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EFL Teachers' Professional Development Needs: Implications for Online Training Design[1]

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Abstract

This study investigated the professional development (PD) needs of in-service English language teachers in Türkiye and explored their perceptions of an effective online in-service training program. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 322 public school English teachers across 12 NUTS regions via a needs analysis questionnaire. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers purposively selected to represent different regions and school levels. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data were examined through open and axial coding, supported by intercoder agreement and triangulation. Findings revealed that teachers prioritized PD in four main domains: speaking skills, ELT methodology, classroom management, and material development, particularly digital resources. Speaking was consistently identified as the most pressing need, reflecting limited opportunities for communicative language use in Türkiye's EFL context. Teachers also stressed the importance of updated methodological training, practical classroom management strategies, and support in developing interactive materials. Regarding online PD design, participants emphasized that programs should be needs-based, practice-oriented, interactive, and collaborative. They valued flexible timing, accessible digital materials, and voluntary participation over mandatory attendance. The study highlights the necessity of designing PD programs that are context-sensitive, grounded in teachers' realities, and aligned with principles of adult learning. These findings have implications for both pre-service and in-service teacher education, suggesting the need for systemic changes in program design. By integrating teachers' voices, the study contributes to the development of needs-driven, practice-based online professional learning models that can enhance teacher effectiveness and support improved English language outcomes in Türkiye.

Keywords: English language teachers, teacher training, needs analysis, online professional development

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Introduction

Effective teachers have a well-documented impact on student achievement and equity (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021), and professional development (PD) is the primary vehicle to enhance teacher skills. However, despite large investments in PD, its impact on student learning tends to be modest on average (e.g., mean effect sizes ~0.06 on standardized tests) (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). This has led researchers and policymakers to scrutinize how to design more effective PD programs (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). In English language teaching (ELT) contexts in particular, continuous PD is seen as essential for teachers to keep up with evolving curricula and methodologies, ultimately to improve learners' English proficiency (Zhang, 2022). The urgency is evident in countries like Türkiye, which consistently ranks low in global English proficiency. For example, Türkiye was ranked 66th out of 113 countries (and 33rd of 34 in Europe) in the 2024 EF English Proficiency Index, indicating a "low" proficiency level (Education First, 2024). Such outcomes underscore the need to strengthen EFL teacher development as a means to improve English learning nationwide.

Research on what makes teacher PD effective has advanced significantly in recent years. Earlier literature converged on a set of "critical features" of effective PD—namely that it should be sustained, collaborative, subject-specific, practice-oriented, have teacher buy-in, and draw on external expertise (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009; Kennedy, 2016; Sancar et al., 2021). This consensus, promoted in influential reviews (e.g., Desimone, 2009), has even informed official PD guidelines in many countries (Sancar et al., 2021). At the same time, scholars have critiqued overly generic checklists of features and called for more nuanced, theory-driven models of PD (Asterhan & Lefstein, 2023). For instance, Kennedy (2016) argued that research should move beyond surface descriptions (like workshop length or format) to examine how PD triggers changes in teachers' beliefs and practices. These findings echo broader principles of adult learning, which emphasize that teachers (as adult learners) benefit from PD that is relevant, motivating, and immediately applicable to their own classroom challenges (Gravani, 2012). In other words, effective PD treats teachers not as passive recipients of one-size-fits-all knowledge but as active agents engaged in making sense of new ideas and integrating them with their existing experience (Sancar et al., 2021).

Both novice and experienced teachers benefit from continuous professional support, though their needs often differ (Karlberg & Bezzina, 2020). Novice teachers, for instance, face challenges stemming from limited classroom experience, such as lesson planning and classroom management, and require targeted, practical training (Ameen et al., 2024). Experienced teachers, on the other hand, should continually adapt to evolving professional standards, curriculum changes, and rising expectations from parents and students (Porcenaluk et al., 2023). Well-designed PD helps teachers enhance their instructional strategies, confidence, and adaptability to new educational demands (Ha & Murray, 2021; Haug & Mork, 2021; Kalinowski et al., 2020). In-service training, as one of the most common forms of PD, has been shown to improve teacher performance by introducing updated methodologies, effective classroom management techniques, and reflective practices (Al-Thani et al., 2025, Gull et al., 2022; Mago & Andal, 2024; Nazar & Nordin, 2020; Uzorka et al., 2024). Such training enables teachers to keep pace with educational innovations and changing student needs, thereby supporting both individual growth and institutional goals (Mahmood et al., 2022; Stevens et al., 2024).

Another important development in the PD landscape is the rise of online and blended professional development (Ventista & Brown, 2023). Technology has increasingly been used to overcome traditional barriers of time, geography, and hierarchy in teacher learning. Research points out that digital platforms can provide teachers with "extensive access to learning and PD without time and space boundaries" (Zhang, 2022, p. 2). Online professional development (OPD) offers flexible, scalable, and cost-effective alternatives to traditional face-to-face training, enabling personalized learning and fostering virtual professional communities. OPD platforms accommodate both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (self-paced) activities, reducing geographical barriers and allowing teachers to access high-quality training regardless of location (Dille & Røkenes, 2021; Russell et al., 2019; Powell & Bodur, 2019; Stavermann, 2025). Features such as discussion forums and collaborative tasks enhance peer learning, reflection, and ongoing professional dialogue (Yurkofsky et al., 2019; Tekin-Sitrava et al., 2024). However, scholars emphasize that OPD is most effective when designed with needs-based content, interactive elements, and sustained support (Lay et al., 2020; Philipsen et al., 2019; Heap et al., 2020).

Online communities and courses enable the creation of affinity spaces for teacher learning that differ from conventional school-based settings, potentially flattening bureaucratic hierarchies and fostering more peer-to-peer collaboration (Zhang, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the shift toward online PD, familiarizing teachers with webinars, virtual workshops, and professional learning networks out of necessity (Heap et al., 2020). As a result, there is growing interest in how to design effective online PD experiences specifically for ELT professionals. Recent reviews indicate that while online PD can be as effective as face-to-face formats, it requires careful attention to design and support structures (Philipsen et al., 2019; Ventista & Brown, 2023; Zhang, 2022). Key success factors include scaffolding and facilitation—a skilled facilitator or mentor is often needed to guide discussions, keep participants engaged, and help translate online learning into practice (Philipsen et al., 2019; Stavermann, 2025). This again points to the importance of conducting a needs analysis and adapting PD content to the target audience, rather than enforcing a rigid top-down curriculum. In summary, online PD holds great promise for reaching EFL teachers at scale in contexts like Türkiye, but its effectiveness depends on thoughtful design—incorporating features known to characterize good PD (active learning, collaboration, practical focus, etc.) and utilizing technology to support rather than replace these features (Ventista & Brown, 2023).

Despite its promise, OPD initiatives often suffer from temporary policy shifts leading to short-lived impacts. Systematic needs analyses are therefore essential for ensuring that professional development programs target specific gaps in teachers' knowledge and practice, rather than providing generic content (Dikilitaş & Tanış, 2018) particularly in fast-evolving fields like ELT (Cotes & Ugarte, 2019; Hajjar & Alkhanaizi, 2018). Given this backdrop, there is a clear need to better understand English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' own perspectives on their professional development. Both globally and in Türkiye, policymakers are seeking more effective, teacher-centered PD models (including online formats) to boost the quality of English teaching. However, designing such programs requires a solid understanding of what teachers actually need and prefer in terms of content, format, and support. Empirical studies on in-service EFL teachers' PD needs, particularly within the Turkish context, remain limited. Most existing PD offerings have been designed top-down, with few systematic needs analyses to inform them. This study responds to that gap by directly exploring Turkish EFL teachers' self-identified development needs and their attitudes toward

online PD. By situating local insights within the broader trends and features of effective PD, the study seeks to contribute a cohesive narrative that integrates international best practices with local realities. In doing so, it aims to inform the design of contextually appropriate, effective online PD programs for English teachers in Türkiye and similar contexts.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to identify the professional development needs of in-service EFL teachers in Türkiye, and (2) to explore their perceptions of the characteristics of an effective online in-service training program. By adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study sought to generate both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth in understanding teachers' priorities and expectations.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it provides empirical evidence on teachers' needs in areas such as speaking skills, ELT methodology, classroom management, and material development, which remain underexplored in the Turkish context. Second, it integrates teachers' voices into the design of PD, thereby aligning with adult learning principles that emphasize relevance, practicality, and autonomy. Third, it contributes to the growing body of research on online PD by highlighting how such programs can be designed to be needs-driven, interactive, and sustainable. Finally, by identifying these needs, the study aims to inform the design of more effective, contextually relevant, and needs-driven online professional development programs that address teachers' realities and enhance instructional quality.

In line with these aims, the study was guided by the following research questions:
RQ1. What are the professional development needs of in-service English language teachers from different regions of Türkiye?
RQ2. According to teachers' perceptions, what are the key characteristics of an effective needs-driven online in-service training program?

Method

This study investigates the professional development needs of English language teachers working in public schools in Türkiye. To achieve this, an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed (Creswell, 2009). This design involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to help explain and deepen the initial findings. Such sequencing enabled the researchers to identify trends across a large sample and then gain more detailed insights through follow-up interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of in-service English language teachers employed in public schools across Türkiye. Participant selection was guided by the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS), a classification system developed by Eurostat for conducting regional analyses and policy implementation (Eurostat, n.d.). The NUTS system is defined according to specific administrative, demographic, and economic criteria, such as minimum and maximum population thresholds. Türkiye adopted this system in 2002 as part of its EU alignment efforts.

Teachers were recruited through snowball sampling, which was chosen to overcome difficulties of direct access and to ensure geographic diversity (Cohen et al., 2018). Recruitment began through professional and personal networks, and participants were encouraged to refer eligible colleagues. During this process, the researchers monitored respondents' teaching levels, regions, and professional experience. Respondents who did not meet the criteria (e.g., retired teachers, teachers of other subjects, or incomplete questionnaires) were excluded (n = 18), resulting in a final sample of 322 teachers working at primary (n=47), lower secondary (n=166), and upper secondary (n=109) levels.

Table 1

Participant demographics

Variables		n	%
Gender	Female	261	81
	Male	61	19
Educational background	Undergraduate degree	281	87.3
	Graduate degree (MA)	41	12.7
Age	22-25	19	5.9
	26-30	88	27.3
	31-35	100	31.1
	36-40	60	18.6
	41-45	35	10.9
	46-50	9	2.8
	50+	11	3.4
Current teaching levels	Primary (Grades 1-4)	47	14.6
	Lower secondary (Grades 5-8)	166	51.6
	Upper secondary (Grades 9-12)	109	33.8
Teaching experience	0-5 years	75	23.3
	5-10 years	105	32.6
	10-15 years	70	21.7
	15-20 years	48	14.9
	20-25 years	21	6.5
	25-30 years	3	0.9
Region	Istanbul Region (TR1)	27	8.4
	West Marmara Region (TR2)	34	10.6
	Aegean Region (TR3)	21	6.6
	East Marmara Region (TR4)	59	18.3
	West Anatolia Region (TR5)	35	10.8
	Mediterranean Region (TR6)	49	15.3
	Central Anatolia Region (TR7)	4	1.2
	West Black Sea Region (TR8)	17	5.3
	East Black Sea Region (TR9)	10	3.1
	Northeast Anatolia Region (TRA)	19	5.9
	Central East Anatolia Region (TRB)	10	3.1
	Southeast Anatolia Region (TRC)	37	11.5
Total		322	100

Most participants were female (81%, n=261), while male teachers accounted for 19% (n=61). In terms of educational background, most held an undergraduate degree (87.3%, n=281), with a smaller proportion holding a graduate degree (MA) (12.7%, n=41). Participants represented all 12 NUTS regions of Türkiye. The highest representation came from the East Marmara Region (18.3%, n=59), followed by the Mediterranean Region (15.3%, n=49), Southeast Anatolia (11.5%, n=37), West Marmara (10.6%, n=34), and West Anatolia (10.8%, n=35). Other regions, including Eastern Anatolia (9%, n=29), Istanbul (8.4%, n=27), Black Sea (8.4% n=27), and the Aegean (6.6%, n=21), regions, were represented by smaller proportions. Overview of participant demographics can be seen in Table 1.

For the follow-up interviews, 60 questionnaire respondents volunteered to participate. From this pool, 20 participants were selected to ensure diversity in terms of geographic region and school level. The interview participants ranged in age from 22 to 52 and included both newly appointed teachers and those with up to 20 years of experience. All participants had undergone in-service training during their teaching careers.

Data Collection Tools

Aligned with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments (Creswell, 2012). The quantitative data were collected via a needs analysis questionnaire developed from prior studies (Al-Qahtani, 2015; Camuzcu & Duruhan, 2011; Gabršček et al., 2013; Kusumoto, 2008). The instrument was piloted with 75 in-service English teachers in Türkiye and further reviewed by three in-service teachers and two academic experts to ensure clarity and functionality. Feedback-informed revisions of ambiguous or problematic items. Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .92$), indicating strong internal consistency (Creswell, 2012).

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 10 questions was developed following the initial analysis of the questionnaire data. Items were thematically aligned with the questionnaire domains to allow deeper exploration of teachers' needs and preferences (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). To ensure reliability in qualitative analysis, intercoder reliability procedures were conducted. Two independent PhD.-holding ELT professionals coded 10% of the open-ended questionnaire responses and interview transcripts. Intercoder agreement ranged from 87.1% to 91.5%, exceeding the acceptable threshold of 80% and aligning with recommended levels (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al.,2014).

The questionnaire was distributed online to in-service English language teachers across Turkiye. To ensure accessibility and encourage participation, the instrument was provided in Turkish. Given the geographic dispersion of participants, the online format offered logistical and cost efficiency. In the second phase of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with voluntary participants to enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings. The interviews were carried out in Turkish to enhance authenticity, accuracy, transparency, and overall study validity (Younas et al, 2022). All interviews were completed via phone, recorded with informed consent, and later transcribed for analysis. The total recorded duration was 7 hours and 52 minutes. The data collection procedure of the study lasted 6 months (4 months for snowballing the questionnaire and 2 months for conducting semi-structured interviews).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) to examine participant demographics and responses to Likert-scale items. Qualitative data from both open-ended questionnaire items and interviews were analyzed through open and axial coding (Cohen et al., 2018). Initial codes were generated through open coding, which then informed the development of categories and themes during axial coding. While identifying the themes, the researchers also took notes related to the quotations that can illustrate the themes and codes in a more detailed way. Furthermore, the themes were noted to add depth to the thematic analysis. Triangulation was achieved by comparing themes with quantitative results to ensure consistency and robustness.

Ethical Issues

This study adhered to research and publication ethics. Approval was obtained from the University Ethics Committee (Approval No:28620816/548, Date:8.10.2018) and from the Turkish Ministry of National Education (Approval No:81576613-605.01-E.9803680, Date: 17.05.2019). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured prior to data collection. All data were anonymized and stored securely**.** In the present study, to protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used for interview participants, while questionnaire participants were identified by numbers.

Findings

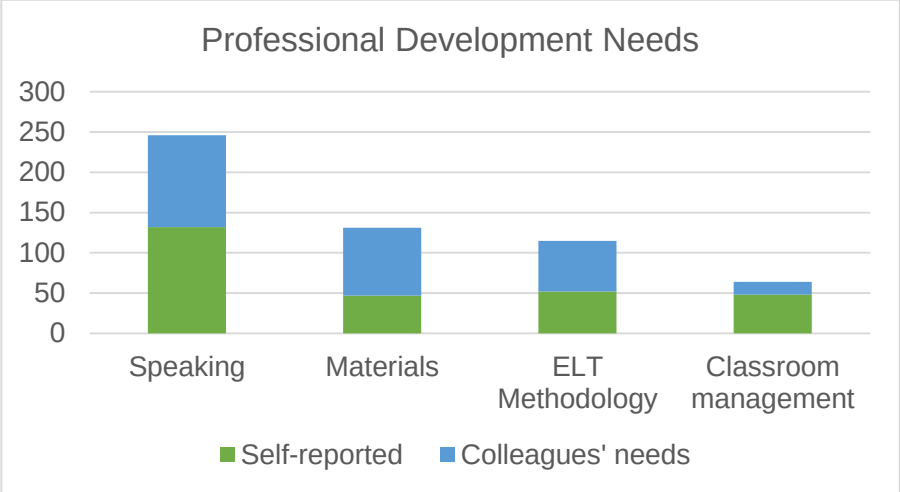
The findings are presented in two parts, aligned with the study's research questions. The first part addresses the professional development (PD) needs of in-service English language teachers in Türkiye, while the second explores their perceptions of the characteristics of an effective needs-driven online in-service training program.

Professional Development Needs

The first research question focused on identifying in-service EFL teachers' professional development needs. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to state the top three areas they wanted to improve themselves in through an open-ended item. In total, 443 items were identified and coded for this question. The majority of the participants provided keywords as answers. The top three areas the participants wanted to improve themselves were: (1) speaking (n = 132), (2) ELT methodology (n = 52), and (3) classroom management (n = 48). Speaking skill was identified as the most significant need by the participants. For methodology and classroom management, the participants stated that they would like to update their knowledge through professional development programs, and they wished to acquire practical solutions rather than theoretical ones. Additionally, for methodology, the teachers indicated several different keywords such as CLIL, teaching 21st-century skills, and current and/or new trends in ELT.

Figure 1

Overview of the results for professional development needs



To complement this item, participants were also asked to identify the top three areas in which they believed their colleagues needed development. From 405 coded responses, speaking again emerged as the top concern (n = 114), followed by material development/use (n = 84), and ELT methodology (n = 63). While there was substantial overlap between the two sets of responses, particularly in the areas of speaking and ELT methodology, some variation was also observed in the relative frequency of other categories. For instance, material development/use was identified by 47 participants as a personal need but was mentioned more frequently (n = 84) as an area in which colleagues required support. Conversely, classroom management was mentioned relatively often as a self-need (n = 48) but appeared less frequently in reference to colleagues (n = 16). These differences suggest that teachers view some challenges as more personal (e.g., classroom management) while others (e.g., materials development) are seen as shared across the profession. The summary of the results for professional development needs can be seen in Figure 1.

Similar findings emerged from the interviews, where several participants emphasized their limited opportunities to practice *English-speaking skills* in their daily lives due to being in an EFL environment. They explained that the restricted use of the target language in the classroom makes it difficult for them to maintain or enhance their speaking proficiency. In particular, the participants expressed a desire for more structured, communicative environments that would support their own language development outside the classroom. One of the key suggestions involved the establishment of an online platform where teachers could engage in peer-to-peer language practice. The following quotations illustrate these issues and underscore the need for institutional support in enhancing teachers' spoken English proficiency.

> Wouldn't it be nice to have some activities for the speaking skill during professional development? Or a kind of a platform for teachers to find each other, maybe online applications, for us to meet online and speak in English, not with native speakers but other teachers. Because it is very difficult, we cannot speak English in the classrooms, it is only for certain levels. Because I am teaching 8th graders, we are preparing for the exam (a national exam for upper secondary schools), the focus is different, it is test-based. (Aylin, West Marmara Region, Lower Secondary)

> The thing is the English teachers do really need a platform for communication. I wish there was such a platform, such an infrastructure, through voice recordings, videos… I believe that speaking videos can be arranged at determined intervals because we have problems especially with speaking. (Burcu, Central East Anatolia Region, Lower Secondary)

These accounts highlight a paradox: teachers are expected to build students' communicative competence while struggling to maintain their own oral proficiency. The repeated suggestion of peer-based speaking platforms demonstrates that teachers are not passive recipients of training but are actively seeking collective solutions to address this gap.

Confirming the questionnaire results, the interview data also revealed a strong demand for professional development focused on *ELT methodology.* Teachers expressed the need for updated training that reflects contemporary instructional approaches, particularly those tailored to different age groups and shifting pedagogical trends. Several participants reflected on the mismatch between the methods they were originally trained in, often grammar-heavy, and the more communicative or pattern-based approaches emphasized in current curriculum materials.

> Well, I think, having worked in elementary, middle, and high schools, we could receive up-to-date training on approaches for different age groups. That's the first thing that comes to my mind. Because we have this issue: we learned English with grammar-focused methods. However, now our materials are more geared towards teaching with patterns, away from grammar. We sometimes experience problems in this regard." (Ufuk, West Marmara Region, Lower Secondary)

> I see it as primarily a need for a refresher/refreshment, something that revitalizes our professional knowledge without overwhelming the teachers with too much depth…Frankly, I think that new innovations should be added to the old methods." (Lokman, West Black Sea Region, Primary)

These reflections suggest that professional development in ELT methodology should strike a balance between innovation and continuity, ensuring that new strategies are accessible and relevant to teachers' existing knowledge.

Classroom management emerged as another significant area of need. Several teachers reported that behavioral issues frequently take precedence over instructional goals, making it difficult to maintain a productive learning environment. These challenges were not seen as exclusive to English language teaching but as part of a broader concern affecting teachers across subject areas. Participants also expressed the view that in-service professional development programs should more explicitly address classroom management strategies and foster reflection.

> Well, we are swarmed with behavioral problems. I mean, we have a lot of problems to deal with before teaching English. The math teacher would say something, the Turkish teacher would say another thing—I mean we need to deal with a lot of behavioral problems. Our problem is about this." (Aylin, West Marmara Region, Lower Secondary)

> These in-service training seminars should help teachers to improve themselves professionally, sustain their knowledge, and revise their classroom management skills.

> Maybe it should help them do self-evaluation… I believe these would be very beneficial." (Esranur, West Marmara Region, Lower Secondary)

These insights suggest a shared expectation among teachers for professional development that not only addresses pedagogical content but also equips them to handle the everyday realities of classroom behavior and fosters ongoing professional self-assessment.

Finally, the interviews revealed a clear demand for support in *material design* and development, both in digital and traditional formats. Participants highlighted challenges in creating context-appropriate, engaging, and curriculum-aligned materials, particularly interactive resources for smart boards. Teachers also emphasized the importance of equipping both in-service and pre-service educators with the skills needed to design and adapt materials for evolving classroom needs. In the following quotations, Faruk, reflected on the gap in training related to digital materials development while Yaren emphasized the lack of accessible, curriculum-aligned resources and the need for more interactive and hands-on materials.

> I would love to develop myself in creating my own questions online. Yes, I can use them, but I cannot develop my own questions online. This is an extra job. I would like to do this very much. I believe this should be offered as a course—or as part of materials design and development courses for BA students who are studying to become teachers, preparing technological/online materials… This can be a project for college education, a course to be included. (Faruk, East Black Sea Region, Upper Secondary)

> To be honest, I'm answering this question based on my own classroom, considering the physical conditions of the school I work at. We do have a computer lab, but I don't think it's very usable for English classes. So, I'm mainly thinking in terms of the smart board. Something that students can see on the smart board—something interactive, perhaps. For example, watching a video and then having a related material—maybe a question-and-answer activity. Because we really lack resources in this area. I personally have a hard time finding materials that align with our curriculum. There could be videos for each unit, along with worksheets. I think there should be more activities like this." (Yaren, Mediterranean Region, Lower Secondary)

These comments underscore the importance of targeted professional development in materials design, with a particular focus on digital tools, interactive formats, and curriculum integration—elements that are increasingly essential in both traditional and technology-enhanced classrooms.

Taken together, the questionnaire and interview data present a portrait of in-service EFL teachers' professional development needs. *Speaking skills, ELT methodology, classroom management and material development* emerged as consistent areas of concern. Teachers not only expressed the desire for language practice and pedagogical refreshment but also highlighted systemic challenges, such as limited opportunities for authentic communication and classroom management. Across all domains, the participants conveyed a strong preference for development opportunities that are collaborative, context-sensitive, and responsive to both their instructional and professional realities.

Online In-service Training Program

In line with the second research question, which examined the key features of an effective professional development program, the participants were asked for their preferences and beliefs about the issue. Accordingly, the study focused on four components: (1) contents, (2) activities, (3) materials, and (4) properties of the program. Data from both the questionnaire and interviews were triangulated to provide a comprehensive picture.

Contents of the Program

Teachers consistently emphasized that an effective PD program must be needs-driven and practice-oriented. In the questionnaire, they rated the importance of various topics on a four-point Likert scale. The most highly valued topics were: *increasing student motivation* (M = 3.61), *methods for developing students' language skills* (M = 3.59), useful websites for teaching materials (M = 3.57), and material selection for ELT (M = 3.56). Closely following were preparing English activities suited to students' levels (M = 3.55), material development for ELT (M = 3.55), and keeping up with developments and hot topics in the field (M = 3.53), and various ELT methodologies (M=3.50). Table 2 provides an overview of the findings for program content. These results reflect teachers' desire for training that directly addresses immediate classroom challenges such as *motivating learners, improving language skills, and designing context-appropriate materials.* Importantly, the priority given to topics like motivation and practical activities highlights that teachers value classroom applicability over abstract theory.

Table 2

Summary of results for content of the program

Topics	Mean	SD
increasing student motivation	3.61	0.63
methods for developing students' language skills	3.59	0.66
useful websites for teaching materials	3.57	0.63
material selection for ELT	3.56	0.64
preparing English activities based on students' levels	3.55	0.64
material development for ELT	3.55	0.63
developments and hot topics in the field	3.53	0.64
various ELT methodology	3.50	0.63

In addition to rating the importance of various topics for an online PD program, the teachers were also asked during the interviews to share their thoughts on the content they would consider ideal for such a program. The interviewees emphasized that the content should be closely tied to current *teaching methods and techniques*, aimed at improving their *language skills, classroom management abilities*, and *material design*. They expressed a strong preference for training that focuses on practical, in-class applications of these techniques, rather than purely theoretical content. According to the teachers, an effective in-service training program should provide them with tools and strategies that can be directly implemented in their classrooms to improve both teaching and learning experiences.

> Well, if we are talking about an ideal online in-service training program, I want something that is related with my own field. It should be about English language teaching… First, I should be able to update my knowledge of methodology. In fact, all the teachers say that they know about methodology, yet, a reminder is required. But this reminder is not about knowledge-based content; it should be about how to use that knowledge, the implication of knowledge. Or something that I can reflect to my own practice. (Pelin, Kocaeli Subregion, Upper Secondary)

Others pointed to the necessity of *technology integration*, reflecting the changing expectations of students and curricula:

> Well, I think there should be things more related to technology, content aimed at bringing technology into the classroom. Because students no longer enjoy the more classical methods. They want teachers to be more equipped in this regard. Lessons are boring for them with the old traditional methods. Smart boards are not enough, for example. There could be things about smart boards, perhaps different ways of how to use them. I would like to attend an in-service training course like this, for example. (Yaren, Mediterranean Region, Lower Secondary)

These comments emphasize the importance of professional development that is directly linked to practical teaching applications. Teachers stress the need for in-service training that not only revisits established methodologies but also provides guidance on how to effectively implement them in the classroom. Additionally, the desire for content that incorporates modern technology and teaching tools, such as smart boards, reflects the growing expectation for teachers to integrate current ELT methodology into their lessons, ensuring that the training is relevant to existing classroom dynamics and student preferences.

Mirroring the findings from both the needs analysis and the questionnaire results, *classroom management* emerged as a significant area where EFL teachers seek targeted professional development. This reinforces the idea that effective in-service training should not only focus on language instruction techniques but also on the dynamics of managing diverse and evolving classroom environments. The comment shared by Esranur emphasizes the importance of in-service training that enables teachers to reflect on and refine their classroom management strategies.

> These in-service training seminars should help teachers to improve themselves professionally, sustain their knowledge, and revise their classroom management skills. Maybe it should help them do self-evaluation… I believe these would be very beneficial. (Esranur, West Marmara Region, Lower secondary school)

Along the same lines the participants indicated their needs regarding *material design and selection* by mentioning the need for implementing different activities in the classroom addressing their students' learning profile. Rukiye's reflection highlights a widespread concern among EFL teachers: the need for a repertoire of practical, student-centered activities that can break the monotony of traditional lecturing and enhance grammar instruction.

> As I said, my only shortcoming is materials. Because I never like lecturing for whole forty minutes, I mean, for example, I can never just lecture on a single grammar topic. I give the grammar, I insert a game in between, I do other activities related to the grammar. I come up with other speaking questions using that tense, so when I get stuck like that, my only shortcoming is materials. If there were training like that, I would wholeheartedly participate. *(Rukiye, Aegean Region, Lower secondary school)*

The above comment also speaks to the confidence and autonomy teachers seek in designing and implementing these activities effectively. Therefore, an ideal in-service training program should not only present ready-to-use materials but also empower teachers to design their own, tailored to their learners' profiles and classroom dynamics.

Additionally, while the questionnaire data did not highlight this as a key area for training, the teachers also underlined the fact that the content can be designed in a way so that the EFL teachers can improve their own target language skills, especially *speaking*. The need for language practice is evident, as teachers recognize gaps in their own speaking abilities, which they feel can hinder their teaching effectiveness. Tansu's reflection on preparing for the IELTS exam and realizing the rustiness of her own language skills highlights the necessity for ongoing language practice. Similarly, Ufuk pointed out the EFL learning environment and the lack of interaction among colleagues in the target language and underlined the need for improving the speaking skills.

> I am working at a secondary school and nowadays I am preparing to take IELTS exam. I realized that my language skills are rusty, there can be something about language practice. (Tansu, Istanbul Region, Lower secondary school)

> I definitely feel the need for speaking. In Turkey, we receive foreign language education from teachers and then pass it on to others—we are expected to see ourselves as flawless. As a result of our education, our reading skills are exceptionally high, but our speaking is the lowest. That's how I see myself. In fact, one aspect of in-service training—a thought that just occurred to me might even be designed to help improve our speaking skills. I have worked for years with English-teacher colleagues, and I cannot tell if they can in fact speak English or not. This is because we never feel compelled to engage in such dialogue among ourselves, and therefore, we tend not to use it. (Ufuk, West Marmara Region, Lower secondary school)

These remarks are important for understanding the expectations of EFL teachers from an effective professional development program, emphasizing the improvement of teachers' own language skills alongside their pedagogical and technical expertise.

In summary, the findings presented highlight that EFL teachers seek a content-rich in-service training program that directly reflects their professional realities and needs. From the quantitative data, topics such as ELT methodology and materials design emerged as clear priorities, while qualitative insights revealed further emphasis on classroom management and even the enhancement of teachers' own language skills, particularly speaking. These needs reflect a strong desire for practical, immediately applicable knowledge and tools that not only enhance instructional quality but also support teachers' self-development and confidence in their professional roles. Having established what teachers want to learn, the following section turns to how they prefer to engage with this content by exploring their preferences for the activities and delivery methods within an effective online in-service training program.

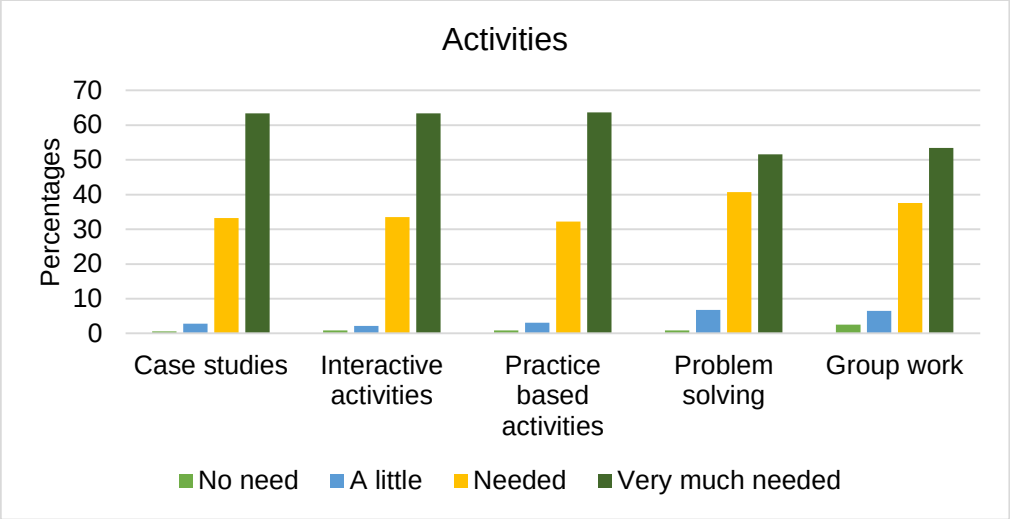
Activities of the Program

Quantitative results revealed that teachers strongly preferred interactive and experiential activities. Case studies (M = 3.59, SD = 0.58), interactive tasks (M = 3.59, SD = 0.58), and practice-based activities (M = 3.59, SD = 0.60) ranked the highest. Problem-solving (M = 3.43) and group work (M = 3.42) followed closely, SD=0.73). The overview of the results

for preferred activity types can be seen in Figure 2. These preferences reflect teachers' belief that PD is most effective when it involves learning by doing, mirroring authentic classroom practice.

Figure 2

Summary of the results for activities to be used in in-service training program



Similar preferences were also recorded during the interviews about the activity types to be included in the professional development program. A noticeable theme that emerged was the *need for experiential, hands-on learning opportunities* that actively involve teachers in the learning process. Rather than relying solely on theoretical presentations or passive listening, the teachers expressed a strong preference for interactive, practice-oriented activities that mirror authentic classroom scenarios. They highlighted that such formats not only enhance engagement but also facilitate deeper understanding and long-term retention, ultimately enabling teachers to transfer training experiences directly into their own teaching practices. As the following excerpts illustrate, the teachers advocated for collaborative, immersive approaches that would allow them to take on the role of learners, reflect on the student experience, and engage meaningfully with peers during the training process.

> Well, the content of the training is also important but generally, we should be active participants- we learn by doing. I want to say that I've participated in training programs abroad, and I never forget them because we were actively involved, like students. We, ourselves, did the tasks that we would ask our students to complete, and I will never forget them. We should first experience it ourselves, through hands-on activities, so that we can teach it to the students. *(Selin, Mediterranean Region, Primary*
>
> Definitely group work activities, because we can learn a lot from each other, but the number of group members should be limited, small groups. Not individually with groups, but small groups… Otherwise, the training fails to fulfill the aims. (Ceren, West Anatolia Region, Lower Secondary)

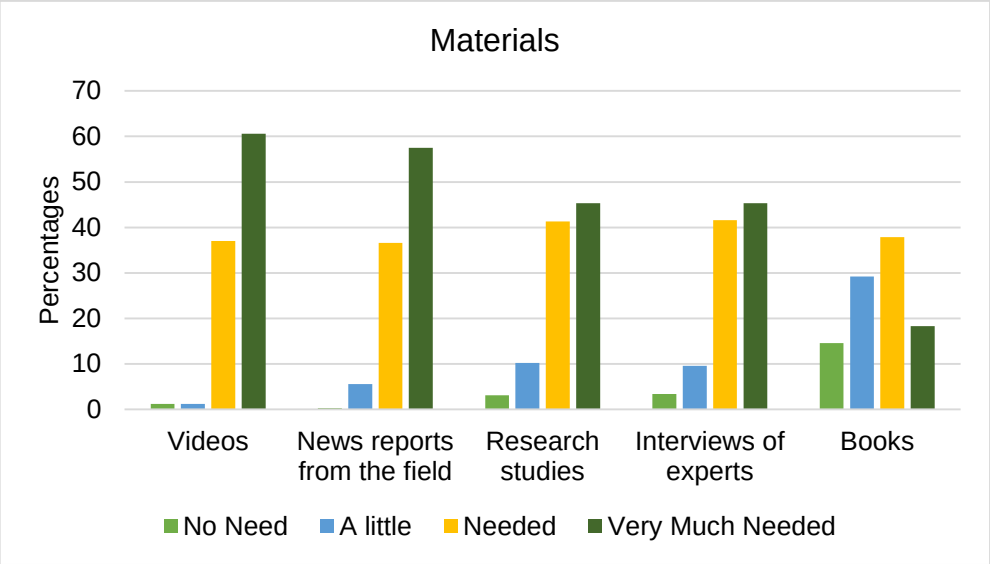
These accounts suggest that teachers view PD not as passive knowledge reception but as a collaborative and participatory process. By engaging in authentic tasks themselves, they can better understand student perspectives and apply strategies in their classrooms.

Materials of the Program

Survey results indicated a strong preference for *digital, multimedia*, and *easily accessible resources*. As can be seen in Figure 3, while books (M=2.60, SD=0.95) were considered to somewhat less needed in in-service training programs, videos (M=3.57, SD=59) and news reports from the field (M = 3.51, SD=0.61) were rated as highly necessary, followed by expert interviews (M = 3.29, SD=78) and research studies (M = 3.29). Books, by contrast, were seen as less useful (M = 2.60), SD=77). This trend suggests that teachers favor dynamic, technology-friendly materials that can be readily integrated into online training environments.

Figure 3

Summary of the results for materials to be used in in-service training program



The interview findings revealed a strong preference among participants for *practical, accessible*, and *technology-friendly materials* to be used in the professional development program. Rather than relying on purely theoretical resources or traditional print-based materials, teachers expressed a desire for materials that are not only relevant and applicable to classroom contexts but also easily integrated into an online learning environment. For instance, Tansu suggested that sessions on topics such as gamification or web design should be supported by trainer-selected readings followed by reflective discussions, as well as tutorial videos that would allow for asynchronous engagement—particularly beneficial in an online format. This combination of readings, multimedia content, and guided discussion was seen as a means to deepen understanding while keeping the experience dynamic and interactive.

> *For example, there needs to be a presenter for gamification or web-design. The trainer's articles can be used, followed by discussions. If it is online, tutorial videos should be included."* (Tansu, Istanbul Region, Lower Secondary)

Similarly, Yaren highlighted the value of digital materials *that can be downloaded, shared by e-mail*, and accessed through cloud platforms. She emphasized that these materials should be user-friendly and universally accessible, ensuring that technological barriers do not interfere with participation or learning. These reflections underscore the importance of designing training materials that are not only pedagogically sound but also aligned with the realities of digital learning environments.

> Well, to be honest, everything that can be downloaded, shared with e-mails *or cloud systems can be used as materials, rather than* using *physical books.* I find these more useful, for example, we can work on these. Somehow, I find e-material use to be more correct. *But it should be things that won't cause* any problem *with downloading or* the format. (Yaren, Mediterranean Region, Lower Secondary)

These reflections highlight the importance of practicality and accessibility. Teachers expect materials that are not only pedagogically relevant but also user-friendly and compatible with their technological realities.

All in all, the findings from both the questionnaire and interviews point to a clear preference for digital, interactive, and contextually relevant materials in an online in-service training program. Notably, traditional materials such as printed books were considered less useful, highlighting a shift in teachers' material preferences toward formats that are more adaptable to online platforms. These insights suggest that the materials used in any future training program must reflect not only contemporary pedagogical content but also the technological expectations of today's EFL teachers.

Properties of the Program

When asked to describe the essential qualities of an online PD program, teachers most frequently referred to *applicability* (n = 73), interactivity (n = 49), and flexibility in timing (n = 48). These findings reinforce their consistent preference for PD that is practical, engaging, and adaptable to their schedules. Teachers emphasized that training should provide concrete, transferable tools rather than abstract theory:

> It should be application-based. It should provide examples. It should not be utopic. I went to a seminar about preparing EU projects. I could not understand anything because everything was on paper. I mean they showed us how to write projects but since they did not give us any example project, I cannot write it. I only learned the stages. It is not enough of course (P238).

As can be inferred, the teachers would like to see practice-based in-service training sessions, rather than "theoretical bombardments". Furthermore, they indicated that the online training should be interactive rather than one-way lecture. Closely following applicability, interactivity was mentioned by 49 participants. This indicates that teachers value programs that offer opportunities for collaboration, discussion, and engagement with both the content and their peers.

> A training where we can interact with each other." (P43)

> I should be able to exchange information with my colleagues through synchronous chat. (P151).

> It should be a training where everybody can interact with each other (P248).

Finally, they believed that the timing of the training sessions should be appropriate for them. The third most commonly noted feature was *time*, pointed out by 48 teachers. This encompasses both the overall duration of the program and its flexibility in terms of scheduling. Many participants emphasized the need for a manageable, well-paced format that respects

their workload and personal commitments. In the open-ended item of the questionnaire, the teachers indicated that they should be able to follow the training whenever they were available.

> The time should be flexible and convenient for me (P2).
>
> In order for participant to re-take the course and attend the training on that day, the participants should be able to adjust the time (P236).

The results from the interviews further emphasized the importance of the properties of the ideal online in-service training program, confirming many of the preferences expressed in the questionnaire. Participants highlighted that the design of the program should be rooted in the specific *needs of EFL teachers*, ensuring that the content is relevant and addresses the actual challenges they face in their classrooms. As noted by the participants, the program should be *voluntary*, which aligns with the idea that professional development should be driven by personal motivation rather than obligation. This choice allows teachers to engage with the program in a more committed and focused manner, ensuring better outcomes both for the teachers and the students they serve.

Another key feature identified by the teachers was the program's *flexibility*, which they felt was essential given their busy schedules. Neriman's and Selin's comments about the program needing to be practical and flexible emphasizes the importance of designing activities that are both engaging and manageable. Teachers clearly expressed that training programs should not be overwhelming but should rather strike a balance between providing meaningful content and respecting teachers' time constraints. The teachers' emphasis on the necessity of a well-planned program that offers structured follow-up further highlights the importance of consistency in the training process. Teachers indicated that they would prefer a program where they could not only participate at their own pace but also benefit from continuous support and clear communication throughout the duration of the training.

> It should be practical. The activities should be designed so that the teachers will not get overwhelmed, and they will enjoy it. So that they care willing to spare some time for the training. It should worth their time. Because time is really problematic for us. It should be planned well. The follow up should be well. It should not be like the training starts tomorrow and then it does not. (Neriman, West Anatolia Region, Upper secondary school)
>
> I would choose something that is based on modules, I guess. I mean more flexible, not something that starts like 7 pm and ends at 9 pm strictly. It may be more flexible; British Council conducts such trainings. I enjoy them more. Module by module, for example you have one month to complete these, you can make plans for the month. (Selin, Mediterranean Region, Primary

The teachers also emphasized the critical need for the *needs-based* quality of the training program, underscoring the importance of tailoring the content to the specific circumstances and requirements of the participants. Bilge's reflection on considering the "conditions and circumstances" of the participants highlights that the training program should be flexible enough to address a variety of teaching contexts. Factors such as the age group being taught, the specific language proficiency level, and the unique challenges faced by teachers in different regions were all mentioned as key considerations in designing an effective training program. Teachers pointed out that the training should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach but should instead be adaptable to the diverse realities in which teachers operate.

> I would pay attention to the conditions and the circumstances, the content of training, the participant profile, working with which age group at what level. (Bilge, Aegean region, Upper secondary school)

Similarly, Tansu suggested that a proactive and responsive approach should be adopted, where the training program is continuously reviewed and adjusted based on participants' ongoing feedback. By proposing the use of a questionnaire to assess teachers' satisfaction with the program, Tansu emphasized the importance of regular evaluation to ensure that the training remains relevant and effective. This iterative approach, involving ongoing assessments and feedback loops, would allow the program to adapt to emerging needs and ensure that teachers feel their concerns and suggestions are heard and addressed throughout the process.

> Honestly, I would review the current training courses and their criteria. I would follow the needs, and for example let's say that the program is in application, I would try to assess their satisfaction with a questionnaire to understand how pleased they are with the program. (Tansu, Istanbul Region, Lower secondary school)

The teachers also highlighted the importance of *voluntary participation* as a key property for an effective in-service training program. Both Reyhan and Lokman expressed that mandatory attendance often undermines the effectiveness and enthusiasm surrounding professional development initiatives. Reyhan's comment emphasizes that voluntary participation fosters a more positive and engaged learning environment. According to her, when teachers are given the freedom to choose their involvement, they are more likely to be invested in the program and enjoy the experience. This approach, she argues, leads to greater success and satisfaction, as the motivation to participate stems from personal choice rather than external pressure.

> Well, of course the participation to these programs should be absolutely and definitely voluntary. Because we see all the time, you must attend, the signatures are collected, there is no profitability. *People are more successful* at things when they participate voluntarily. The people around are voluntary, and it makes it enjoyable. (Reyhan, West Marmara Region, Lower Secondary)

> Well, I think that it's on teachers actually. I mean, considering the in-service training sessions I've given before… There is such a perception why are we here? I think that the participation requests of teachers should be updated. The teachers, when presented with a document like here you go there is a course, you got the course, the first thing they do is pouting and grimacing. They even take medical reports, and they do not attend. *(Lokman*, West Black Sea Region, Primary)

Lokman's perspective adds a critical dimension to this argument, pointing out that teachers often view mandatory training sessions with reluctance, and the general perception can be one of cynicism. He refers to instances where teachers, feeling compelled to attend, resort to tactics such as submitting medical reports to avoid participation. This suggests that, for the program to be effective, teachers should feel genuinely motivated and see the value in participating.

Together, these insights highlight that teachers envision PD as *applicable, interactive, flexible, and voluntary*. They seek programs that respect their agency, accommodate their schedules, and provide authentic opportunities for professional collaboration.

Conclusion, Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study reveal the professional development (PD) needs of EFL teachers in Türkiye and their beliefs about effective online training. With respect to teachers' professional development needs (RQ1), the data indicated four priority domains: speaking skills, ELT methodology, classroom management, and material development. Speaking skills emerged as the most pressing area, reflecting the constraints of Türkiye's EFL environment, where opportunities for authentic language use are limited. Teachers expressed concern that their own spoken proficiency stagnates over time, in line with earlier accounts that Turkish teachers often rely on grammar-based instruction at the expense of communicative practice (British Council & TEPAV, 2013; Çapan, 2021; Gültekin Talayhan & Babayiğit, 2023). This pattern resounds with findings in other EFL contexts: Thai teachers, for instance, also identified speaking, listening, and pronunciation as their highest-priority needs, above grammar and vocabulary (Poonpon, 2022). Similarly, novice teachers in Türkiye recently emphasized classroom communication and language use as critical areas requiring targeted support (Akçor & Ergül, 2025). In Indonesia, EFL instructors in higher education similarly prioritize language proficiency enhancement, particularly speaking and listening, through self-directed PD to build confidence and address gaps in communicative competence (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025). Iranian EFL teachers resonate with this, reporting needs for reflective practices to improve oral skills amid exam-oriented systems (Shokpour, et al., 2024). In China, rural EFL teachers highlight basic language upskilling alongside speaking, constrained by limited resources and heavy workloads (Parker & Tang, 2025). Collectively, these results underline a paradox: Teachers are tasked with developing learners' communicative competence, yet they themselves often lack sufficient opportunities to maintain fluency.

Teachers' strong demand for updated methodological training aligns with this need. Many of the participants contrasted the grammar-heavy methods they learned during their initial training with the communicative and task-based approaches now emphasized in curricula. They sought refresher training that integrates innovation with continuity, a preference consistent with earlier research showing Turkish and European EFL teachers' interest in modern approaches, technology integration, and 21st-century pedagogies (Yücedağ & Şevik, 2021). Our findings support prior conclusions that methodological upskilling remains central to EFL teacher PD worldwide (Arslan, 2018; Pasternak et al., 2016). In Colombia, peripheral EFL teachers prioritize practical methodologies tailored to rural contexts, highlighting a need for localized training to bridge top-down policy gaps (Barrientos-Moncada & Carvajal-Castaño, 2023).

The inclusion of classroom management as a recurrent theme indicates that teachers view behavior management as integral to their professional identity and effectiveness. Participants emphasized that disruptive behavior often takes precedence over instructional goals, reducing time for meaningful language learning. Similar challenges have been reported in other Turkish studies and across novice teacher cohorts, where classroom management was highlighted as a priority for induction programs (Akçor & Ergül, 2025). Addressing

classroom management in PD, therefore, not only equips teachers with strategies but also reinforces their confidence and professional agency. This aligns with the conclusion of McChesney and Aldridge (2021) that PD must address contextual barriers such as workload, classroom challenges, and institutional support if it is to be fully "accepted" and implemented by teachers. Expanding this to other EFL environments, Chinese teachers in large classes (>50 students) need PD for management in overcrowded settings, while Indonesian instructors seek culturally responsive strategies to handle diverse learner behaviors (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025).

Finally, the need for material development, particularly digital and interactive resources, reflects the growing centrality of technology in teaching. Teachers expressed frustration at the lack of curriculum-aligned digital resources and their own limited skills in designing online materials. These concerns confirm international findings: Thai and Vietnamese teachers have similarly emphasized the importance of blended learning approaches and training in digital material development (Nguyen & Sit, 2023; Poonpon, 2022). Kandemir (2020) likewise called for stronger technology integration in teacher training. Taken together, these results confirm that EFL teachers globally are directing a shift toward technology-enhanced pedagogy, and many feel underprepared for this transition. Additionally, Zhang (2022) found that EFL teachers increasingly expect training that helps them integrate technology into lessons, a finding reiterated in multiple international contexts where online and blended learning are expanding rapidly. Research has consistently shown that teachers value PD that strengthens their digital literacy and provides access to curriculum-aligned, interactive resources (Philipsen et al., 2019; Uztosun, 2017). In this sense, the Turkish teachers' demands are consistent with global calls for technology-supported, resource-rich PD, such as in China where TPACK training addresses tech disparities, or Indonesia where digital tools are needed for culturally responsive materials (Parker & Tang, 2025; Qamariah & Hercz, 2025). Colombian teachers in peripheral areas similarly need accessible digital resources to overcome isolation (Barrientos-Moncada & Carvajal-Castaño, 2023).

Turning to teachers' preferences for online PD design (RQ2), the findings emphasize applicability, interactivity, flexibility, voluntariness, and contextual relevance. Teachers consistently argued that PD should be practice-oriented, offering tools, strategies, and materials directly applicable in the classroom. This preference for "learning by doing" aligns with Burns' (2017) call for interactive, being-based teacher education and with Uztosun's (2017) conclusion that Turkish PD programs are often criticized for their lack of contextual grounding. International studies also support this orientation: Vietnamese teachers, for example, expressed a preference for blended programs precisely because they enabled more active learning and hands-on practice (Nguyen & Sit, 2023). Similarly, large-scale surveys reveal dissatisfaction with lecture-style delivery and a strong desire for more experiential learning formats (Uztosun, 2017; Yücedağ & Şevik, 2021). As pointed out by other studies, PD is most impactful when it is not theoretical or generic but rather practice-oriented and context-sensitive (Kennedy, 2016; McChesney & Aldridge, 2021; Sancar et al., 2021). Comparatively, Chinese EFL teachers prefer practical, mentor-supported PD to implement reforms (Parker & Tang, 2025). In Indonesia, preferences lean toward collaborative, self-directed activities for applicability in diverse classrooms (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025).

A second strong theme was *interactivity* and *collaboration*. Teachers stressed the importance of peer learning and professional dialogue within PD programs. They called for

opportunities to share experiences, engage in group work, and build professional communities online. This confirms findings that collaborative PD models foster deeper professional learning and reflection (Canaran & Mirici, 2020). Online communities of practice have also been found to foster deeper engagement when they include personalized, interest-driven interaction (Kyndt et al., 2021). Philipsen et al. (2019) similarly stressed that scaffolding, facilitation, and peer interaction are essential to sustaining teacher engagement in online PD. The convergence between our findings and these studies highlights that teachers value PD not only as knowledge acquisition but also as a space for professional networking and support.

Flexibility was another widely stated preference. Teachers appreciated the potential of online PD to overcome logistical barriers such as travel, accommodation, and scheduling, which have historically limited participation in face-to-face programs (Özer, 2004). They favored modular and asynchronous designs that allow them to integrate PD into their busy teaching schedules, a need corroborated by research across Asia and Europe (Nguyen & Sit, 2023; Kyndt et al., 2021). Flexibility, however, was not framed as mere convenience but as a condition for sustained engagement, since rigid formats can discourage participation (Uztosun, 2017). Similar flexibility needs appear in Indonesian and Chinese contexts, where online modular PD helps address workload and geographic barriers, unlike more structured Korean programs (Qamariah & Hercz, 2025; Parker & Tang, 2025).

Finally, teachers emphasized that participation should be voluntary rather than mandated. They argued that compulsory programs often foster resentment and disengagement, confirming prior studies that suggest voluntary PD leads to higher motivation and stronger outcomes (Kımav, 2019; Yücedağ & Şevik, 2021). The findings support the view that teacher agency is essential for meaningful professional growth, repeating Rogers' (2007) principle that adults learn best when they choose to engage. Voluntariness is a common theme in EFL PD across environments, with Iranian teachers favoring self-directed reflection, highlighting a global need for autonomy (Shokpour et al., 2024).

Together, these findings affirm that teachers' preferences in Türkiye mirror global trends in PD. Research across contexts emphasizes that effective PD must balance content relevance, interactivity, and sustainability with teacher autonomy (Philipsen et al., 2019; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Zhang, 2022). Importantly, the study also underscores the need to address longstanding challenges in Turkish PD—namely the prevalence of top-down, theory-heavy, one-off workshops (Uztosun, 2017)—by designing needs-based, teacher-centered online programs that integrate teachers' voices at every stage.

The implications for practice are threefold. First, in-service training programs should be needs-driven and context-sensitive, incorporating specific strategies to address key deficiencies in areas such as speaking proficiency, ELT methodology, classroom management, and material development. Rather than relying on uniform, top-down courses, teacher education authorities should base program design on systematic needs analyses and include hands-on practice through activities like micro-teaching sessions (Gürsoy, 2013), peer observation cycles (Gosling, 2014; Tenenberg, 2016), and simulated classroom scenarios (Ventista & Brown, 2023). To enhance speaking ability, programs could feature compulsory modules on advanced oral communication, such as virtual language immersion with native speakers or conversation clubs via online platforms (Stavermann, 2025), while elective courses might focus on digital material design using tools like Canva or Genially for interactive

resources (Aşıksoy, 2018; Öztürk & Çakıroğlu, 2021). Ongoing coaching and collaborative elements, such as virtual professional learning communities, would foster sustained growth and reflection, aligning with evidence that frequent, long-duration PD yields stronger outcomes (Kraft et al., 2018; Stavermann, 2025). Integrating these components would help bridge the paradox of EFL teachers expected to foster communicative competence while lacking opportunities for authentic language use themselves.

Second, pre-service teacher education can benefit from these insights by revising curricula to strengthen foundational skills in the identified priority areas, ensuring novice teachers enter the profession better equipped. For instance, programs could embed compulsory courses in communicative ELT methodology and classroom management, supplemented by early hands-on teaching practice in real or simulated EFL settings to build confidence and adaptability (Gürsoy, 2013; Ventista & Brown, 2023). Elective options might include "ICT-Integrated EFL Projects" for digital literacy or "Advanced Speaking for Language Educators" to preempt proficiency gaps (Aşıksoy, 2018). This approach would prepare future teachers for both traditional and online contexts, promoting innovative pedagogies through experiential learning like blended internships or peer-led workshops.

Third, both in-service and pre-service programs should prioritize flexibility, interactivity, and voluntariness to maximize engagement, for example through modular online formats that allow self-paced progression and incorporate collaborative forums for peer dialogue (Stavermann, 2025). By combining these elements with evidence-based practices like ongoing coaching, educators can better support individual growth and institutional goals, ultimately enhancing EFL teaching quality (Kraft et al., 2018).

Like all empirical studies, this research has limitations. The sample, while geographically diverse, was limited to public-school teachers in Türkiye; private school teachers or those in different institutional settings may have distinct needs. Data were collected through self-reports and voluntary participation, which may reflect more motivated teachers' voices. Furthermore, while the study identified what teachers perceive as their needs and preferences, it did not examine the long-term impact of PD interventions, nor did it explore in detail how institutional and policy-level factors shape access to professional learning.

Future research could address these limitations by including broader participant groups, employing longitudinal designs to track the outcomes of PD initiatives, and comparing perceptions across different educational contexts and regions. Investigating how online and blended PD models are implemented in practice and how they affect teaching quality and student achievement would add valuable evidence for policy and program design. Studies that examine collaborative models, such as online teacher communities of practice, may also deepen understanding of how professional dialogue and peer support sustain teacher growth over time.

In conclusion, the study highlights the urgent need for needs-based, practice-oriented, and teacher-centered professional development in Türkiye's EFL context. It demonstrates that teachers are not passive recipients of training but articulate, reflective professionals who know what they need and how they wish to learn. Designing PD programs that respond to these voices through flexible, collaborative, and practical online models can contribute not only to teachers' professional growth but also to the overall quality of English language education.

Contribution Rate of the Researchers

This study is a part of the doctoral dissertation completed by the first author. It was conducted under the supervision of the second author.

Statement of Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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