The Congruity/Incongruity of EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Listening Instruction and their Listening Instructional Practices

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Abstract: While research on EFL teachers' beliefs and the realization of these beliefs in their classroom practices has recently gained momentum in the field of applied linguistics, the study of teachers' beliefs as they relate to listening has received insufficient attention in the literature. This study was conducted to investigate Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about listening and their beliefs-driven instructional practices. To this end, a listening beliefs questionnaire was administered to a total of 85 teachers (BA= 49, MA= 36), followed by classroom observation of 12 teachers (6 teachers per group) who were given an audio to teach. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between BA and MA teachers regarding their listening beliefs and beliefs-driven practices. The results of the Phi coefficient of correlation indicated that there was no significant relationship between teachers' beliefs about listening instruction and their listening instructional practices. Furthermore, the results of the interview showed that time, besides other impediments, was the major obstacle for teachers to actualize their listening beliefs. The implications of the study for teacher education are discussed.

Keywords: Listening Instruction, Beliefs, Practices, Degree, EFL Teachers.

Introduction

Over the past decades, the field of education has been concerned with recognizing teachers' mental lives as a potential source shaping their classroom approach (Freeman, 2002). Teachers' beliefs about different aspects of teaching, which influence their instructional choices, form part of their mental lives (Borg, 2003). These beliefs shape what Borg (2003, p. 81) called teacher cognition, defined as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching–what teachers know, believe, and think". Teachers' beliefs about different aspects of teaching are presumed to influence their instructional practices to a great extent (Nunan, 2004). Borg (2001) defined belief, generally, as a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, serving as a guide to thought and behavior. Kagan (1992, p. 65) defined teachers' beliefs as "tacit, often unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught". Exploring the guides to thought and behavior, tacit assumptions, and unobservable

cognitive dimension of teaching has recently gained momentum in offering insights into teachers' classroom approach.

Johnson (1994) proposed that three basic assumptions build the research on teachers' beliefs. First, teachers' beliefs influence both conception and judgment that, in turn, impact on their instructional choices. Second, teachers' beliefs play a crucial role in the outcomes of pre-service and in-service training, because they moderate teachers' interpretations of new information and manner of implementation in the classroom. And third, understanding teachers' beliefs is critical to improving instructional practices and teacher education programs.

To assay the role of beliefs in the 'whats' and the 'hows' of teachers' classroom approach, many researchers, over the years, have conducted studies to investigate teachers' beliefs and their beliefs-driven practices; though most of them have been case studies (Basturkmen, 2012). These case studies have reported contradictory findings regarding the correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their practices. As the correspondence between teachers' beliefs and their beliefs-driven practices has only been observed intermittently (Basturkmen, 2012; Ellis, 2012; Fung & Chow, 2002; Isikoglu, Basturk, & Karaca, 2009), a distinction has been made between these two notions which have been referred to as 'espoused theory' and 'theories of action', respectively. Ellis (2012, p.144) defines these two types of belief as:

> The former [espoused theory] is comprised of explicit beliefs that are used to explain what people believe they should do or what they would like others to think are guiding their actions. The latter [theories of action] is comprised of the beliefs that actually motivate a person's actions.

Reviewing the research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices, Basturkmen (2012) found that context and constraints appeared to mediate the relationship across situations, a finding supported by the literature as well (e.g. Borg, 2003; Fang, 1996; Liao, 2003). In addition, Basturkmen (2012) contended that the existence of the correspondence was reported mainly in situations involving experienced teachers and planned aspects of teaching (see e.g. Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Ng & Farrell, 2003 for similar results).

In spite of areas such as literacy (McNeill & Kirk, 2013), grammar (Uysal & Bardakci, 2014), and content areas (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000) which have witnessed research on the correspondence between teachers' beliefs and practices abundantly, an area which has received little attention in the literature has been teachers' beliefs about listening and their beliefs-driven practices (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2014). Listening as the most difficult skill for learners (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006) requires teachers' full adherence to cultivating the basic mechanisms of how listening works in the learners. Raising learners' awareness of the process of listening comprehension (Vandergrift & Goh, 2009) should be a determining instructional practice of effective teachers. Hence, teachers' beliefs about listening could be defined as teachers' perspectives of the processes involved in listening comprehension as well as how listening should be taught, including the activities done before, while, and after listening to a text.

A wide array of factors may influence the beliefs system of teachers regarding listening. It, for example, appears that if teachers themselves have not experienced a proper approach toward listening comprehension or listening has been something marginal to them in their "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), their beliefs might have been negatively influenced (Tarone & Allwright, 2005), resulting in what Graves (1996, p. 35) called "if only…"

syndrome where teachers attempt to rationalize the avoidance of listening instruction in their syllabuses. Statements such as *"if only we had quieter classrooms, if only students would not interrupt the listening audio, if only acoustic instruments would work better, and so on"* can be some of these syndromes teachers may relate to as impediments for applying listening activities in their classrooms.

Freeman (2002) posited that predicating policy actions such as teacher degree upon a knowledge-base is needed for the professionalization of teaching as it shapes the structure of teachers' professional knowledge. In the one hand, research has shown that undergoing formal education impacts teachers' beliefs and practices (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011). On the other hand, experiencing more technical courses during higher education (MA level) might shape teachers' beliefs and beliefs-driven practices regarding various aspects of language learning/teaching differentially, listening being no exception. However, in the literature, the effect of formal education as it relates to teachers' beliefs about listening comprehension and their instructional practices is unexplored. Considering the abovementioned points, this study was conducted to explore the listening beliefs and beliefs-driven practices of EFL teachers in light of the degree (BA or MA) they hold.

Literature Review

Throughout the years, many researchers have worked on teachers' beliefs in the field of teacher education. It may be imperative for any researcher working in the field to have an eye on teachers' beliefs. The first seeds of working on teachers' beliefs were cultivated by Philip Jackson in 1968, who wrote on teachers' mental lives. Since then, studying teachers' beliefs has proliferated in different areas of education. In 1996, Fang stated that the area of literacy has received greater attention than others in regard to studying teachers' beliefs. Although this emphasis has continued in the new millennium (Deal & White, 2005; Kuzborska, 2011; Lim, 2010; Norman & Spencer, 2005; Scharlach, 2008, to name but a few), teachers' beliefs about grammar has received great attention (Andrews, 2003; Borg, 1998; Borg, 1999a, 1999b; Farrell & Lim, 2005; Hassan, 2013; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sharabyan, 2011; Uysal & Bardakci, 2014).

Phipps and Borg (2009) investigated the grammar-teaching beliefs and practices of three teachers of English in Turkey. Having been observed for 18 months and interviewed, the teachers, practically, tended to adopt a focus-on-forms approach, present and practice grammar, correct grammatical errors, and use grammatical terminology. Data also highlighted a number of tensions between the teachers' stated beliefs and their practices, mainly related to inductive and contextualized presentation of grammar, meaningful practice, and oral group work.

Teachers' beliefs influence their classroom decisions inasmuch as most of the definitions of belief emphasize the determining impact they have on teachers' thinking and actions (Borg, 2001). With regard to the language skills, especially receptive ones, studying teachers' beliefs about listening comprehension and their beliefs-driven practices has received little attention in the literature. Considering the arduousness of listening comprehension on learners' part (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006), teachers are presumed to play a paramount role in making learners acquainted with listening strategies as well as the processes involved in listening comprehension. Considering this point, it is of high significance to explore teachers' listening theories and their listening instructional behaviors. Regarding teachers' beliefs about listening comprehension, Graham et al. (2014) conducted a study to explore the listening beliefs of 115

Modern Foreign Language (MFL) teachers in England, how they used listening materials in textbooks, and the nature of those materials. The results indicated a mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs regarding listening instruction and their stated practices. The researchers concluded that teachers mostly conceived of listening as a product-driven phenomenon and focus on the process of listening was rarely found. In other words, task completion was emphasized rather than teaching the process of listening comprehension. Teachers held the positive beliefs literature suggests as acceptable for listening instruction, but they did not practice what they believed.

Additionally, pedagogical preparation courses are presumed to influence the quality of teachers (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Karimi, 2011). It follows that as teachers undergo higher education (MA level), their quality can be influenced and they might become more effective teachers. In the context of Iran, prospective teachers are educated formally at universities, at BA level, for four years or so, on how to teach language, undergoing courses such as Methodology, Testing, Practicum, etc. At MA level, students experience in-depth studying of these courses, albeit in a shorter period, as well as further theoretical underpinnings and research studies, meaning that MA students can be, at the very least, equipped with deeper understanding of language teaching constructs and concepts. Accordingly, their teaching cognition and classroom instructional practices can be influenced and they could have a deeper outlook of the conceptual and practical issues of their practice (Akbari & Dadvand, 2011).

Several studies in content areas such as mathematics have been conducted regarding the effect of degree on teachers' cognition (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford & Wyckoff, 2007; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1997, 2000). In applied linguistics, Akbari and Dadvand (2011) investigated the differences in Pedagogical Thought Units (PTUs) of 8 BA and MA teachers using Stimulated Recall Technique (SRT). They concluded that MA teachers produced twice as many pedagogical thoughts as their BA counterparts. Furthermore, they argued that systematic changes emerged in teachers' cognition as a result of their higher education. Additionally, Karimi (2011) attempted to explore the variations in 6 EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge base considering their degree. Teachers' degree comprised of teachers having TEFL degree (standard-licensed), Literature or Translation degree (alternatively-licensed) and other degrees (non-licensed). The results indicated that TEFL holders displayed higher PTUs than the other groups. The researcher posited that pedagogical preparation courses may have relationship with practitioners' reflective and thoughtful teaching.

However, few studies in the literature have explored the listening beliefs and beliefs-driven practices of EFL teachers and whether the formal education teachers undergo yields any discernible impact on their practices. Therefore, given the dearth of research and the significant role of teachers in helping learners how to listen effectively, the present study was conducted to address the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' beliefs about listening comprehension?
2. Is there a significant relationship between BA and MA teachers' listening beliefs and their listening instructional practices?
3. Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' listening instructional practices?
4. What factors teachers find as inhibitions in actualizing their listening beliefs in practice?

Methodology
Participants

The initial pool of the participants of this study was 91 BA/MA Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers teaching in private language centers who were selected purposively. These teachers were given the listening questionnaire to fill. Six teachers' responses to the questionnaire were incomplete and were thus discarded. The remaining participants were 85 EFL teachers including both BA-holders (N=49) and MA-holders (N=36). From this sample, 12 teachers were selected purposively to investigate their classroom teaching of listening. To this end, six teachers were selected per group. Seven of the teachers were female and 5 were male. All of the teachers held TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) degree. The 12 teachers' experience ranged from 3 to 8 years and their mean of age was 26.

Instrumentation

In this study, three instruments were used: A questionnaire, an observation coding scheme, and interview.

The current study utilized the questionnaire designed by Graham et al. (2014) (rw = .80). Minor changes were made to make it suitable for the purpose of the present study (Appendix A). The reliability of the revised questionnaire was .75 which, based on Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), is considered an acceptable level for a questionnaire. The questionnaire has two main sections. The first section deals with the activities teachers implement before, during, and after listening. The questions are asked in a Likert-type format which ask teachers about the use of each listening phase in their classes (frequently, always, etc.). The second section encompasses questions about the process of listening in a Likert-type format which asks teachers about their level of agreement with each statement (agree, disagree, etc.).

In addition, an audio of a short story from the book *"Thoughts and Notions"* by Ackert and Lee (2005) was chosen to be taught by teachers. It is about the history of credit cards. The length of the audio is three minutes and forty six seconds and the accent is American. An amalgamation of the policies of the institutions and teachers' evaluation of whether learners listened to similar texts were utilized and once assured, the teachers were asked to teach the audio. Then, based on the first section of the questionnaire, an observation coding scheme was designed by the researchers to count the frequency of teachers' listening instructional practices before, while, and after listening to the audio (Appendix B).

Furthermore, a semi-structured interview was run to ask the participants about the impediments to the actualization of listening beliefs in practice. This was done using cell phone as not all of the teachers were available and the researchers wanted the method of data collection to be the same for all of the participants. Teachers were asked three questions, concerned with i) their level of exposure to listening comprehension at school while they were students, ii) their level of exposure to listening comprehension at university level, and iii) the obstacles in actualizing their listening beliefs in practice. The first two questions were asked to find out the amount of teachers' previous experience of scholastic exposure to listening comprehension. The third question was asked to explore the constraints teachers conceive of as thwarting the actualization of their listening beliefs.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire, classroom observation, and interviews were analyzed in three phases. First, BA and MA teachers' responses to the listening questionnaire were subjected to analysis using independent samples t-test to find out the differences between them. Second, their listening instructional practices were tallied in the three phases of listening. This was done through videotaping teachers' classroom teaching and, further, using the observation coding scheme designed based on the questionnaire. The data were analyzed using chi-square test. Third, the relationship between the 12 teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices was investigated. To this end, Phi coefficient correlation was run. Finally, teachers' responses to the three questions of the interview were analyzed, searching for the themes emerging in their responses. The frequency of the themes was counted in the teachers' responses and their further explanations regarding each answer were written down and reported.

Procedure

Regarding the design of the study, a mixed-method research design was followed in that regarding the weighting of the study a QUAN + qual approach and regarding the timing of the study a QUAN → Qual approach was followed (Tavakoli, 2012). An ex post facto design was followed as the correlation between beliefs and practices was emphasized as well as the differences between BA and MA teachers' listening beliefs and their beliefs-driven practices. Data were collected from 2015 to 2016. First, the listening beliefs questionnaire was administered to teachers to fill. Then, teachers' classroom teaching was videotaped. The classes chosen for video-recording were selected by asking teachers about the learners' level and whether they can understand the audio or not. In order to avoid any planning of teaching aspects (Basturkmen, 2012), teachers were given the written form of the audio just before the class and they did not have the time to design instructional activities in advance. The 12 teachers were given the script of the listening audio before the classroom implementation so as to neutralize the effect of unknown vocabulary items on their classroom approach. Teachers were chosen based on their degree and the intermediate level of the learners they taught. Then, they were videotaped to count the frequency of their listening instructional practices. Duration of teaching time varied from 17 to 35 minutes among teachers. Finally, teachers were interviewed about the obstacles in the way of proceduralizing their listening beliefs in practice. Data were analyzed using SPSS, version 21.

Results

In order to compare BA and MA teachers' listening beliefs –the first research question, independent samples t-test was run. Table 1 indicates the results of the beliefs of BA and MA teachers about listening. These beliefs included teachers' beliefs in terms of pre-listening, while-listening, after listening, and their level of agreement about the processes involved in listening.

		N	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Beliefs	BA	49	53.10	5.36	1.06	83	.29
	MA	36	51.83	5.53			

Table 1: Independent Samples t-test for Teachers' Beliefs (N= 85)

Table 1 indicates that the difference between BA and MA teachers' listening beliefs was not significant *t*(83) = .29, *p* > .05 ; in addition, based on Field (2009), it represented a small-sized effect *r* = .11.

Additionally, one of the major aims of this study was to explore the relationship between teachers' stated beliefs and their practices –the second research question. To this end, Phi coefficient of association was run which yielded a .56 value for the association between BA and MA teachers' listening beliefs and their instructional practices. Having calculated Phi, it was tested for statistical significance. Running the calculations, it produced a 3.72 value for chi-square – which is the appropriate test of Phi against the null hypothesis (Howell, 2010) – at .05 level of significance which indicates that the correlation is not significant at this level.

Another part of this study was to explore the differences between BA and MA teachers' beliefs-driven instructional practices. Having counted the frequency of teachers' practices based on the coding scheme, chi-square test was run the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Group	N	Observed N	Expected N	Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig.
BA	6	42	52	3.84	.05
MA	6	62	52		

Table 2: The Results of the Chi-square Test for Teachers' Practices (N= 12)

When the Chi-square statistic was calculated for the distribution of BA and MA teachers on their listening instructional practices which was the concern of the third research question, a statistically significant difference was not found between them (χ^2 = 3.84, df = 1, *p* = .05). BA and MA teachers displayed similar listening instructional practices before, while, and after listening to the audio.

Borg (2009) contended that research should delve into contextual factors influencing teachers' cognition and their practices. Therefore, to probe the last research question, teachers of the present study were asked about the factors hindering the application of their listening beliefs in the classroom. Furthermore, they were asked about their exposure to listening comprehension in their apprenticeship of observation both at school and university.

Five major themes emerging in teachers' responses, ranked from the most frequent to the least frequent were *time constraints, lack of appropriate facilities, learners' low background knowledge of the content of the audios, diversity in the accents of the interlocutors in the audios, and incongruity between learners' proficiency level and the speakers of the audios.*

Almost all of the teachers related to time limitation as the main problem thwarting the process of actualization of beliefs in practice. In other words, because the curriculum requires teachers to cover several books during a semester, they have insufficient time to apply listening audios as intended. For instance, one of the BA teachers said:

> *The major difficulty in teaching listening for me is time. You know that we have*
> *to finish our classes in a defined period of time and listening process takes much*
> *time because at first we should prepare students for what they are going to hear*

> *and after listening it is necessary to provide activities for receiving feedback and giving them opportunities to use what they have learned. So for this purpose I think we should have unlimited time but unfortunately it is impossible.*

Facilities were another problem mentioned. Low-quality equipment hinder teachers' applying of the audio in practice the way they have in mind. For example, one of the MA teachers stated:

> *You know, the equipment I am working with is of low quality and it produces some extra noises. When I want to increase the sound volume it becomes problematic for learners to understand the listening properly.*

Learners' low background knowledge about the content of the audios and the necessity to raise the schemata was another problem mentioned. A sub-theme emerging in this category was that as the content of the audios are from a different culture, learners face difficulties in understanding the audios. This was reflected in the words of one of BA teachers as:

> *Always the audios are from a different culture and learners are unfamiliar with some of the habits of speakers and because of this, it is difficult to interest learners.*

In addition, the variety of accents in the audios prevents teachers from working on a single accent with learners. That is, listening to different accents demands the teachers to clarify the differences between the accents and thus digress from their lesson plan. One of the teachers related to the negative impact of these accent diversities on the performance of learners on examinations, as it seems that while during the semester American accent is emphasized, examination audios are in British.

Another problem was the unsuitability of audios to learners' level of comprehension. A teacher put it as:

> *Sometimes audios which are too long make my learners not understand it. The speed of the texts, a lot of colloquial words or expressions, and proverbs make bookish students have problem with understanding them.*

All of the teachers stated that they had no exposure to listening comprehension in a systematic way in secondary school and high school and the main focus in their classrooms had just been reading the texts non-interactively, translating texts into learners' L1, focusing on grammar, and working on vocabulary lists with their L1 equivalents. But in university, they had exposure to listening in the form of focus on movies, audio files, documentaries, speeches followed by discussions and summaries, news, music, and interaction with native speakers at disposal. The most frequent activity referred to was "working on movies".

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding listening comprehension in light of their degree. Regarding the first research question, the results indicated that both BA and MA groups shared similar beliefs about listening comprehension. This finding is in line with that of Graham et al. (2014) who reported "the lack of difference across teachers in their stated beliefs…" (p. 53) about listening comprehension. It is also in line with Drinnon (2008) who compared the beliefs of BA and MA teachers in her study.

In the context of Iran, policy makers plan similar curricula for BA students of TEFL at different universities. Student teachers experience 7 to 8 semesters getting familiar with the

process of learning and teaching English as a foreign language at BA level, while this familiarization takes place for three semesters at MA level. Simultaneously, as asserted by the participants of this study, since they had no experience of listening comprehension in secondary and high schools, the ground for learning how to listen as well as its teaching becomes the same for students, i.e. university. Consequently, their core beliefs are molded alike (Phipps & Borg, 2009). As a result of being exposed to similar concepts over a longer period, teachers' beliefs form a schema-like semantic network and some of them become core and difficult to change (Peterman, 1991). The results of this study contrast with the notion that "human beings have differing beliefs of differing intensity and complex connections that determine their importance" (Pajares, 1992, p. 318).

The second research question explored the relationship between the 12 teachers' listening beliefs and their instructional practices. The results revealed the lack of a significant relationship, a finding which is in line with those obtained by Graham et al. (2014). This lack of significant relationship could be due to what Van den Branden (2006, p. 221) called "conflicts between beliefs and skills". That is, teachers may be familiar with particular pedagogical approaches theoretically, but lack the skills to actualize them. For instance, most of the participants agreed that inability to identify word/phrase/sentence boundaries causes fundamental problems in understanding an audio, but it was not actualized in their practices.

However, the lack of a significant relationship between beliefs and practices might be due to the amalgamation of contextual constraints and the scale used. In the scale, 21 items for teaching listening before, while, and after listening to the audio have been incorporated which measure teachers' listening beliefs. Simultaneously, teachers asserted that they have insufficient time to implement their desirable listening activities in the class. Accordingly, due to lack of time, they will not be able to implement all or even half of the techniques in the class. It adduces that their classroom instructional practices are not highly congruent with their listening beliefs.

This overarching obstacle, insufficient time, seems to influence teachers' lesson plan to a great extent, compelling them to cover the books assigned by policy makers rather than designing appropriate pre-task, while-task, and post-task listening activities, being likely to lead to teachers' inability to actualize their listening beliefs in class (Daily, 2010; Pelletier, Levesque & Legault, 2002; Sinprajkpol, 2004; Sugiyama, 2003; Shin, 2007).

Method of research has also been considered as a cause of non-alignment between beliefs and practices (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lioyd, 1991). In the present study, teachers were not given time to plan the activities in advance so as to neutralize the effect of planning on teachers' classroom approach. While research indicates that planning teaching practices generally leads to the existence of correspondence (Basturkmen, 2012), not planning the activities in this study might have exercised a strong impact on the lack of a significant relationship between beliefs and practices (Ng & Farrell, 2003).

A strikingly surprising finding was that none of the teachers, in their interviews, related to the impact they can have on the lack of actualization of beliefs in practice. For instance, making learners familiar with cultural differences (Daily, 2009; Ellis, 2003; Oglivie & Dunn, 2010) or establishing the ground for working on the important vocabulary in the audio (Baleghizadeh & Moghadam, 2013; Walker, 2014) are among the aspects which seem important in making the process of listening easy (Vandergrift, 2007). Nonetheless, they were not observed in all of the teachers' instructional practices.

All of the teachers related to external factors as hindrances for not applying their beliefs in practice. This thought-provoking relation to external factors could have some reasons. The

reasons could rest in social and pedagogical perspectives. First, most of the teachers have to make a living out of teaching and may overwhelm themselves with a lot of classes (Akbari, 2008), often in different levels. This issue results in two problems. First, teachers' attention and devotion is divided into as many classes as they have and, subsequently, they may not be able to design adequate pre, while, and post tasks which reflect their espoused theories. The second problem which hinges upon the first is that because different levels, evidently, require different classroom activities, teachers who have many classes may not have enough time to design communicative tasks for each and every level.

The second reason could lie in teachers' dispositions toward listening at two levels – morally and instructionally. Listening as the most difficult skill among the four skills (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006) requires teachers to strive to develop self-regulated learners (Vandergrift, 2002). This takes place when responsible and efficacious teachers familiarize learners with the process of listening and the strategies involved in listening. On the other hand, to make learners aware of the process of listening comprehension and the strategies involved in it, teachers, themselves, must be aware of these strategies, how they work, the processes (top-down, bottom-up, and interactive) (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005) involved in it, etc.

However, a solution to the problem of non-actualization of beliefs in class due to time limitations could be that teachers design classroom activities in binary forms. Although only while-task phase is central to designing task-based activities, research has indicated that pre-task and post-task phases improve the effectiveness of activities (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, as it seems unlikely to cover all the pre-task, while-task, and post-task activities in a class because of covering several books in a semester, planning the lesson in the form of, for instance, having listening and speaking in one session can be helpful.

Regarding the differences in BA and MA teachers' beliefs-driven practices, the results indicated the lack of a significant difference. This finding is compatible with the results obtained by Drinnon (2008) and Kane, Rockoff and Staiger (2008). While Drinnon (2008) used a survey to report the teachers' practices, in this study teachers' observed classroom practices were reported, which could be a more sophisticated and robust method of data collection. Previous research has also reported contradictory findings with those of this study regarding the differences in teachers' instructional practices who hold different degrees (e.g. Akbari & Dadvand, 2011; Klehm, 2013; McMullen, 1999; Snider & Fu, 1990). A reason for this incongruity might be attributed to the higher number of the participants in the previous studies.

The lack of a significant difference between the beliefs-driven practices of the two groups corroborates what Akbari and Dadvand (2011) emphasized about not equating higher education with higher teaching cognition. A reason for the results obtained could be due to the existence of mixed-experience practitioners in both groups. Hence, a continuum between degree at one end and experience at the other end could be drawn in that despite the increase in getting acquainted with more theories and research findings at MA level, teachers' instructional practices, in the course of time, are derived from their experience of teaching more dominantly than their familiarity with theoretical concepts in higher education.

However, a possible reason for the homogeneity in BA and MA teachers' practices could be the way teachers' instructional practices were investigated –not permitting teachers to have planning time for teaching practices. Nevertheless, by doing so, the researchers intended to explore whether time pressure makes any difference between BA and MA teachers. MA teachers displayed that, in spite of being exposed to more theoretical insights, under the same time

pressure for designing instructional practices, they do not differ from their BA counterparts significantly.

Listeners use their pragmatic knowledge to make inferences and determine speakers' implied meaning which is often culture-bound (Vandergrift, 2007). The implication of this point for teachers is that they should design a methodology in which raising learners' background knowledge (Basavand & Sadeghi, 2014), awareness of cultural issues, and the specific vocabulary items attached to them gain primary importance. Research has also indicated that familiarity with the content of the materials promotes listeners' proficiency (Hayati, 2009) which underscores the facilitative impact of raising learners' awareness of especially cultural issues for successful comprehension to take place. If this culture awareness-raising takes place before listening to the audio, the degree of mismatches between learners' preconceived assumptions and what they comprehend in the audio can be decreased. Teachers must, in turn, be aware of these processes so that they can be cultivated in learners appropriately.

Teachers' awareness of and familiarization with listening process can be achieved through three potential sources. First, their own experience of listening comprehension which partially forms their cognitions regarding listening can influence their awareness. As the participants of this study stated, it was only in university classes that they had undergone listening comprehension classes. The second source could be self-development effort which, considering the difficulties of social life as discussed earlier, seems a demanding task. The third source is teacher education courses which could be a better route as the first two sources are limited in terms of experience and time. To bring learners up to the level of autonomy, which is central to listening comprehension, a redefinition of teacher's role (Widdowson, 1993) is needed in teacher education courses. Other factors to consider in these courses would be how to use technology, cognitive and metacognitive processes and strategies working in listening, etc. These considerations result in a different role for teachers from a probably traditional perspective to a more innovative one. When teachers figure out the nature of listening and the processes involved in it, teaching becomes more effective and easier.

Conclusion

The present study has investigated the beliefs and practices of teachers in terms of listening comprehension and variations in beliefs-practices in light of teachers' degree. Overall, the results indicated that BA and MA teachers did not differ significantly in terms of their listening beliefs and beliefs-driven practices and that a significant relationship did not exist between beliefs and practices. Furthermore, teachers' interpretations of the difficulties hindering actualizing their listening beliefs emphasized the confining role of contextual factors, especially time.

The delicate nature of listening and the way it should be taught require teachers' familiarization with the nature of listening and the processes involved in listening comprehension. Considering the difficulties in second/foreign language teaching profession, teacher education can be a great help. A sound option a teacher educator can provide for teachers is what Freeman (1982, p. 23) called "the non-directive approach". That is, after being observed, the observer –in this sense educator– predicates his/her decisions on the teachers' experience as a source for providing further/constructive comments. Having established a practice-based

understanding, teacher educator can offer additional or alternative comments and suggestions to the teacher to apply in the classroom.

Considering teaching listening, observed teachers' practices should be amalgamated with research findings concerned with innovations in listening pedagogy, cognitive and metacognitive strategies/processes for listening (Field, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), and linguistic resources supporting listening comprehension (Goh, 2014). When these teacher-developing considerations are done in an interactive manner in which teacher's methodology forms the basis of what to be educated and the educated theories and practices inform teachers' forthcoming practices (Wallace, 1991), "learners achieve more than they can achieve on their own" (Goh, 2014, p. 75).

An implication of this study for policy makers would be not to bombard teachers with a lot of textbooks as it seems unlikely to cover all of the textbooks. Opting for an appropriate textbook can guarantee the success in fostering autonomous learners. In lieu of getting teachers to teach a number of textbooks, leaving the room for teachers' creativity is more likely to guarantee learning rather than, predominantly, following the textbooks. However, when the issue of covering several textbooks is there, as it seems to be, the role of the teachers steps toward a lesson planner who wants to both make learning effective and cover several textbooks. In this sense, distributing the textbooks and teachers' classroom activities into different sessions would be a helpful option.

However, the results of this study are to be interpreted cautiously as there were only 12 participants whose classroom practices were studied. Further research should be conducted with a higher number of teachers. In addition, further studies should be done on teachers who hold different types of degree so as to obtain more robust understanding of the relationship between teachers' beliefs about listening and their instructional practices in the light of degrees they hold. Moreover, as this study investigated mixed-experience teachers' instructional practices, future research can explore the abovementioned variables in light of experience, comparing novice and experienced teachers' instructional practices. Also, as this study investigated unplanned practices of teachers, future studies can address the possible differences between the planned and unplanned teaching practices as well.

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Appendix A: Listening Beliefs Questionnaire

Please answer the following items about listening comprehension and the related methodology you adopt in your classroom.

Degree: …………………. (B.A. or M.A.)   Years of teaching English: ……………

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Before listening, I remind learners of vocabulary linked to the topic.				
Before listening, I give learners vocabulary items that will be used in the text.				
Before listening, I ask learners to predict vocabulary they might hear in the text.				
Before listening, I ask learners to think of ideas that might be discussed in the text.				
Before listening, I ask learners to discuss possible answers to the questions asked before the text.				

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
While listening, I ask learners to verify their predictions.				
While listening, I ask learners to focus on key words.				
During the listening, I pause the audio when the passage is played for the first time.				
When I pause the audio, I pause it at the end of each line.				
When I pause the audio, I pause it at the end of each paragraph.				
I play the audio as many as two or three times.				
While listening, in short times, I ask learners to present a summary of what they have heard.				

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
After listening, I tell learners the answers to the questions.				
After listening, I ask about learners' answers to the questions.				
After listening, I ask learners some real-world-contexts-related questions.				
After listening, I ask learners to present summaries.				
After listening, I ask learners to paraphrase the story.				
After listening, I ask learners how they felt about the task.				
After listening, I advise learners how to deal with understanding difficulties next time.				

How far do you agree with the following statements for your students? Please circle one of the following answers as your response to show your level of agreement.

Opinion Statement	1= Strongly agree 2= agree 3= average 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree				
i) when learners don't understand a word, they should work out its meaning from the context.	Strongly agree strongly disagree				
	1	2	3	4	5
ii) when learners don't understand a word, they should work out its meaning from the words/phrases that precede or follow the unknown word.	1	2	3	4	5
iii) when learners don't understand a word, they should work out its meaning from their linguistic knowledge (e.g. knowledge of L1/L2 vocabulary, grammar).	1	2	3	4	5
iv) it is more important for learners to use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is actually said.	1	2	3	4	5
v) The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from their lack of vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
vi) learners' main problems lie in the difficulty they have in identifying where word/phrase/sentence boundaries are.	1	2	3	4	5
vii) the main difficulties for learners in listening arise from lack of grammatical knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
viii) the main difficulties for learners in listening arise from lack of background knowledge about the topic of the passage.	1	2	3	4	5
ix) after listening, students discussed how they completed the listening activity.	1	2	3	4	5
x) after listening, students should discuss how they felt about the listening activity.	1	2	3	4	5
xi) I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally as individual items.	1	2	3	4	5
xii) I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally in connected speech.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU

Appendix B: Observation Coding Scheme

Before Listening

1. The teacher made learners aware of the vocabulary linked to the topic.		
2. The teacher gave learners the vocabulary items that will be used in the text.		

3. The teacher asked learners to predict vocabulary they might hear in the text.		
4. The teacher asked learners to think of ideas that might be discussed in the text.		
5. The teacher asked learners to discuss possible answers to the questions asked before the text.		

While Listening

1. While listening, the teacher asked learners to verify their predictions.		
2. While listening, the teacher asked learners to focus on key words.		
3. During the listening, the teacher paused the audio when the passage was played for the first time.		
4. When the teacher paused the audio, he/she paused it at the end of each line.		
5. The teacher paused the audio at the end of each paragraph.		
6. The teacher played the audio as many as two or three times.		
7. While listening, in short times, the teacher asked learners to present a summary of what they have heard.		

After Listening

1. The teacher told leaners the answers to the questions.		
2. The teacher asked about learners answers to the questions.		
3. After listening, the teacher asked learners some real-world-contexts-related questions.		
4. After listening, the teacher asked learners to present summaries.		
5. The teacher asked learners to paraphrase the story.		
4. After listening, the teacher asked learners how they felt about the task.		
5. The teacher advised learners how to deal with understanding difficulties next time.		