therefore, it is crucial that they be designed to better engage the Syrian EFL in-service teachers rather than burdening them with more theory and outdated practices.

Some recommendations for planning future EFL in-service teacher training:
1-	The programs should take into consideration the militarized crisis and the impact it has had on both teachers and students.
2-	The programs should be constructed as a combination of both a bottom-up approach where teachers recognize the necessity to develop and improve specific skills and; therefore, participate, willingly, in teacher development programs; and a top-down approach where the administration and EFL supervises support and encourage developmental programs to enhance the practicality and productivity of these training programs.
3-	Pre-questionnaire the teachers to determine what their needs are.
4-	Post-questionnaire the teachers to assess whether these programs and the trainers have met and fulfilled the teachers' needs or not.
5-	Teachers' years of experience must be taken into consideration when arranging them into groups. Information provided to novice teachers differs from practices presented to experienced ones, i.e., contextualizing training to their actual needs.

6- Emphasis on integrating both top-down and bottom-up teaching based on the objective whether it is concerned with motivating students to learn through direct interaction or focusing on the details of a lesson to decode and simplify each component.

7- Provide frameworks for consistent support even after the training program is over.

8- These programs should take into consideration the realty of the classroom environment, such as large numbers of students and lack of technology and other teaching aids especially audio and visual.

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