



Strategies used by in-service EFL teachers when teaching English for Palestine Curriculum Case Study of Teacher Education Improvement Project

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Abstract:

Teacher education plays a significant role in today's education since it targets teachers' professional development. Hence, EFL teachers need to update their methods and strategies of teaching English as a foreign language to cope with the increasing needs and interests of their students who are living in a world of sophisticated technology. This qualitative study aimed at identifying the strategies used by a purposeful sample, consisting of three in-service female teachers, when teaching English for Palestine (E4P) textbooks and finding out the extent to which these teachers used the E4P textbooks flexibly and creatively. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a qualitative method design utilising three tools: classroom observation, focus-group discussion, and teachers' self-reflection. The results of the study revealed that the teachers used the strategies they had formerly learned from the Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP) effectively. They used a set of strategies like classroom management strategies, questioning strategies, and a range of instructional strategies to facilitate students learning. Regarding educational resources, the three teachers used games, drama, videos, and role-playing. The three teachers also used reflection effectively to reflect on their teaching by providing a set of examples of how they conducted their classes.

Keywords: In-service EFL teachers, English for Palestine, Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP).

Introduction:

In today's Palestinian educational context and after 26 years of the Oslo Accords, there is a pressing need for a system of education that promotes teachers' professional development and students' learning experience. The Oslo Accords are political agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that led to the creation of the Palestinian Authority tasked with limited self-governance of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Later, Israel transferred some of the responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, including the educational sector and semi-state recognised, as the State of Palestine evolved in some parts of the two territories with different forms of ministries of different duties and responsibilities. One of these ministries is the Ministry of Education which is supposed to work for all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Ministry of Education has devoted great efforts to the educational sector through several measures, including launching the first Palestinian National Curriculum in addition to training thousands of in-service teachers of all school subjects. Based on the assumption that teachers are the key element behind the success or failure of any educational system (PALPCU, 2020)

and that training for teachers is one of the most important factors contributing to English language learning development, the Ministry of Education in Palestine has been holding annual training workshops since 2000 to improve EFL teachers' professional skills to help them use English for Palestine (E4P) textbooks intelligently and creatively. Such workshops seem to be in line with the belief that preparing teachers for the teaching profession is a higher priority in any country and may lead to nations' rising and progress in different domains (Boudersa, 2016). Training is seen as a means to prioritise teachers' understanding of basic concepts and principles before applying them to teaching, which has the potential to help the trainees demonstrate the learned principles and practices in the classroom, and try out new strategies, usually with supervision (Richards and Farrell, 2005:03). By the same token, Desimone (2009) indicated that effective professional development updates teachers content knowledge exposes them to new teaching strategies, sustains their teaching effectiveness, and promotes continuous growth.

Like many other developing countries around the globe, Palestine needs all teachers, especially EFL teachers, to become skilled educational professionals to meet the pressing

requirements of the 21st century, where English is increasingly becoming more widespread and more influential. Teachers are also expected to improve their skills and competencies so they can perform better in front of the students (Havea & Mohanty, 2020) and continue their professional development once they begin their careers (Richards, 2015). This expectation requires them to be fully responsible for all actions within a reflective practice that gain the freedom to understand, explore, and experiment (Bolton, 2014, p.24). That is why in some countries, teachers need to get a teaching license, which is usually embedded as part of or obtained after completing the university degree program, and any other requirements to be hired (Rilling and Miller, 2020). Under the umbrella of training workshops that targeted teachers who teach English for Palestine (E4P) curricula was the Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP)-Additional Financing. The TEIP programme was funded by the World Bank in November 2015 with the aim of improving the competencies and classroom practices of Grades 1-4 in-service teachers in the West Bank and Gaza schools as well as supporting further progress towards bringing teacher education and teaching in the State of Palestine closer to international good-practice norms (The World Bank, 2020). The project was implemented through five Palestinian universities in addition to Canterbury Christ Church University as an international consultant with its academic team and the Project Coordinating Unit. The TEIP life cycle lasted three years, training around 3987 in-service teachers, of which 73% of them were females, and 27 % were males (PALPCU, 2019). Among this number, 295 EFL teachers were teaching the English for Palestine curriculum for 1st-4th grades. To achieve better professional development, professional language teachers should make a range of commitments to attain their excellence. Interacting with one another for the sake of learning and exchanging experiences and ideas with sympathetic colleagues should be made as the first commitment. Likewise, working steadily to reach certain standards of performance, and learning continually about the subject matter, teaching methods, and many other things, make teachers better educated and, therefore, better educators (Rilling and Miller, 2020). Zaghar (2019) maintained that teachers' professional development should involve substantial merits, including coping with the most recent developments and innovations in English language teaching, selecting appropriate teaching resources, developing materials required to match the future needs of the learners, practising reflective practitioners, creating a safe and supportive learning atmosphere, offering multiple opportunities to students to enhance their linguistic output, and taking appropriate decisions and actions to correct students' misbehaviours.

Boudersa (2016) urged teachers to engage in training and professional development programmes since they are the embodiment of lifelong learners, stressing learning as an ongoing process in the current world of vast knowledge. Such involvement can be a great vehicle for teaching improvement and learning success, especially if it is prepared and given by experts and conducted regularly to meet the needs of teachers, schools, or other educational institutions. Teacher professional development seems to be synonymous with teacher education since the former refers to processes, actions, and activities intended to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in teaching to improve students' learning (Guskey, 2000). The professional development of teachers is critical in improving students' learning (Havea and Mohanty, 2020). One teachers' professionalism indicator is their classroom performance, which is based on what teachers do in the classroom and how that affects student learning (Suwartono and Nitiasih, 2020). Teacher education, on the other hand, focuses on teachers' developing knowledge systems and their awareness of learner needs, motivation, and autonomy (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p.xi). Professional development, as defined by Havea and Mohanty (2020), is the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce an outstanding performance for the students. Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu (2012) argued that teacher education is not just about teachers and their education. It should take into account not only issues such as teachers' knowledge, skills, dispositions, cognition, and beliefs but also factors such as educational, social, cultural and ideological movements, as well as swings in the political pendulum (p.1). Such propositions are supported by Demeshkant (2020), who highlights the importance of professional teachers' digital competencies that combine professional, pedagogical, technological knowledge and skills, as well as beliefs regarding the integration of technology in teaching practices.

Taking into account the social, cultural and political situations in Palestine after 1994,(in this year the Palestinian and the Israelis signed a peace treaty known as Oslo agreement) it becomes quite evident that EFL teachers, who have been facing many political, economic, and social problems, are obliged to work towards their professional development. Such development is usually achieved through pre-service and in-service training programs offered by the Ministry of Education and /or other national or international agencies and NGOs working in Palestine; for example, the British Council, the AMIDEAST, UNRWA, Teacher Creativity Center, and Erasmus+ Projects, to name few. In this respect, Boudersa (2016) claimed that it is always an urgent educational need that teachers

should receive adequate educational and professional training to possess adequate knowledge and teaching skills and to be able to dedicate themselves to the teaching profession. At the same time, teachers are expected not only to be competent but also to be professional in their related fields and subject matters.

Teacher Education Improvement Project is a project funded by the World Bank to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the West Bank and Gaza schools by improving the competencies and classroom practice of Grade 1-4 in-service teachers who do not hold education certificates. The National Institute for Educational Training (NIET) supervised component 2 and implemented it through five Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza in addition to Canterbury Christ Church University, which was involved as an international consultant with its academic team, and the Project Coordinating Unit. The first phase started in the fall semester of 2012, and the first cohort of trained teachers completed their training in June/July 2013. Later, in November 2015, the Additional Financing agreement was signed to be closed on June 2019. Teacher Education Improvement Project, specifically speaking, was implemented through modules that aimed to upgrade the large proportion of Grades 1 to 4 teachers who were under-qualified either in their academic and/or professional teaching qualifications and who do not meet the new requirements for teacher certification in three main subject areas: languages, math and science (PALPCU, 2020).

The English Language Module was divided into English 1, English 2, and English 3 modules that cover many topics and issues, such as introduction to Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), planning and assessing language skills, strategies to develop and extend vocabulary, teaching grammar to young learners, using questioning techniques to develop and deepen understanding, using stories, drama, and role play to support English language learning, developing and using key resources to support English language learning and teaching, providing for different language learning needs, using an integrated approach to teaching English language skills, connecting English language learning to daily life, and continuing professional development. In summary, the English Module was aimed at qualifying EFL teachers to use specific strategies to teach the content of the English for Palestine curriculum as well as enhancing their ability to select, design, and create effective resources and teaching aids to provide opportunities to practice, apply, and relate English language to real-life situations. Based on the implementation of the Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP), results reported by the Project Coordination Unit

(PALPCU, 2020) indicated that over 82% of Grade 1-4 teachers trained by TEIP expressed positive attitudes towards the projects' outcomes. The training program impacted their skills in specific competencies related to lesson planning, instruction, and assessment of student learning. Nevertheless, there is still a necessity to measure the impact of the training programs on the performance of the EFL trainees and connect this performance with the trainees' professional development. Therefore, the current study aims at exploring the strategies used by in-service EFL teachers when teaching E4P textbooks, as well as finding out the extent to which teachers use the textbooks flexibly and creatively. Measuring the impact of teacher training programs becomes an urgent necessity, at least to gauge whether or not the proposed programme objectives were achieved. The results of this study are hoped to shed some light on the impact of the TEIP English language modules on the trainees' practices for the purpose of helping decision-makers in planning what to focus on in TEFL professional development programmes. More importantly, the results are expected to relate in more detailed information about the ways and extent to which teachers use the E4P textbooks flexibly and creatively.

Literature Review:

Recently, the concepts of teacher education and teacher professional development have gained much attention due to their unquestionable significance in improving the quality of education in the 21st century. Some researchers aimed to explore the impact of teacher education projects and programs on the competencies of both pre-service and in-service teachers in many countries. Others opted to study the importance of using specific strategies and resources for improving teachers' performance. To this end, Sabbah et al. (2020), who explored the effect of the Education for Future programme on the practices of female teachers in a public school, found that the program developed teachers' competencies since it improved their teaching styles, teaching methods and strategies, as well as assessment strategies. Furthermore, the programme developed the teachers' classroom management, their technology integration in the classes, the student's interaction, and the students' values and attitudes. Observations of the teachers' lessons revealed that many educational strategies were applied, such as learning by playing and visual learning styles like concept mapping. The E4P textbooks positively affected the integration of technology in the classroom. Technological resources employed include LCDs, PowerPoint (presentation slides), videos, electronic tests, websites, cards, and electronic teaching aids. Similarly, Batugal (2020), who explored the performance quality among pre-service teachers as they were engaged in actual teaching, found that the

said performance could be rated from very good to excellent. The themes that emerged from the teachers' reflections encompassed self-efficacy, character-building, classroom management, and the production of teaching resources.

Contrary to the aforementioned results, Suwartono and Nitiasih (2020), who investigated the effect of participation of two primary school EFL teachers in a professional development programme to improve their teaching performance, revealed that the expected post-participation performance was not optimal and believed to have an unsatisfactory impact on the teachers' performance in the classroom. The relationship between supervision skills and teaching effectiveness was examined by Khun-Inkeeree et al. (2020). They found that a teaching and learning supervision process followed by 211 teachers in 13 primary schools resulted in moderate self-efficacy, while the dimension of knowledge skills scored the greatest impact on teacher self-efficacy. In parallel, the issue of digital competencies and their impact on the performance of PhD students as future teachers was studied by Demeshkant (2020). Results showed different levels of digital competence depending on the student's field of study and speciality. However, the results also showed that, on average, PhD students did not feel well-prepared for the practical use of digital techniques in teaching activities. Alsuhaibani (2019) explored the perceptions of three female pre-service teachers from the English Department at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in addition to examining their practices of reflection in teaching. Portfolios, reflective journals, observations and discussions were used to collect the data. The qualitative analysis showed that pre-service teachers generally believed in the usefulness of reflection, particularly at the beginning of their teaching experience. The study indicated that a student-teacher (pre-service teachers who are supposed to spend 150 training hours at a cooperative school) reflection was general, brief, and mostly descriptive in nature, impeded by some repetition of shared problems that focus mostly on students rather than on the teaching experience itself.

Zaghar (2019) examined how teachers work with writing among first-year English as a foreign language (EFL) students with the aim of delivering a form of instruction based on a set of professional development methods implementation in the classroom. Findings indicated that the proposed strategies led to a virtuous bond between the teaching/learning process of written expression that may generate beneficial knowledge, valuable teaching, and constructive learning results. These techniques have demonstrated that they enable the teachers to gain key reflections on their instruction and their learners' interactions and outward manners throughout time, finding specific areas of teaching

practices that need to be improved. Al-Jaro and Asmawi (2019) investigated the English Teacher Education Programme (ETEP) in order to reform and develop current teaching practices by looking at the preparation strategy, classroom teaching, and supervisory support in one public university in Yemen. The results revealed some inconsistencies between the proposed strategies at the university and the actual classroom implementation and that the present teaching duration is insufficient to realise the real benefits of the programme for sustainable growth. Coskun (2019), whose study involved three pre-service English language teachers who completed the pedagogical formation certificate program in a Turkish state school, revealed that the experienced teacher-led lesson study has improved teachers' lesson planning. Yalcin Arslan (2018) analysed the influence of the lesson study approach on the professional development of EFL pre-service teachers in Turkey. Data were collected from research lessons, observations, and reflections. Findings revealed that lesson study contributed to teacher development by providing teachers with concrete examples of practice and encouraging them to reflect on their teaching to improve its overall quality.

Likewise, Alwadi et al. (2020) studied the influence of the participatory lesson study (PLS) strategy on creating a participatory professional development experience for English language teachers in a secondary school in the Kingdom of Bahrain by exploring their perceptions of their professional growth. Following a qualitative interpretive approach, a total of eight lesson study cases and 16 meetings were conducted and analysed. The results implied that the main factors influencing the participants' perceptions of professional growth in PLS were: high self-efficacy and confidence, dominance of their peers, the informality of the PLS practice, and reflective practice. Relatedly, the results revealed critical thoughts about PLS as a means for teachers' self-directed professional development in non-native English-speaking contexts. Richards (2017) compared two contrasting educational philosophies that have had a significant impact on approaching and understanding the practices of teacher educators. These were the transmission-based approach and the ecological approach. Teachers who engage in what we can call "principled improvisation" view lessons as a collaborative process between the teacher and the learners, shaped by the teacher's plans for the lesson but also moving in unpredictable directions through the interactions that take place. Teaching from the perspective of the learners is reflected in the following aspects of the teacher's lessons: the degree of engagement learners have with the lesson, the extent to which learners' responses shape the lesson, the amount of learner

participation and interaction, how the lesson reflects learners' needs and preferences, how the lesson connects with the learners' life experiences and how the teacher responds to learners' difficulties. Zein (2017) investigated the perspectives of twenty-six teachers on the appropriate pedagogy needed to teach in the English for Young Learners (EYL) programme. Data from semi-structured interviews indicated that, in an EYL classroom, a greater emphasis needs to be given to the young learners' individual development rather than the language. The findings showed that developing a child-friendly pedagogy in the EYL classroom is of vital importance; it is at the core of EYL pedagogy, and teacher educators need to design courses aimed at fostering child-friendly pedagogy.

Fakazli and Gönen (2017) explored the perceptions of eight EFL university instructors regarding different reflective practices. Several reflective tools, including diaries, video analysis, and peer sessions, were used for reflective practice after some training. Findings indicated that the participants recognized the usefulness of the reflective tools to their professional development despite some negative perceptions regarding the time and effort required. Sholah (2016) investigated the effect of a suggested online training programme on developing 11 EFL in-service teachers' professional performance in the preparatory stage by using two instruments: a teacher's performance observation checklist and EFL teacher's interviews. The programme was administered to the participants for about 15 hours, and the results revealed the positive impact of the training on developing the EFL teachers' professional performance. Almost 42% of the teachers were able to apply what they received from the training programmes in their classrooms at the same time of the training. That means they were yet to take the full benefits of the training. Wati (2008) aimed to identify the effectiveness of an English language training programme for elementary school EFL teachers in Riau province, Indonesia, by sampling 55 English teachers. Her findings revealed that, in terms of overall effectiveness, the programme was highly effective in improving teachers' confidence and motivation.

Methodology:

Study design:

The design of the current study employs a qualitative method with the utilisation of three tools: classroom observation, focus-group discussion, and teachers' self-reflection.

Study questions:

The study is guided by three main questions:

1. What strategies are being used by in-service EFL teachers who completed TEIP when they teach E4P (Grades 1-4 textbooks)?

2. To what extent are the strategies learnt in TEIP used by the teachers in their classrooms?
3. How effective are these strategies in engaging Grades 1-4 students in learning English?

Context and participants:

Three female teachers were purposefully chosen from three different areas in the West Bank of Palestine (Nablus City, Jenin City and Kufr Dan Town). They participated in the TEIP 2017/2018 for one year, where they used to attend 6-hour Saturday training workshops. Every single one of them has teaching experience with the E4P curriculum ranging between 10-15 years, and their ages were between 33 - 45 years old. Each of them has a Bachelor's degree (BA) in teaching English as a foreign language, and their mother tongue is Arabic.

Data collection and instruments:

A qualitative case study was used to answer the study questions. Case study research utilises a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a case—or multiple cases over time—using in-depth data collection techniques involving multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, audiovisual methods, and documents to report a case description or case-based themes (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). A triangulation design was used to collect the required data from different resources to enrich and deepen the results of the study. Specifically, the data were collected through three tools. The first tool was an observation checklist constructed by the two researchers and validated by a jury of experts in the field of TEFL and teacher education. According to Rilling and Miller (2020), observation is an important professional development tool that fosters personal improvement (p.224). Hence the observation tool was constructed to focus on the strategies introduced in TEIP training modules. After each observation, the researchers asked the teachers to reflect on their lessons and performance.

The second tool was a focus discussion, which was held through scheduled Zoom video conferencing, with a focus on teachers' beliefs and practices in English teaching. The third tool, self-reflection, was exercised by asking the three teachers to write their own reflections on what they have taught after each lesson in a journal, primarily focusing on the applied strategies and methods. The concept of critical incidents was utilised for the teachers' self-reflection. For Flanagan (1954), this technique consists of a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behaviour in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems (p. 327). Thus, it helps teachers to know how they operate, question their practice, and then explain and provide a solution. Such kind of reflection aids teachers in promoting their self-directed professional growth.

Procedure:

The study took place during the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020. Two researchers of the current study visited and observed the three participating teachers in their classes by attending six lessons (40 minutes each). The researchers played the role of the observers since they had about 20-year experience in supervising EFL practicum courses and observing student-teachers. Discussions were conducted between the three teachers and the researchers directly after the observation stage when teaching was still fresh to discuss certain aspects of the teachers' performance. Meanwhile, the three teachers were asked to write their own reflections on what they had taught. Later, the researchers communicated with the English supervisors, who were responsible for visiting and evaluating the three teachers, to get the teachers' evaluations in the last three years. The researchers then asked these supervisors to visit the teachers and observe them using the observation tool prepared by the researchers.

Data analysis and interpretation:

Taking into consideration the multiple sources of data collection in this study, the researchers aimed to gather comprehensive data that would be helpful in answering the questions of the study. Therefore, the data about the three teachers' reflections and practices were systematically compiled and analysed. In the subsequent step, some recurring themes were identified.

Results:**1-Results that answer the first question: What strategies are being used by in-service EFL teachers who completed TEIP when they teach E4P (Grades 1- 4) textbooks?**

To answer this question, the results of the observation tool were coded, analysed, and compared with the results obtained through teachers' self-reflection. The findings indicated that the three teachers showed outstanding competence in the following strategies: using classroom management strategies, practising a range of instructional strategies to engage students accompanied by questioning strategies that aimed to activate students' participation, using verbal and non-verbal communication to maintain students' attention, demonstrating content knowledge to meet the needs of students, demonstrating active learning techniques, and creating appropriate learning experiences based on student's interests and needs. Concerning the utilisation of educational resources, the three teachers demonstrated outstanding competence in using videos, songs, games, and dramatisation in their classes to maintain students' engagement.

Teacher B wrote in her journal:

I started my lesson by asking some questions about the months of the year. I drew a

diagram to show how many months are in a year and classified the months of each season, and asked about the weather. I saw that it helps my students to classify the months of each season easier. Then we sang a song together about the months of the year. They enjoyed it a lot; I think songs make teaching English more enjoyable and interesting. There was a sketch related to the topic. The students liked using drama in learning. I used technology by showing a video about our lesson. I asked many questions (wh- Q and yes/no Q). I saw that questioning makes students active and good participants. At the end of the class, we did a simple game, "clap or stamp". The students liked this game a lot since it allowed them to move their bodies, in addition to changing the atmosphere. I also used games for informal evaluation.

Teacher L wrote:

For the fifth grade, my lesson was about holidays in Palestine. I asked one student to lead the warm-up activity by standing up and turning around their bodies. Another student was then asked about his name, age, etc. Then he sang the song "How old are you?". One of the students asked about the day, tomorrow, yesterday, and the date. Another student made a revision with present continuous by asking, "What are you doing now?", "What is Hala doing now?" and sang the song "What are you doing?". Another student asked about the daily routine, "What do you do every day?" and sang the song "I wake up". Then, I asked about a certain topic through brainstorming for students to answer, e.g., summer holiday, we don't go to school, two holidays in Feb and June, (as well as) July and August. I drew some signs for the seasons, e.g., clouds, trees, flowers, and the sun, and asked about the four seasons and the months using wh- and yes/no questions. After that, we sang a song about the months of the year. Then I asked students to read the lesson and discuss many things in the text. I asked students to form questions. I can say that the majority of students were active participants. We made a sketch about the four seasons, and students wore and held things related to each season. In the end, I showed students a video about the four seasons and asked different types of questions, e.g., "What is the harvest season?" and "What can you do with snow?". I used a model for four seasons.

Teacher D also wrote her journal as follows:

Since I was teaching first, second, and third graders, activities, songs, and different kinds of entertainment were used to develop and achieve my aims and to develop the students' speaking skills. I realised that these approaches were very successful. They helped me to create positive values and attitudes towards English language learning. All songs build confidence in young learners, and even shy students enjoy singing and acting out a song as part of a group or whole class. I used to write songs

and short sketches to serve the lesson objectives. Activating posters in each class and writing songs for each poster was my daily routine with these kids. My kids are often proud of what they have learnt, and they like to show their achievements to people around them. I used to encourage my little pupils to practise speaking at home with their families and at school with their teacher and friends. As a language teacher, I used songs to open and close my lessons, to illustrate themes and topics, to add variety or change the routine, and to present new vocabulary or recycle known language. I realised that their speaking skill improved. Through songs and role play, I did my best to provide more opportunities for all pupils to express themselves clearly in English and to describe others and pictures in the classroom.

I used chanting throughout my lessons which enabled me to change the words, sentences, pictures, posters and speech in different lessons to songs with beautiful melodies for all grades. I found that it leads to great interaction among all students, especially the weak students, and they increase their participation and ability to speak freely and confidently in the classroom. Moreover, I used learning by doing activities to help students understand and perform instructions. I believe that speaking should be taught systematically and in an enjoyable way by building their confidence in speaking through collaborative learning. Therefore, students are motivated to speak in English between them. I tried my best to introduce grammatical and functional structure through songs, role play, and dramatisations to create fun in the classroom. I also worked hard to create cooperation between the school and the parents, working continually to preserve their relationship. I communicated with the parents of my students through social network sites and periodic meetings with them at school. I demonstrated the importance of English language speaking and the importance of practising the language to my students, not only at school but also at home with their parents, friends, and neighbours. I asked their mothers to record videos for their girls while they were speaking in English at home and send those videos to me through messenger, so I could upload them to my YouTube channel. Two teachers showed satisfactory competence in the following: using various methods to evaluate the teaching outcomes, addressing students by name, planning authentic learning experiences, and providing multiple assessment options for the students to demonstrate knowledge and skills. One of these assessment options was using games as a tool for evaluation.

2-Results that answer the second question: To what extent are the strategies learnt in TEIP used by the teachers in their classrooms?

Based on the self-reflections and observations of the teachers, it was evident that they

gained benefits from the TEIP project. This was reflected in their efforts to fully employ the strategies and techniques they had learnt in TEIP, such as planning and assessment of language skills, questioning techniques to develop and deepen understanding, stories, drama, and role play to support English language learning, development and utilisation of key resources to support English language learning and teaching, and the enhanced ability to select, design and create effective teaching resources. Furthermore, these results were supported by the three supervisors when they participated in the Zoom focus group by confirming that the three teachers were creative in their teaching methods and in their ability to engage students. One of the teachers (Teacher D) has been known by her educational YouTube channel: Dua'a Taha Minawi (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC58g3h2AHZG0cjODm89OjKA>), which contains hundreds of mini-videos showing her pupils practising English, either at home or in the classroom. Some of the videos show students singing in English or using aids and resources relevant to the units and themes of their E4P curriculum.

3-Results that answer the third question: How effective are these strategies in engaging Grade 1-4 children in learning English?

The overall reflections given by the three teachers indicated that the strategies used in the classrooms were effective and supported students' learning and engagement. The three teachers pointed out the use of dramatisation, songs, games, videos, real objects, puzzles, posters, pictures, and questioning techniques, which helped the pupils to learn and enjoy the lesson. As shown in the teachers' reflection, the students enjoyed singing songs, playing funny games, role-playing the "small teacher" acting, enacting roles and sketches, and chanting some content with the help of the teacher. Most of these activities appeared in the mini-videos uploaded to the YouTube channel of Teacher D from Nablus city. The clips clearly indicated that the pupils were strongly motivated to learn English and to have some fun and engagement in the class at the same time.

These results were supported by the in-class observation conducted by the two researchers. They noticed the active participation of the students who were happy and fully engaged in the class, especially when they were asked to sing, act, and carry out some instructions. Students also showed some kind of enthusiasm towards playing the role of the small teacher, which enabled them to speak the language with noticeable self-confidence.

Discussion of the results:

The Teacher Education Improvement Project was implemented with the aim of improving teaching and learning quality in the West Bank and Gaza schools by improving the competencies and

classroom practice of 1-4 grade in-service teachers who did not hold education certificates. This study was conducted to find out the strategies used by the in-service English language teachers who taught the E4P curriculum to Grades 1-4. The participating teachers used to attend the weekly training conducted every Saturday for 6 hours. They also came on Thursdays for 3 hours to present their work and strategies they had formerly implemented during the week in what were called learning circles. In these learning circles, the teachers presented what they had taught during the week, either by showing the videos of their documented work or performing microteaching in front of their colleagues. All these activities indicated that TEIP as a teacher training program played a significant role in enhancing the teachers' competencies and skills for teaching the E4P curriculum. This result reveals the importance of teacher education projects and programmes funded by international donors to upgrade EFL teaching methods in a newborn state like Palestine with very limited resources and potential.

The result, thus, seems to be in line with Sabbah et al. (2020), who found that the Education for Future program was effective since it enhanced teachers' competencies in terms of teaching styles, methods, and strategies in addition to helping teachers in integrating technology in the classroom. The result also partially agrees with Sholah (2016), who found that the proposed online training program had a positive impact on developing the EFL teachers' professional performance, although only 42% of teachers were able to apply what they had received in the training programs. The results from Wati (2008) also support the results of the current study when revealing that the English language training programme was highly effective in terms of overall effectiveness and in improving teachers' confidence and motivation. However, the current result seems to be inconsistent with the work of Suwartono and Nitiasih (2020), who indicated that teachers' participation in a professional development programme resulted in an unsatisfactory impact towards the teachers' performance in the classroom. Likewise, the result disagrees with Al-Jaro and Asmawi (2019), who found that the duration of the English Teacher Education Program (ETEP) was insufficient for teachers to get the benefits of the programme for their sustainable growth.

The results of the current study revealed that the three teachers were committed to using the strategies they had learned from TEIP. These strategies were reflected in their classroom performance and activities, such as the use of classroom management, the practice of a range of instructional strategies, questioning strategies, content knowledge and active learning techniques demonstrations, and the utilisation of many

educational resources such as videos, games, songs, and dramatisation. Through songs and role play, the three teachers worked hard to provide more opportunities for all pupils to express themselves clearly in English and to describe others and pictures in the classroom. One teacher demonstrated the importance of providing the students with repetitive opportunities to practice English language speaking, not only at school but also at home. These opportunities were clearly reflected in students' active participation in the classroom and also in the videos uploaded to Teacher D's YouTube channel or the school's Facebook page. Teacher D, in this regard, maintained that she used to ask the mothers of the students to record videos of their children speaking in English at home. She also requested them to send the videos to the school's Facebook page or through messenger, where she then posted these videos onto her Youtube channel. The TEIP English modules were designed to help teachers in planning and assessing the students' language skills, using strategies to develop and extend vocabulary, teaching grammar to young learners, using questioning techniques to develop and deepen understanding, using stories, drama, and role play to support learning, developing and using key resources to support learning and teaching, and providing different language learning needs. All these components and competencies were reflected and implemented by the three participating teachers as formerly discussed.

The results of the first question also matched the results obtained by Hweido (2004), Richards and Farrell (2005), Wati (2008), Sholah (2016), Yalcin Arslan (2018), Sabbah et al. (2020), and Batugal (2020), regarding the effectiveness of the training programmes and the implementation of the strategies learned by the participants. Concerning the second question, the three teachers were able to implement the strategies they had formerly learned from TEIP. They implemented lesson planning, questioning techniques, and other resources such as stories, drama, and role play to support English language learners, as well as key resource development and utilisation. The training programme also enhanced their ability to select, design, and create effective resources and teaching aids. This is reflected in their practices and confirmed by the supervisors who were present at the focus group meeting. The supervisors indicated that the three teachers were very creative in their teaching and used many resources to engage and support the students. The three teachers showed the genuine implementation of the strategies as shown by the analysis of the observation tool. These findings match the results obtained by Sholah (2016), Richards (2017), Khun-Inkeeree et al. (2020), Batugal (2020), and Alwadi et al. (2020).

The results to discuss the third research question suggested that the three teachers truly used the strategies they had learned from (TEIP) in their classes. They used songs, videos, drama, questioning techniques, and “small teacher” role-playing to engage their students, who were still young and tended to enjoy learning by doing and learning by playing or singing. From the three teachers’ reflections, it is evident that the students benefited. They enjoyed singing, role-playing, and even videotaping themselves as seen on Teacher D’s YouTube channel. The three teachers indicated that the strategies they used in the classroom were the strategies they previously learned and practised during the implementation of TEIP. These strategies helped them to create an enjoyable learning environment to engage students, not only inside but also outside the walls of the classroom and school. Such results seem to agree with Zein (2017), who highlighted the importance of developing a child-friendly pedagogy in the English for young learners (EYL) classroom. Learning and engagement were extended to cover the students’ homes and their families. These results are in line with the results obtained by (Fakazli and Gönen 2017, Yalcin Arslan 2018, Alsuhaibani 2019, Zaghar 2019,).

Conclusion:

The primary objective of this qualitative study was to identify the strategies used by three female in-service EFL teachers when teaching English for Palestine (E4P) textbooks in three Palestinian schools. Prior to this study, the three teachers had participated in the Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP), a programme funded by the World Bank and administered by the Ministry of Education in Palestine in 2017/2018 for one year, where they used to attend 6-hour Saturday training workshops. The results of the study revealed that the three teachers benefited from the training project, and they used a lot of educational strategies they had learned in the programme to teach English in their schools. These strategies were focused on the utilisation of classroom management strategies, instructional strategies to engage students, questioning strategies that aimed to activate students’ participation, verbal and non-verbal communication to maintain students’ attention, and active learning techniques, to name a few.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that TEIP had a positive impact on the competencies and classroom practice of Grade 1-4 in-service teachers in Palestine. This implies the continuous need to implement similar teacher education projects to upgrade EFL teachers in Palestine. It can also be concluded that teachers who manage to attend such training programmes should try their best to apply what they have learned in their classrooms to enhance their teaching practice. It is

therefore recommended that teacher education programmes should focus on providing teachers with theoretical and practical components to enable them to develop their teaching methods in the 21st century and use creative methods and strategies that meet students’ needs and interests. The results also imply a necessity to employ follow-up procedures to measure the impact of these training projects on the teaching practices of the participating teachers. Thus, it is recommended for further research to investigate the impact of such training programmes on a larger sample of teachers and examine the effect of these programmes on students’ achievement and learning. However, it should also be noted that the results of this study are limited to the three teachers who constituted the purposeful sample; hence, making the results less generalisable. Consequently, it is also recommended for any future research to include a larger number of male and female teachers and extend the observation period to a longer time.

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Observation Tool					
Teacher's Name:		Grade:	Observation Number:		Date of
Observation:		(Time:	Observer:		
No.	Constructs	Outstanding	Competent	Satisfactory	Inadequate
<u>Strategies and Techniques</u>					
1.	Creates appropriate learning experiences based on the student's interests and needs.				
2.	Connects multiple perspectives to encourage learners to learn from each other.				
3.	Uses positive classroom management strategies, including the resources of time, space, and attention.				
4.	Practices a range of instructional strategies to engage students.				
5.	Uses a variety of questioning strategies to involve each learner in appropriately differentiated high-level learning.				
<u>Content Knowledge</u>					
1.	Bases instruction on accurate content knowledge using multiple representations of concepts.				
2.	Demonstrates content knowledge in teaching the material.				
3.	Teaches accurate language and basic concepts.				
4.	Teaches content-specific reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills for effective communication.				
5.	Uses a variety of examples to explain content.				
<u>Active Learning</u>					
1.	Uses differentiated management strategies focusing on individual learner needs.				
2.	Organises student learning teams for the purpose of developing cooperation, collaboration, and student leadership.				
3.	Maintains student attention through active participation.				
4.	Demonstrates active learning techniques.				
5.	Provides explicit directions for active learning tasks.				
<u>Interaction</u>					
1.	Provides opportunities for student interactions.				
2.	Supports each learner's communication skills through content-specific reading, writing, listening, and speaking.				
3.	Addresses students by name, as possible.				
4.	Maintains effective teacher-pupil interaction.				
5.	Uses both verbal and non-verbal language (gestures, facial expressions, intonation, etc.) to maintain attention.				
<u>Use of Technology</u>					
1.	Uses data sources to assess the effectiveness of instruction and to make adjustments in planning and instruction.				
2.	Uses a variety of available and appropriate technology and/or resources to support learning.				
3.	Investigates and use new technologies and/or resources to enhance student participation in learning.				
4.	Uses videos, songs and other resource materials with a clear purpose.				
<u>Planning and Management</u>					
1.	Plans authentic learning experiences.				

2.	Plans lessons that demonstrate how knowledge and skills transfer to other content areas.				
3.	Designs learning experiences that promote the application of knowledge in multiple content areas.				
4.	Maintains effective organisation and management of the class.				
<u>Evaluation/Assessment</u>					
1.	Uses varied methods to evaluate the outcomes of teaching.				
2.	Monitors learner performance and response to individual learning needs.				
3.	Provides multiple assessment options for the learner to demonstrate knowledge and skills.				
4.	Uses multiple formative and summative assessments to make ongoing adjustments in instruction based on a wide range of individual learner needs.				
5.	Uses a variety of effective formats to document and provide feedback on learner progress.				

Thanks a lot