

The Opinions of English Instructors Towards Mentoring at Tertiary Level¹

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Abstract

Mentoring programs are critical to teachers' professional development and provide both new and experienced teachers with the support and guidance they need. This study aims to investigate the perspectives of English language teachers who participated in a mentoring program at higher education level. A case study design was adopted within the scope of qualitative research and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from ten instructors chosen through convenience sampling. The data obtained from the interviews were then transcribed and subjected to content analysis. The findings of the study show that mentors are concerned about the lack of a well-organized mentoring program as well as the time and resources needed for effective mentoring. The study also reveals insights into professional development, interactions between mentors and mentees, and the impact of the mentoring program. The results suggest that mentoring can be a useful strategy for advancing teachers' professional development but requires careful planning and implementation to be effective. This study contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate on mentoring and provides important insights for educators, institutions, and officials interested in implementing effective mentoring programs.

Keywords: mentoring, language instructors, professional development, teaching practices

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Introduction

Professional growth for teachers is often carried out by others on their behalf. Instructors are now participating in school-based, practitioner-oriented, collaborative professional development as a result of the emergence of self-directed, collaborative, research-based learning procedures that allow them to take an active role in their own development (Johnson, 2009). From a critical standpoint, professional development for teachers facilitates self-reflection on their roles and identities in this context. It is thought that self-reflection provides a window into how an individual and the social world interact, enabling educators to critically observe every aspect of their work environment (Hawkins & Norton, 2009). As a result of technological developments and the globalization of education, the expectations of EFL teachers are changing and it is becoming increasingly important to investigate the impact of professional development programs tailored to their specific needs and challenges (Borg, 2011). Accordingly, many scholars working in the field of teacher education focus on mentoring (Gayle Baugh & Sullivan, 2005; Hobson & Maldarez, 2013; Lindgren, 2005). It is stated that mentoring provides socialization in the teaching profession (Millwater & Yarrow, 1997; Shapiro, 2020). This study makes the case that a constructivist mentoring approach can facilitate joint learning between

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experienced mentor teachers and new teachers and can act as a model of teacher learning that can result in teachers who are knowledgeable in this context.

An expert and a novice have a one-on-one relationship in which the expert mentors the novice through academic and career counseling, advice, professional networking, behavioral and cognitive modeling, and emotional and scientific support (Murphy et al., 2005). Mentoring has also been defined in multiple forms in recent years, and in general, mentoring means that an experienced person (mentor) provides guidance and assistance to a less experienced person (mentee) in order to gain skills and knowledge (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Malderez, 2009). According to Lindgren (2005), mentoring is an active process in which human dynamics are taught and developed. As a result, mentoring programs have received considerable attention as important components of professional development in educational settings (Eby et al., 2013; Hoa, 2008). These programs facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills and experience from experienced educators to novices and play an important role in supporting professional advancement and improving teaching practice (Hudson et al., 2009). Additionally, mentoring has been found to energize, refresh, and help acclimatize novice English language teachers to the teaching environment (İbrahim, 2022; Awaya et al., 2003). Mentoring is a crucial factor in the professional development of English teachers at the tertiary level. Understanding the opinions and experiences of English teachers towards mentoring is essential in comprehending its impact on their teaching practices and overall professional growth. This underscores the significance of exploring the perceptions of English teachers towards mentoring, as it directly influences their adaptation to the teaching environment and professional growth. These insights highlight the need to delve into the experiences and perspectives of English teachers regarding mentoring at the tertiary level, as it can provide valuable guidance for the development of effective mentoring programs. This indicates the ongoing efforts to enhance professional development opportunities for English teachers, making it imperative to understand their attitudes and opinions towards mentoring. However, few studies have been conducted on mentoring in EFL teacher education (Hudson & Nguyen, 2009).

Understanding the opinions of English teachers towards mentoring at the tertiary level is crucial for enhancing professional development and improving teaching practices. In this context, this study explores the experiences and perspectives of EFL teachers who participated in a mentoring program in a private institution. By exploring their perspectives, this research aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on mentoring and provide valuable insights for the development of effective mentoring programs tailored to the needs of English teachers at the tertiary level. It also aims to shed light on the barriers and opportunities these educators face in their professional development journey and ultimately contribute to the ongoing discourse on mentoring and teacher education.

Literature Review

Mentoring is critical to the professional development of English language instructors, enriching their pedagogical practices, increasing job satisfaction, and improving the quality of English language education (Asencion, 2010; Holloway, 2001; Schulz, 1995). At the same time, it is critical to acknowledge that mentorship goes beyond the classroom and into the broader framework of teacher education. According to Freeman (2002), pre-service teacher education, while valuable, is insufficient for completely preparing teachers for their professions. He promotes the formation of new ties between new and experienced teachers in order to support educators throughout their careers. Johnston (2009) shares this viewpoint and emphasizes the importance of collaboration in teacher development settings. It becomes crucial to consider the function of the collaborating instructors themselves when taking into account the collaborative dynamics within teacher education. According to Freeman (2002), pre-service teacher education, while valuable, is insufficient to fully prepare teachers for the profession and therefore should encourage new connections between new and experienced teachers in order to support educators throughout their careers. Johnston (2009) shares this perspective and emphasizes the importance of collaboration in teacher professional development. Furthermore, David (2000) highlights the value of planned, methodical mentoring programs, highlighting the role of mentoring in reducing the stress, anxiety and isolation that new teachers often

experience. Brown (2011) emphasizes the idea that mentoring is an indicator of seniority and experience, and that both mentors' and mentees' perceptions of the challenges faced by mentees provide recommendations for successful mentoring initiatives. According to Malderez (2009), supportive networks, mentor recognition and similar goals between mentor and mentee are all prerequisites for effective mentoring. In this context, mentoring is critical for the professional development of EFL teachers, enriching their pedagogical practices, increasing job satisfaction and enhancing the quality of English language teaching (Asencion, 2010; Holloway, 2001; Schulz, 1995).

A Good Example

According to David (2000), the Mattoon Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program in Illinois, the United States, an in-service teacher-training program created in partnership with Eastern Illinois University, has been highly spectacular and very beneficial for the teachers who have participated. He claims that the aim of the program is to provide comprehensive assistance to new trainers so that they are appreciated and eventually become contributing employees, and that all parties benefit from the process. As a result, the new teacher can discover the appropriate environment to increase professional abilities, preparation, and teaching approaches, as well as get ongoing inspiration and emotional support. The mentoring program, as outlined by David (2000), aims to expedite the adoption of new teaching practices, reduce the challenges of change, enhance teaching performance through a successful role model, attract talent in a competitive environment, affirm employee decisions to join, facilitate integration into school values, and foster a collaborative subculture for transformative change.

About a week before the start of the school year, a large number of trained mentors were matched with new instructors. Mentor-mentee pairings, guided by criteria from David (2000), were strategically chosen a week before the school year, emphasizing job alignment, proximity, and synchronized breaks. Experience trumped age in mentor selection, prioritizing positive outlook, passion for knowledge-sharing, and avoiding rigid personality or educational viewpoint matches to maximize learning opportunities. Both mentors and mentees had the autonomy to opt in or out, and mentor dedication to learning was paramount.

In light of the above-mentioned perspectives, various elements of mentoring have been examined in research in relation to teacher education. Some studies (He, 2010) focus on pre-service teacher education, while others (Kissau& King, 2014) focus on in-service teacher education. This is particularly noticeable in Turkey, where mentoring programs for English language teachers have received considerable attention in recent years. Okan and Yıldırım (2004) investigated pre-service teachers' school experiences. Their research draws attention to the vital role mentoring plays in meeting the needs of this group, especially the general school environment, the type of observation tasks, the effectiveness of student-mentor interactions. Yavuz (2011) conducted a study on the practical elements of mentoring from the perspective of final year EFL teachers in order to shed light on the implementation, quality and problems of mentoring. The results particularly highlighted the value of mentoring as a tool to apply theory and the difficulties encountered during the mentoring process in practicing schools. Ekiz (2006) examined mentoring from the perspectives of student trainers and classroom mentors, as well as exploring the support provided to classroom mentors. The study shed light on the transformative importance of mentoring programs in helping teachers and highlighted the critical role mentors play in guiding and developing novice teachers, paving the way for their professional development. Örsdemir and Yıldırım (2020) contributed to these studies by examining the effectiveness of mentoring in the context of English language teaching education. Their research, based on Hudson's Five-Factor Mentoring Model (2004), revealed teachers' perspectives on mentoring methods and mentoring development areas. Rakicioğlu-Söylemez and Eröz-Tuga (2014) investigated how pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers view and undertake their roles and tasks related to mentoring practices during practice teaching in EFL settings. Their research highlights the diverse nature of mentoring and its function in developing teacher networks and enhancing teaching.

As these studies have shown, mentoring programs have emerged to address the specific needs of English language teachers. Mentoring provides important help, guidance and professional development opportunities for teachers as they navigate the challenging world of English language teaching. To summarize, mentoring is a dynamic and multidimensional activity with important implications for teachers' professional development. In addition to practicum schools and faculties, it provides a platform for knowledge sharing, personal development and collaboration between teachers and mentors. As observed in the literature, mentoring studies on EFL teachers and candidates are predominant. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing mentoring debate by analyzing the perspectives of EFL instructors who participated in an in-service mentoring program. The main research question is: *What are the teachers' opinions about the mentoring program?* It is clear that mentoring is a practice that needs to be approached with care. It should be planned from start to end, taking into account all relevant stakeholder aspects. Another critical element is that the mentoring process should be properly monitored and checked frequently. In this process, the opinions of mentors and mentees are important in assessing the quality of the mentoring program.

Method

Research Design: In this study, the opinions and experiences of EFL instructors in a private institution were explored using a qualitative case study approach. The case study format provides a comprehensive examination of the topic in a real-world setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2014).

Participants: The study involved ten participants who were selected through convenience sampling (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008) and divided equally into two groups: five mentees and five mentors. Mentees are usually early career EFL teachers seeking professional development, while mentors are usually experienced teachers who provide guidance and support to mentees.

Table 1
Participants' Roles, Teaching Background, and Participation in the Program

Participants	Years of Experience in Teaching	Years of Experience at SFL	Reported Level of Participation to the Mentoring Program
Mentee 1	1	1	Low
Mentee 2	1	1	Low
Mentee 3	1	1	High
Mentee 4	1	1	High
Mentee 5	12	1	High
Mentor 1	5	4	High
Mentor 2	37	5	High
Mentor 3	3	3	Low
Mentor 4	7	5	High
Mentor 5	16	4	Low

Information about mentors and mentees in this study is summarized in Table 1. It should be noted that the numbers assigned to each participant are completely random; no particular meaning is intended to be associated with the numbering.

Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection tool used in this study. The researchers developed a semi-structured interview form to guide the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and provided a comprehensive exploration of the participants' opinions and experiences. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure the authenticity of the data analysis. The interview instrument was evaluated by two researchers experienced in teacher education to ensure reliability, validity, applicability and comprehensibility. There were seven questions in the interview that asked the participants what mentoring is to them (Item 1), what they think about the mentoring program at the institution (Item 2), what they think the advantages and the disadvantages of the mentoring program are (Item 3), how they would define

an ideal in-service teaching training program (Item 4), if they believe that the mentoring program has made a contribution to their professional development (Item 5), what their suggestions are in order to enhance the efficiency of the mentoring program (Item 6), and finally what metaphor they would use to describe mentoring (Item 7).

Data Analysis: Content analysis was conducted on the data obtained through the interviews. This method of analysis enabled the identification of recurring themes, patterns and insights in the interview data. By applying this comprehensive technique, the research aims to provide important insights into the opinions and experiences of foreign language teachers participating in a mentoring program at a private university. The qualitative case study design provides an appropriate basis for investigating this complex educational situation.

Credibility: Validity in qualitative research refers to the investigators' attempt to treat the phenomenon honestly and objectively (Kirk & Miller, 1986). When a measurement tool is considered valid, it measures the phenomenon it is intended to measure with accuracy. In order to create the data collection tool, expert opinion was sought. Expert opinion serves as a safeguard against mistakes like poorly worded questions that could cause data to be incorrectly interpreted and lower the validity of a qualitative study. To guarantee that participant opinions were accurately documented, archived, and transcribed, interviews were videotaped as well as audio recorded. Furthermore, consent from the participants was acquired after the data transcription process. The interviews underwent an impartial analysis to guarantee the validity of the research. The data was also assessed using NVivo 12, a program created especially for qualitative data analysis. The data were gathered in line with the study's objectives, and a detailed explanation of the steps taken during the investigation and its outcomes was provided (Creswell & Miller, 2000). When the study's conclusions are supported by additional research findings and align with the conceptual framework of the research, they can gain greater credibility. The method for collecting the data and the analysis of the data were explained in detail. Finally, consideration was given to the degree to which the research findings were consistent with the conceptual framework of the study and with the findings of other studies. The diverse perspectives of the participants and these methodological decisions enhance the overall validity and reliability of the qualitative case study.

Findings

In light of the opinions of mentors and mentees regarding mentoring programs, the research findings were assessed. The findings of this research are displayed as themes, subcategories, and categories. Four themes that reflected the research problem were identified within the confines of the study. Detailed findings, direct quotations and observation findings related to the themes are divided into subheadings.

Figure 1

Themes on the mentoring program by the participants



As seen in Figure 1, these themes are “definitions of mentoring, benefits of mentoring, personal metaphors of mentoring and reinforcement of mentoring”. Each theme is discussed in detail below. The findings provide a more comprehensive view of the impact of mentoring programs on the professional development of EFL instructors. The definition of mentoring as identified by the participants is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
The definitions of the participants regarding mentoring

Category	Sub-category
Definitions of Mentees	New teacher’s getting help from experienced instructors
	Collaboration between more experienced teachers and new teachers
	A teacher who should support newly graduated teachers
	A person who has already started a job helps a newcomer. Guidance to get used to environment
Definitions of mentors	Getting help from someone with experience in different subjects
	A more experienced person helping a less experienced person in certain areas
	The experienced guiding, mentoring and counseling the inexperienced To help newcomers to the institution to keep up with the corporate culture and in terms of teaching.

The key finding is that experienced teachers play a critical role in helping and guiding their less experienced colleagues. This mentoring process was identified by the participants as a collaborative effort in which experienced teachers serve as mentors and critical support providers for novice teachers. There are several key features that characterize the mentor-mentee relationship providing assistance in navigating the institutional environment, helping with institutional culture integration, providing subject-specific expertise, and advising and mentoring on various aspects of teaching. This collaborative approach, characterized by synergy between experienced and novice teachers, not only facilitated the adaptation of novices to teaching tasks, but also fostered professional development and a sense of belonging to a community within the EFL program. These results highlight the value of mentoring programs in creating a friendly and supportive environment for teachers. The following are direct quotes from the participants:

For example, it seems to me that a teacher who is new to the environment gets help from more experienced teachers. Getting help from an experienced teacher related to the use of technology, classroom environment or any subject. (Mentee 1).

I think she is a teacher who should support newly graduated teachers like me. She will observe me and then give me tips to turn my minuses into pluses, that's how it is. (Mentee 3).

Mentoring, especially our new friends, so when we first come, we are inexperienced, we do not know what to do, we are a little more shy. It is useful to get help from someone who is experienced in different subjects, especially the operation of the school, the teaching of the courses. So instead of figuring out what to do yourself, someone shows you. He says if you do it this way, your work will be easier. (Mentor 1).

Teachers with more experience - there is the corporate culture and there is the teaching culture - they are different things, they help the new teachers to adapt to the corporate culture and to help them in terms of teaching. Not just from the top down, but from the bottom up, because sometimes less experience can be better than more experience. It can bring fresh ideas. (Mentor 5).

Mentoring was perceived by participants as a collaborative venture, with experienced teachers playing a critical role in training and supporting less experienced colleagues. The definitions emphasized that mentoring is essential not only for subject-specific training, but also for supporting novices to adapt to

the institutional environment and organizational culture. Several factors can be attributed to the participants' motivation for expressing these concepts. For example, they show a genuine appreciation of the benefits of mentoring in the teaching profession. For EFL instructors, mentoring goes beyond instructional guidance and includes holistic support in the form of advice, counseling and involvement in the academic community. Participants' understanding may have been influenced by the tangible benefits they gained from mentoring, such as improved teaching skills, higher job satisfaction and a sense of belonging.

Benefits of mentoring

Table 3

The self-reports of the participants regarding the benefits of mentoring

Category	Sub-category
Benefits of Mentoring	Alignment with corporate culture
	Provision with entry level classroom clues
	Low level of anxiety
	Awareness of responsibility
	Quick comprehension of things that would take a long time
	Changing different and practical teaching techniques and ideas
	Quick and easy adaptation
	Opportunity to see something through the eyes of others via observations
	Professional development

These perspectives include a wide range of benefits, from professional development to personal growth and improvement of teaching practices. They underline the complex nature of mentoring, emphasizing its function not only as pedagogical support but also as creating a sense of community, reducing fear and accelerating the learning process for novices. In line with this, direct quotes are as follows.

I learn things that I will learn later, together with the experiences of the other person. (Mentee 4)

For me it is a very good process, I think it is also because I am a mentee, my mentor was really good. She was really helping me, we are at the same office, we did so much, I did not know anybody, when I came she started to talk about the university and how I should start and how things work out. For me it is a really good process. (Mentee5).

Even if it's small, you learn to do things in a different way, you see a different perspective. Now when you go to class, your method is the best in the world, but when you observe someone else, you say that it can be like that. (Mentor 1).

If you have someone observing you and trying to get something out of what you are doing, you focus more, so we say, let me do it a little more properly so that it will benefit. It is also useful because there is an exchange of ideas. It is always useful. (Mentor 3).

Sharing ideas, can be methodological or material, from the most general to the most specific, this was nice. Especially when experienced and inexperienced friends come together, it benefits both sides. (Mentor 5).

The motivations that drive individuals to share their ideas are varied. These are most likely the result of personal experiences in the mentoring program. In conclusion, it can be said that participants' views on the benefits of mentoring stem from both personal experiences and a shared belief in the transformative power of mentoring. They not only emphasize the benefits of mentoring, but also contribute to the development of a mentoring culture by fostering an environment where mentors and mentees learn from each other and collaborate.

Reinforcement of mentoring

Table 4

Participants' opinions on reinforcement of mentoring programs

Category	Sub-category
Reinforcement of mentoring	Supervision of the mentoring process.
	Sharing the content and aim of mentoring
	Making the mentees feel comfortable
	Provision of familiarity between mentor and mentee
	Extra payment for the mentor
	Friendly, sociable and collaborative mentor
	Guideline for mentoring/checklist for mentors on how and what to do
	Training mentors
	Low course load
	Checklist for the observations in mentoring
	Compatible and appropriate mentor-mentee pairing
	Willingness to participate

These suggestions show a clear commitment to improving the mentoring experience for both mentors and mentees. Teachers mention concepts such as supervision of the mentoring process and emphasize the importance of supervision in ensuring the effectiveness of the program. Sharing the content and goals of the mentoring program would provide transparency and both parties would have a clear understanding of the mentoring. Ideas such as making mentees feel comfortable, creating mentor-mentee interaction and paying mentors extra emphasize the importance of beneficial and rewarding mentoring. Participants also emphasized the importance of mentor qualities such as friendship, sociability and collaboration to strengthen the mentor-mentee relationship. In this context, guidelines, training, checklists and minimum course loads are suggested to ensure the structure, consistency and professional development opportunities of the mentoring program. To ensure that mentors and mentees are well matched in terms of expectations and aspirations, compatible and appropriate mentor-mentee matches are seen as fundamental for effective mentoring. Finally, willingness to participate, emphasizes the importance of active involvement of all parties involved in the mentoring process. Below are direct quotes from a few participants:

Mentoring is really good. Some mentors should be given a checklist or they should be trained so that they can help mentees more. (Mentee 5).

I wish I would have worked with a syllabus defining what mentors and mentees should do what they should be working on, what they should accomplish weekly or monthly. Just assigning someone as a mentor or a mentee is not enough itself. Either nothing happens, or only the people who just want to do it by themselves do it. (Mentor 5),

A mentoring training is needed. It could be in the forms of workshops or reading different materials. It should address the issues like what the purpose of mentoring is, who the mentor is, if a mentor is there only to answer questions regarding the school or more, if it is just in the form of consultancy, what should be observed in class observations. (Mentor 3).

So far, the participants have very clearly expressed the need for mentor training or guidelines for mentoring. They suggest that there is a serious need for guidelines in mentoring and that a mentor training should be organized at the beginning of the academic years. Similarly, another participant stated that:

Just assigning people as mentors and mentees in the beginning of the semester is not enough. Their progress should be watched and they should be demanded to report what

they are doing and where they are as a feedback. Based on this feedback, some rearrangements could be made. (Mentor 4).

The pairs should be checked if they are happy with their partners, and if the process does not function well, the reasons behind it should be investigated, and then they should be provided with some alternative partners among whom they can choose. (Mentor 1).

It should be totally voluntary based. If I had been asked in the beginning, and if I had said yes, then I would have felt the responsibility. I perceived it some sort of obligation that I had to obey. So I did not find it effective. Such things should be optional. (Mentee 4).

Participants identified areas where the overall effectiveness of the program could be improved. These ideas provide a roadmap for developing a mentoring program that is transparent, encouraging, and beneficial to the professional development of mentee and mentor. In other words, the participants' views are in line with the ideal mentoring process described in the literature.

Personal Metaphors

Table 5

Participants' metaphors regarding mentoring

Category	Sub-category
Metaphors for Mentoring	Master and apprentice
	Guide
	Siblings/ Mother-Daughter/ Husband-wife
	Friends

The personal metaphors used by the participants to describe their mentoring relationships provide deep insights into how they view the mentor-mentee relationship. The "master and apprentice" metaphor refers to a hierarchical relationship in which the mentor maintains a position of expertise and instructs the mentee. This metaphor most likely reflects the participants' perception of mentors as knowledgeable leaders who represent the dissemination of knowledge and skills in the educational process. The "guide" metaphor supports the idea that mentors serve as guides, providing guidance and support to enable pre-service teachers to overcome the challenges of teaching. The "siblings" metaphor implies that mentoring relationships can be based on mutual respect and a shared experience. The title "Mother-Daughter" emphasizes the nurturing component of mentoring by highlighting the mentor's role in supporting the mentee's development, similar to the parental bond. Finally, the "Friends" metaphor emphasizes the possibility of developing real, supportive connections in mentoring by offering a sense of mutual respect and comfort. Direct quotations are provided below:

I think I would liken it to the master-apprentice relationship. He reaches a certain level with the master and then he goes to sea on his own. (Mentee 2).

We are like sisters; we go to the gym, out to a restaurant, and shopping together. (Mentor 4).

Mentors are mothers. You are there to give advice. Guiding the person into doing things that they should be done. The mentee does not question the authority of the mother, just accepts it, not willingly but still. I want my son to be a man. I did not tell him what to wear, instead I showed him the wardrobe, and I told him this is your wardrobe, you choose it. He managed; I didn't care if it is orange with purple. I recommend, I suggest; it is done like this in here, okay, if they are going to do it differently, we discuss it, but you have to choose, you have to make your way. (Mentor 2).

It is like the relationship between a husband and a wife. They are different from one another, but they complete each other. They are not the two halves of an apple; one of

them is better in one thing, and the other is good in another thing. When they come together, they complete each other. (Mentor 5).

Friends always help you. You don't need permission from your friends to do things, but they guide you. Say, you are in a new country, your friend has been there before, and you ask her what I should be aware of when I am in that country, what I should eat; she has eaten something very delicious, so she can recommend me. (Mentee 5).

Based on the responses, it is possible to conclude that participants value the mentoring system regardless of their level of involvement. The fact that some participants used relatively 'warmer' metaphors for mentoring can be attributed to their own positive experiences in past mentoring programs or in the current mentoring program, or to their own biases. These metaphors were most likely inspired by the participants' own experiences and expectations and indicate their desire for various aspects of mentor-mentee relationships, ranging from guidance and support to collaboration and friendship. In conclusion, mentoring programs for English language teachers provide significant benefits and impacts such as mentor-mentee relationship, alignment with individual needs, and quality along with institutional support. These results emphasize the value of developing and conducting mentoring opportunities in teacher education, especially for EFL teachers.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

The definitions of mentees and mentors provided by the English instructors in the study reflect a shared understanding of mentoring as a supportive and collaborative relationship between experienced and novice educators, which is consistent with the social constructivist nature of mentoring (Millwater & Yarrow, 1997). Mentors are defined as experienced professionals who offer advice, counsel, and support to less experienced colleagues. Mentees are defined as new educators who are looking for direction, support, and aid in adjusting to the teaching environment. These definitions are consistent with the idea that mentoring is a process of development that supports the integration of new teachers into the educational community and their professional development (Eby et al., 2008). For educators hoping to grow in their professions, mentoring is a crucial tool (Lunsford et al., 2017). Language teachers can improve their teaching methods and students' learning experiences by working with an experienced mentor who can offer them new information, abilities, and resources (Li & Zhu, 2013). The ability to receive individualized feedback and guidance regarding their teaching is one of the most significant benefits of mentoring for language teachers. A mentor can keep an eye on a teacher's practices in the classroom, offer suggestions for areas that need work, and introduce them to fresh approaches to teaching (Flores, 2018). Teachers who are attempting to develop new teaching strategies and enhance their teaching abilities may find great value in this feedback.

It was found that most instructors feel positively about the mentorship program, irrespective of their stated participation levels. Their opinions on the current mentoring program, however, differed. It's interesting to note that every teacher who had only one year of experience at the institution and in teaching expressed negative opinions about either mentoring in general or particular aspects of the program. Regardless of their reported levels of participation in the institution's current mentoring program, teachers with more experience in the classroom and overall expressed significantly more positive opinions regarding the mentoring program and mentoring in general. From this perspective, it is reasonable to conclude that the first years of teaching are critical for educators in terms of their views on mentoring and/or collaborative teacher training methods in general. Based on teachers' responses, mentoring programs have a number of benefits, such as helping new teachers adapt to their roles, encouraging collaboration, reducing anxiety levels, increasing awareness of responsibilities, facilitating quick understanding of complex issues, encouraging the adoption of practical teaching techniques, promoting quick adaptation to new environments, and providing opportunities for observation in the classroom. These findings are consistent with the extensive literature on the benefits of mentoring in education, which highlights its role in promoting teacher retention, enhancing instructional practices, and fostering personal and professional growth (Kram, 1985).

In order for mentoring to be effective in the context of language teachers' continuous professional development, there are several significant factors (David, 2000) to consider, as merely putting two adults together does not ensure success (Andrews & Wallis, 1999; Trubowitz, 2004). It therefore necessitates that the mentor have maturity, confidence, creative thinking, empathy, and a willingness to devote time and effort to another (Barondess, 1997). Thus, for the reinforcement of the mentoring programs, such recommendations became evident including monitoring the mentoring process, explaining the purpose and content of mentoring, making mentees feel comfortable, building rapport between mentors and mentees, paying mentors more, encouraging mentoring dynamics to be friendly, social and collaborative, creating guidelines or checklists for mentors regarding their roles and responsibilities, providing mentor training, reducing teachers' teaching loads, and implementing observation checklists in mentoring. The strategies for reinforcing mentoring outlined by the English teachers emphasize the importance of clear communication, mentor-mentee compatibility, mentor training, supervision, and the establishment of supportive and collaborative relationships. These strategies align with best practices in mentoring and underscore the significance of structured and well-supported mentoring programs in educational settings (Allen et al., 2004). These include developing a close bond between the mentor and mentee, outlining precise expectations and objectives for the mentoring relationship, and keeping lines of communication open and honest at all times (Flores, 2018). In terms of the future of knowledge management, Emelo (2009) asserts that organizations must prioritize connecting people because people want to share knowledge and feel connected to their peers. Richards and Farrell (2011) stress the significance of having regular communication and support, establishing clear expectations for the mentoring relationship, and matching mentors and mentees based on their needs and interests. In addition to offering comments and advice, mentoring can help language teachers build their networks and connect with other experts in their field. Teachers can interact with other teachers with similar interests and expertise, attend conferences and seminars, and gain access to new resources through a mentoring relationship (Kato, 2013).

While describing mentoring relationships, metaphors like "master and apprentice," "guide," and "siblings/mother-daughter/husband-wife/friends" offer a rich and complex understanding of the dynamics and complexities involved. These metaphors highlight the diverse aspects of mentoring, including aspects of friendship, partnership, guidance, and support, all of which are relevant to the relational and developmental aspects of mentoring relationships (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The use of personal metaphors highlights the significance of mentor-mentee compatibility, as it is evident that mentees are at ease and feel cool. In this instance, a mentoring program that incorporates all of these concepts could produce better results. As mentoring is a process, it needs to be carefully observed and controlled. It is certainly not enough to simply assign people with different roles. There should be a guideline for both mentors and mentees that precisely defines the roles of the parties involved, outlines the boundaries of each individual, clarifies what they should and should not do and what they must and must not do (see David, 2000). Mentors should be trained (Gandhi & Johnson, 2016) at the beginning of the semester. This training program can last for the whole year. However, at the beginning of the semester mentors should be given a clear explanation of the basics of mentoring. Subsequent training sessions throughout the academic year can be used as a tool to solicit mentors' views and to modify or restructure the program. Mentors' time management strategies were negatively affected by their workload. Mentors could be given a salary increase or career progression so that both mentors and mentees can see mentoring as part of their job. These recommendations provide enlightening suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the mentoring program and providing better support to teachers.

Despite its non-generalizable qualitative nature, this study shares common findings with recent research highlighting findings such as mentoring's impact on classroom management, teachers' networking as mentees and mentors, gaining experience in teaching, lack of organization of the mentoring program, and teachers' lack of time to participate in mentoring programs due to their workload. Recent mentoring research in Turkey has highlighted outcomes such as networking with other teachers through mentoring, classroom management, effective matching of mentees and mentors, collaboration for professional development, better communication skills and higher professional competence, gaining experience in teaching, lack of quality in the implementation of

mentoring programs involving mentors and mentees, communication problems between mentees and mentors, and the need for more mentoring (see Aktaş, 2018; Alabaş & Yılmaz, 2018; Alemdağ & Şimşek, 2017; Ali & Cansu, 2019; Aslan & Öcal, 2012; Bayar, 2014; Hangül, 2018; Yirci, 2017). In a broader sense, it can be concluded that the findings of the current study are in line with Malderez (2009), David (2000) and Brown (2001). In conclusion, the findings presented in the research article shed light on the perceptions, experiences, and conceptualizations of mentoring among English instructors at the tertiary level. The study contributes to the existing literature on mentoring in education by providing valuable insights into the definitions, benefits, reinforcement strategies, and metaphors associated with mentoring. The implications of these findings for the design and implementation of effective mentoring programs in tertiary education are significant, emphasizing the need for structured, supportive, and relationship-focused approaches to mentoring that promote the professional development and well-being of teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, some future research directions emerge that are strongly linked to the experiences and perspectives of EFL instructors in the context of mentoring programs. To begin with, a comparative review of mentoring programs in other educational settings could be undertaken to identify how the specific problems and benefits reported by the study participants might differ in other contexts. Furthermore, as evidenced by the participants' interest in this topic, a deeper exploration of the criteria and processes involved in a good mentor-mentee match would provide useful information for optimizing these partnerships. Furthermore, how technology supports mentoring relationships could be explored and hypothetical cases could be developed and artificial intelligence could be used for guidance. Finally, a more comprehensive examination of how mentor training affects the standard of mentoring relationships may reveal ways to improve mentor preparation. The results of the current study are supported by these proposed research directions and have the potential to greatly enhance and expand mentoring programs for EFL instructors.

Limitations

The study is limited with the participants in the foreign languages school of a private university.

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