Research Paper

Reflection Levels Among Iranian EFL Teachers: The Interactional Effects of Gender, Academic Degree and Their Teachers' Experience

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Abstract

In today's society, it is important for teachers, particularly foreign language teachers, to understand that reflectivity is considered a main factor in the growing teaching profession. This study sought to examine the different dimensions of reflective teaching among Iranian EFL teachers considering the variables of gender, academic degree, teaching experience, and interactional effect between them. In doing so, initially using an explanatory sequential mixed method survey design a five–point Likert scale, 29-item Reflective Teaching Questionnaire including (practical, meta-cognitive, critical, cognitive, and affective) was distributed to 142 EFL teachers (male and female) with 4 to 30+ years of professional experience with BA, MA, and Ph.D. academic degrees. Considering teaching experience, the participants were categorized into three groups. MANOVA results indicated the significant effect of teachers' experience on their reflective teaching with the least effect reported on the affective dimension. Secondly, sixteen EFL teachers were invited to participate in an interview. The results of the present study will be useful for EFL teachers to have effective teaching, and to involve themselves more in exploring their students' learning styles and critical aspects of the teaching context. Reflective teaching would help teachers to foster their independence. The analysis revealed that shortage of time, prescribed syllabi, predetermined textbooks, and ineffective teacher training programs were the main obstacles to reflectivity as experienced by the teachers. The outcomes have pedagogical implications for Iranian EFL teachers and theoreticians in the area of language teaching.

Keywords: *Academic Degree; Gender; Reflection Level; Teachers' Experience*

سطوح بازتاب در میان معلمان زبان انگلیسی زبان ایرانی: تأثیرات متقابل جنسیت، مدرک تحصیلی و تجربه معلمان

در جامعه امروزی، برای معلمان، به ویژه معلمان زبان های خارجی، مهم است که درک کنند که بازتاب عامل اصلی در رشد حرفه معلمی در نظر گرفته می شود. این پژوهش با توجه به متغیرهای جنسیت، مدرک تحصیلی، سابقه تدریس و تأثیر متقابل بین آنها، به بررسی ابعاد مختلف تدریس تأملی در بین معلمان زبان انگلیسی زبان پرداخته است. برای انجام این کار، ابتدا با استفاده از یک طرح پیمایشی ترکیبی متوالی توضیحی، یک مقیاس پنج درجه ای لیکرت، پرسشنامه آموزش انعکاسی 29 سوالی شامل (عملی، فراشناختی، انتقادی، شناختی و عاطفی) بین 142 معلم زبان انگلیسی (مرد و مرد) توزیع شد. زن) با 4 تا 30 سال سابقه حرفه ای در لیسانس، کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری. مدارک تحصیلی با توجه به تجربه تدریس، شرکت‌کنندگان در سه گروه دسته‌بندی شدند. نتایج MANOVA نشان‌دهنده تأثیر معنادار تجربه معلمان بر تدریس تأملی با کمترین تأثیر گزارش شده بر بعد عاطفی بود. در مرحله دوم، شانزده معلم زبان انگلیسی برای شرکت در مصاحبه دعوت شدند. نتایج مطالعه حاضر برای معلمان زبان انگلیسی مفید خواهد بود تا تدریس موثر داشته باشند و خود را بیشتر در کشف سبک های یادگیری دانش آموزان و جنبه های انتقادی زمینه تدریس مشارکت دهند. آموزش انعکاسی به معلمان کمک می کند تا استقلال خود را تقویت کنند. تجزیه و تحلیل نشان داد که کمبود زمان، برنامه‌های درسی تجویز شده، کتاب‌های درسی از پیش تعیین‌شده، و برنامه‌های آموزشی ناکارآمد معلمان، موانع اصلی بر سر راه بازتاب آنگونه که معلمان تجربه می‌کنند، هستند. نتایج، پیامدهای آموزشی برای معلمان زبان انگلیسی و نظریه پردازان ایرانی در حوزه آموزش زبان دارند.

کلمات کلیدی: مدرک تحصیلی، جنسیت، سطح بازتاب، تجربه معلمان

Introduction

Many developed countries have been recently focusing on the quality of education. It is believed that the process of education and learning can be motivating and encouraging if learners comprehend the method of transmitting data effectively and responding to their surroundings in a positive way (Hawley, 2007). According to Paul (1993), the primary aim of efficient teaching is to teach learners the skill of reflecting in an advanced way. As a result, under the notion of reflective practice, reflection and reflective teaching have become part of numerous instructor education platforms (Zulfikar & Mujiburrahman, 2017). Consequently, learners have been assigned a great deal of attention to the concept of reflection and the development of performance. Certainly, instructors have to offer information and skills to young learners and provide them the opportunity for an improved future (Mostafavi et al., 2022; Rezai et al., 2022). The importance of reflective teaching has been investigated by a large number of professors, e.g., Akbari (2007), Farrell (2007), Gheith & Aljaberi (2018), Kömür & Gün (2016), Pazhoman & Sarkhosh (2019), who were motivated by the theoretical involvements of numerous important theoreticians like Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983). Dewey (1933) originated the notion of thoughtful thinking and regarded it as a procedure that instruction has to strive to promote. Reflective thinking is explained as "dynamic, continuous, and attentive reflection of any idea or believed shape of awareness in view of the positions that maintain it and the outcomes to which it leads" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9).

Lavoue et al., stated that reflection is a significant feature of education as students are able to personalize and rebuild what they have acquired (2015). Additionally, reflective teaching has been considered a central aspect in the educational domain for over half a century. Dewey (1933) supposed that instructors are not just inactive syllabus users, but they can also have an active role in curriculum development and instruction replacement. Furthermore, he revealed that training has to be a kind of procedure, consisting of a process of hypothesizing, examination, interpretation, and assessment that may lead to adaptation and, if necessary, supplementary exploration. In fact, this application of education is what he regards as reflective teaching.

It is claimed that reflective teaching promotes individuals to think critically about the materials and methods (Yayli, 2009). This leads them to be autonomous in teaching, enables them to have an active role in the class, and be responsible for their teaching, identify content deficiencies, and deal with them. In addition, teachers as autonomous professionals take greater responsibilities in RTI for promoting their careers by raising awareness of their own practice (Minott, 2010).

Shanmugavelu et al., (2020) described the effects of reflective teaching and mentioned that in an educational context, it is a difficult thought that empowers a teacher to make choices and decisions on alternative activities in the class. A reflective practice supports thinking about one's own teaching activities to answer questions like how well did a lesson go, was it well planned, did it accomplish its goals, and how could it be done in a better way. It is an important skill that may create a significantly high level of learning and is very valuable in the planning procedure. Fundamentally, reflective teaching is a cyclic procedure of thinking concerning the way of education. A cycle of reflective thinking begins with the creation and writing of instructional objectives and finalizes its one cycle with the assessment of the results and the execution of the complete teaching procedure (Dixit, 2017).

While there has been great consideration given to the role of superior-order thinking and thoughtful judgment in the educational procedure, there are debates over the worth and likelihood of integrating advanced-regulated views into the educational programs of Asian populations. Farahian et al., (2021) found that there are several socio-cultural features, such as an excessive emphasis on regular and unfocused learning, presuppositions about education, a teacher-oriented

curriculum, and more prominently, a specialist-respectful customs that are favorably widespread in Asian nations that perceive advanced-sort training as challenging and rather complicated. It seems that such an approach about the Asian countries' environment is embedded in the thought that the Asian educational setting is mostly unified (Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016), and the desire for public agreement has left no or less notice for advanced organized opinion (Enayat et al., 2015).

By means of a universal direction toward reflective teaching (O'Donnell, Reeve, & Smith, 2012), as a deviation from conventional education, the assessment of the elements affecting training reflection, as well as their gender, academic degree, and experience, implies to be of great importance.

Literature Review

John Dewey (1933) assumed that reflection has a major responsibility in education. Dewey stated that reflection is the lively, continual, and cautious thought of any idea or imaginary form of information, considering the opinions that carry it and the more deductions to which it attends. Dewey considered reflection as the fundamental constituent required for education and implies that reflective thinking consists of a position of uncertainty, wavering, bewilderment, mind intricacy, where thinking initiates, and a function of probing, following, questioning, to discover items that will determine the uncertainty and organization of the confusion.

Taking into consideration the significance of reflective teaching, it is apparent that this concept is not a new one in the realm of language instruction. Several researchers investigated reflective teaching from various aspects. Moradkhani and Shirazizadeh (2017) found out about the impact of contextual varieties on the level of EFL instructors' participation in reflection and surveyed context-related features which can assist or prevent the reflection procedure. Considering the discussion, information discovered that instructors' participation in reflection was controlled by the effect of five overall context-related features specifically, awareness of thought, instructional requirements, educators' way of thinking about instruction, accessibility of sources, and institutional protract.

Soodmand Afshar and Farahani (2018) investigated Iranian EFL instructors' opinions about their own reflective teaching, restrains to their own reflective teaching, and restrains to their students' reflective thinking. The findings of their study showed that Iranian EFL instructors mostly regarded three sets of elements as hinders to their reflective instruction: absence of information inhibitors, affective and emotional inhibitors, and language institute inhibitors. Furthermore, Tajik and Ranjbar (2018) examined the limitations and restrictions in implementing reflective teaching beliefs in ELT contexts in Iran from the educators' viewpoint. The introductory study process led to the recognition of three extensive classes of impediments of meaningful instruction, including foundational matters, self-focused matters, and matters with thoughtful instruction beliefs. Sheikhbanooie and Farahian (2021) conducted a survey to evaluate the barriers to reflective performances of Iranian ESP learners.

In another study, Soodmand Afshar and Moradifar (2021) studied the relationship between reflective teaching and work performance among 300 Iranian EFL instructors. They implemented a SEM study and realized that EFL teachers' work performance was anticipated by reflective teaching. Similarly, Soodmand Afshar and Hosseini Yar (2019) investigated the relational pattern between reflective teaching and the performance of Iranian EFL instructors. The findings revealed an important positive connection between the participants' work performance and reflective teaching. This means that teachers who reflect on their teaching performances critically have a better job presentation. Ashraf, Samir, and Yazdi (2016) confirmed that EFL Iranian teachers' reflective performance encompasses four basic aspects of reflection consisting of practical, cognitive, metacognitive, and affective factors. These features considerably denote the

improvement of teaching practice and positively amend the students' attitudes towards learning the language.

Despite the plethora of writing developed in the realm of reflective teaching across the world, it seems that we are far from understanding the beneficial role of reflective teaching in the Iranian EFL context. To the researchers' best knowledge there is not much research in this field. Furthermore, to focus the researchers' attention on the subject, the following research questions are created:

RQ1: Is there any significant difference among Iranian male and female EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the level of reflection?

RQ2: Is there any difference among Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the levels of reflection based on their academic degree?

RQ3: Is there any difference among Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the levels of reflection based on their teaching experience?

RQ4: Is there any difference among Iranian EFL teachers' levels of reflection based on the interaction of their gender, academic degree, and teaching experience?

RQ5: What are Iranian EFL Teachers' attitudes toward Reflective Teaching?

Methodology
Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were chosen from the sample of 177 Iranian junior high school EFL teachers attending a seminar directed by Tabriz Instruction Office. Finally, 142 teachers attended the research. A two-hour meeting was focused on reflective teaching, its five parts, and validating it as a teaching and assessment instrument. Then, the researchers divided the participants into three teams based on their practices in teaching. 91 of the participants were female, and 51 were male, and the number of participants related to low, middle, and high experience teachers were 23, 48, and 71. Besides, 49% (70 educators), 38% (54 teachers), and 13% (18 teachers) possessed B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees, respectively.

Instruments
Questionnaire

In order to gather data, the Reflective Practice Questionnaire (RPQ), proposed by Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010), including 29 Likert scale items, was applied. The items are evaluated on a five-point Likert scale extending from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The questionnaire comprised five elements of critical teaching. Practical items (1-6) consist of tasks like diary recording, lesson reports, surveys, and questionnaires, audio and video recordings, observations, training portfolios, and group discussions, with exchanging class observations; Cognitive items (7-12) consist of attempts for specialized improvement throughout conferences or professional papers. Affective items (13-15) denote instructors' reflection on studying and students' affective responses. Metacognitive items (16-22) cover teachers' individual attitudes and traits, recognized description of instruction, and expressive concept, and Critical items (23-29) contain instructors' awareness of socio-political features of their presentation and its classroom functions. This questionnaire was selected for the objective of this research since it was expanded to determine educators' reflection in the Iranian setting and enjoys a great degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.91$) for the entire level as a measuring tool for instructor reflectivity. Moreover, the psychometric characteristics of this level have been confirmed by Xiaojing et al., (2022).

A Semi-Structured Interview:
In addition to RPQ, a semi-structured interview encompassing eight questions was designed to be used in this study. Four high-quality proficient Ph.D. scholars with experience in reflective teaching, including two school instructors and two university professors, analyzed and modified the subject of discussion. Eight male and eight female teachers (four Ph.D., six M.A., and six B.A. holders) were selected by chance. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for the following three-step analysis outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely data reduction, display, and interpretation.

Procedure
Initially a convenient sample of 177 male/female B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. Iranian EFL teachers in a reflective teaching workshop, were selected and debriefed about the rationale behind the study. After administrating RPQ (Akbari et al., 2010), 35 candidates withdrew from the study leaving 142 completed questionnaires, which were scored and statistically analyzed.

Moreover, to triangulate the data, the researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with 16 male/female participants with different university degrees. Initially, the participants were debriefed about reflective teaching to prepare them for the interview. Then, questions were posed in individual face-to-face interview sessions to obtain information about their problems in reflective teaching as well as their solutions for the related challenges. Each session, conducted in English, lasted for about 10-15 minutes. This yielded documentable recorded (and later transcribed) data about Iranian EFL teachers' reflective practice (in line with five dimensions of RPQ), their challenges, and solutions.

Data Gathering Procedure
To meet the purpose of the research, a concise explanation was established about the description of research and the intention of information gathering. After educators' conformity to take part in the research, a questionnaire measuring reflective teaching was distributed among them. Throughout the process of information gathering, consideration was taken about paying attention to the ethical issues of the study. For instance, the teachers' involvement in the study was voluntary. In addition, they were assured of the confidentiality of the data they supplied. Besides, they were told that the gathered information would be used for research purposes only.

Then the EFL instructors were told to write down their answers with caution and concentration. In many parts, the EFL instructors could not complete the questionnaire at the stated time because they were engaged with their own work; therefore, they were told to study the questionnaire at home, reply to the questions, and finally give them back to the institute. Then, the restored papers were assessed.

Data Analysis
After the questionnaires were completed, they were scored on a 1-5 scale according to the frequency they were employed by the teachers so; the highest and lowest scores belonged to the categories often and rarely with the other options receiving the middle scores. MANOVA was carried out on the questionnaire information. The interviews were transcribed shortly after they had been conducted.

Results

Preliminary Statistics
To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, as it was a standard questionnaire, it was expertly viewed. To investigate the reliability indices for the Reflective Practice Questionnaire of Akbari et al., (2010) and its five subscales, a sample of 30 teachers were chosen to answer the questions. Then using Cronbach's Alpha, the reliability of the questionnaire was measured. Considering the

size of the sample as well as the length of the questionnaire, the reliability estimates were in the acceptable range (over 0.7).To examine the normality of the distributions Central Limit Theorem of Stevense (2002) is used. Descriptive statistics of the individuals' marks after answering RPQ for 142 participants are shown in table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of reflective teaching and Reflection Levels

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Min	Max	Range	Status (Percent)
Practical	142	20.19	4.37	0.3	11	30	19	67
Cognitive	142	20.76	3.7	-0.03	12	30	18	69
Affective	142	11.35	2.004	-0.23	6	15	9	76
Metacognitive	142	28.14	4.56	-0.97	12	35	23	80
Critical	142	22.62	5.75	0.19	11	35	24	65
Reflective Teaching	142	103.08	13.51	0.108	66	136	70	71

According to Table 1, in order to compute the statistical significance of differences between means, data was submitted to multivariate analysis of variance to compare teachers' means on five reflection parts, i.e. practical, cognitive, affective, met cognitive, and critical. Based on the descriptive statistics in Table 1, in fact, using reflective teaching by the participants in this study was approximately high (71%). It is necessary to indicate the participants relatively sometimes use reflective teaching strategies in their classrooms.

When reference is made to Table 2, from a statistical point of view, it is clear that there is no significant interactional effect among gender, academic degree, and different teaching experiences among integrated dependent variables of Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the levels of reflection, F=0/91, P=0/47V=0/96 ,partial η=0/03).There is no meaningful interaction among gender, experience, and educational level in Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the levels of reflection in this study (P>0/05).

Table 2
Multivariate Tests of Mean Differences for Reflection Levels between teachers,according to gender, academic degree, and teaching experience

	Value	F	Sig	Eta
Wilks` Lambda	0.96	0.91	0.47	0.03

As is obvious in Table 3 when, the outcomes of dependent variables were measured separately, in the practical subscale (the value of F=0/003, P>0/01, (partial η=0/000),in cognitive element (the value of F=1/69,P>0/01, partial η=0/01),affective (learner) component (the value of F=0/203 ,P>0/01, partial η=0/002),while in met cognitive (the value of F=1/65,P>0/01, partial η=0/013), in critical (the value of F=0/06 ,P<0/01, partial η=0/000).Therefore there is no noteworthy interactional effect according to their gender, academic degree, and teaching experiences on reflection levels, in fact the value of applying practical, affective, cognitive, met cognitive , and critical among participants according to their gender, academic degree, and teaching experiences are at the same level on this research (P> 0/01).

Table 3
The outcomes of Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Gender, Degree,and Experience Level

	Variables	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig	Eta
	Practical	0.04	1	0.04	0.003	0.95	0.000
Gender*	**Cognitive**	14.67	1	14.67	1.69	0.19	0.013
Academic Degree*	**Affective**	0.58	1	0.58	0.203	0.65	0.002
Years of Experience	**Metacognitive**	20.95	1	20.95	1.65	0.2	0.013
	Critical	1.31	1	1.31	0.06	0.8	0.000

As it is obvious in Table 4, generally speaking, the mean of reflective teaching on the highly experienced, female, Ph.D. (mean=122/16) and highly experienced male MA (mean=113/81) approximately are at the same level, so there are no meaningful interactional effect among gender, educational level, and experience of Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching regarding the levels of reflection.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics for Reflection Levels among teachers considering interaction among gender, experience, and academic degree

Variables	Gender	Academic Degree	Years of Experience	Frequency	Mean	St. Error
Practical	**Female**	**B. A**	Low	7	18.71	2.75
			Mid	21	18.33	2.88
			High	4	21.25	4.19
		M.A	Mid	8	23	3.5
			High	33	22.03	3.84
		Ph.D.	High	18	24.55	3.63
	Male	**B. A**	Low	16	16.31	3.7
			Mid	17	17.05	3.34
			High	5	21	2.34
		M.A	Mid	2	20	4.24
			High	11	19.81	4.51
Cognitive	**Female**	**B. A**	Low	7	17.57	2.22
			Mid	21	18.57	2.76
			High	4	21.25	4.71
		M.A	Mid	8	21.5	2.26
			High	33	22.6	3.26
		Ph.D.	High	18	24.33	2.82
	Male	**B. A**	Low	16	17.37	2.98
			Mid	17	19.23	2.58
			High	5	21.8	3.49
		M.A	Mid	2	17	2.82
			High	11	22.36	2.65
Affective	**Female**	**B. A**	Low	7	9.57	1.61
			Mid	21	11	1.34

Construct	Gender	Degree	Level	N	Mean	SD
			High	4	10.75	2.06
		M.A	Mid	8	11.12	2.1
			High	33	12.42	1.56
		Ph.D.	High	18	12.77	1.43
		B. A	Low	16	9.56	2.27
			Mid	17	10.47	1.84
	Male		High	5	11	1.41
		M.A	Mid	2	9.5	2.12
			High	11	12.45	1.63
		B. A	Low	7	24.57	4.35
			Mid	21	26.9	3.08
	Female		High	4	27.75	4.78
		M.A	Mid	8	26.75	2.81
			High	33	30.21	2.75
Metacognitive		Ph.D.	High	18	32.11	2.58
		B. A	Low	16	22.81	6.26
			Mid	17	25.64	3.48
	Male		High	5	30.8	2.86
		M.A	Mid	2	29	1.41
			High	11	31.54	2.29
		B. A	Low	7	16	2.94
			Mid	21	20.23	3.68
	Female		High	4	19.5	3.69
		M.A	Mid	8	22.37	4.53
			High	33	23.54	6.08
Critical		Ph.D.	High	18	28.38	4.35
		B. A	Low	16	16.62	3.99
			Mid	17	22.76	3.99
	Male		High	5	24.8	2.28
		M.A	Mid	2	25	7.07
			High	11	27.63	3.35
		B. A	Low	7	86.42	2.26
			Mid	21	95.04	1.3
	Female		High	4	100.5	2.99
		M.A	Mid	8	104.75	2.11
			High	33	110.81	1.04
Reflective Teaching		Ph.D.	High	18	122.16	1.41
		B. A	Low	16	82.68	1.49
			Mid	17	95.17	1.45
	Male		High	5	109.4	2.66
		M.A	Mid	2	100.5	4.23
			High	11	113.81	1.85

Multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) was conducted to probe the interactional effect among these three variables and teachers' level of reflection, i.e., practical, cognitive, learner (affective), meta-cognitive, and critical. Before reporting the results, again it needs to be reminded that the assumptions of homogeneity of variances and covariance were covered by Box's M =188.85 with P > .05). The significant level¬ of the test faced=P=0/002. In fact, in this study, the data had the homogeneity of variances and covariance, (p>0/001). The homogeneity of variance was associated with Levenes test. The level of meaningfulness for all measures of reflection is higher than 0/01. Therefore, it is stated that the variances are equal on this test (P>0/01).

Responding to the Fifth Research Question
A semi-structured interview, encompassing eight questions (Appendix B), was designed and used to respond to the fifth research question. A review of interview papers confirmed that to the majority of the instructors, reflection implied thinking about teaching practice, considering whether the purposes were obtained, and applying the outcomes to develop future performances. They believed that reflection might happen either throughout the teaching procedure or after it has been done. Qualitative analysis of interview consequences revealed that Iranian EFL teachers had a comprehension of reflective teaching, acknowledged its advantages sometimes, and used it in their performance.

All of the teachers stated that they had not adequate time to contact the recent courses in the field. They felt they were too busy with their classes to allot some time to reflect on their practice. Not knowing the concept completely, the lack of time and motivation on the part of teachers, being too preoccupied with matters like the low income and absence of the educational system, lack of experience, class size, and prescribed syllabuses and textbooks were the major problems mentioned by the teachers during the interview sessions.

The teacher education programs in Iran, and in fact, the ineffectiveness of teacher training courses can be paid for by proficient and educated teacher trainers who recommended increasing the nature of training activities of beginner language instructors through reflective teaching and training improvement. At last, language teachers are suggested to bear in mind reflective thinking and teaching because of their significant impacts on the attainment of teaching tasks.

Practical Dimension: The interviewees managed to develop instruction and use reflection devices. In replying to the opening interview question, many of the participators (90%) highlighted the importance of reflecting on their own way of education and using the outcomes in their teaching activities. They considered this assists them to reflect on their accomplishments and improve their information and knowledge. Only one individual claimed that this process takes too much time.

Cognitive Dimension: Thoughtful instructors attempt to employ their cognitive aspect to enhance their expertise presentation and adjust their instruction abilities by examining related recourses. Also, they stressed the value of attending seminars and scientific gatherings in increasing their comprehension of training and education problems. Furthermore, one of the participants mentioned his absence of information about reflective teaching up to his involvement in this research. The problems stated in this type refer to not having enough time and the value of conferences and meetings.

Affective Dimension: Further, the interviewees concentrated on students' feelings by paying attention to their emotions, getting their responses, supporting interactive learning, evading robot-like instruction, and taking into account their intends, desires, and motivations. Receiving feedback from the students was also highlighted by some teachers; although, one of the difficulties was considering affective relations with learners.

Metacognitive Dimension: The interviewees emphasized the worth of trainers' knowledge of training and its results, standards, and accomplishments. The dilemma emphasized by some was getting away from your individuality and reflecting on your own education.

Critical Dimension: Several individuals emphasized the worth of the critical aspect of reflective teaching by saying:

Teachers act more deliberately and consciously by reflective teaching and also they can get free from daily and hasty acts by using reflective teaching. This forms a feeling of liberated and honest converse about troubles and suggestions.

On the other hand, they supposed that all this requires a condition of shared trust in the classroom. For example, a teacher revealed:

I assume that teachers can make the classroom environment so pleasant in a way that students discuss openly the troubles in society and learn to comment on these problems by creating common confidence between them.

Discussion and Results

Recently, ELT pedagogy has been becoming progressively more aware of the importance of trainers' role in materializing educational objectives. (Akbari et al., 2007; Nosratinia & Zaker, 2017). The most important idea of the present explanatory sequential mixed-method research was to revise the stages of reflective teaching and more particularly investigate the impact of gender, educational level, and experience on reflective teaching dimensions and their interactions; although, the difference was not sometimes large enough to reach statistical significance in some groups.

The results of data analysis indicated that Iranian English trainers principally activated the level of meta-cognitive reflection implying that through focusing on their own beliefs and characteristics, teachers could be reflective practitioners. This was pursued by critical reflection, which refers to the social and contextual dimensions of teaching practice. Cognitive reflection constituted the next step that teachers reflected on their practice, which deals with attempts for specialized progress by taking part in conferences and reading specialized articles and journals. Practical reflection was the fourth level, which consists of trainers' discussions with their colleagues about teaching interests, viewing other instructors' classes or being viewed by other trainers, and writing reflective journals about their teaching practices. Surprisingly the lowest level of reflection identified in data analysis was affective which deals with learners' emotions, and feelings, and receiving feedback from them. It reveals that while the Iranian trainers operated at the five steps of reflective practice, they mostly employed meta-cognitive and critical reflections in their teaching. The results contradict the earlier researches that trainers operate at all steps of reflection (Lee, 2005; Otienoh, 2011; Farrell, 1999). These results are also consistent with Dinkelman's (2000) and Liou (2001)'s studies in that teachers use critical reflection more frequently than the other levels. However, those studies utilized case studies and practice teaching reports as the main data collection methods.

Regarding the first research question according to participants' gender and reflection levels, the results of MANOVA showed that there was an important distinction between males and females in terms of all reflection levels (practical, critical, meta-cognitive, affective, and cognitive), but the difference between means of the participants indicated that female EFL teachers performed better than their male counterparts considering reflective teaching. The outcomes of this research are in contrast with the results of Karadag and Sadik (2012) in that they found no important difference in trainers` reflective thinking levels related to their gender. Moreover, the outcomes are not supported by the findings of Keshavarzi and Falahati Qadimi Fumani (2015) who concluded that gender had no effect on instructor's reflectivity.

The findings rejected the earlier researches that female instructors are more reflective than their male counterparts on all levels of reflection are (Rashidi & Javidanmehr, 2012b; Poyraz, &Usta, 2013; Hassan Soodmand & Afshar Mojtaba Farahani, 2015). Although there are a limited number of studies¬ on gender distinctions in reflection, this finding is in line with the study showing that women can have an intense sense of effectiveness than men since teaching is mostly a female profession (Gencer & Cakiroglu, 2007).

Regarding, academic degrees and reflective teaching, the outcomes of MANOVA brought to light that there was a noteworthy difference between teachers' degrees and the levels of reflection. However, an important relationship was found between instructors' academic degrees and meta-cognitive reflection. According to the results, the Ph.D. group outperformed the MA, and BA groups on all levels of reflection. It indicates that academic degree has an important effect on teachers' reflection levels and this is because of their wide knowledge and awareness. The higher the trainers' degree, the more they reflect critically and cognitively on their activity. These findings are in contrast with Rashidi and Javidanmehr's (2012b) and Odeh et al.,'s (2010) studies in which no important relation was found between trainers' academic degree and their reflective thinking. MA teachers also outperformed BA groups on all dimensions. Furthermore, as what is stated by Richards, (2004), trainers with a master's degree are more reflective than those trainers with a bachelor's degree and consequently, it looks to overemphasize the relation between the educational degree and reflectivity. Danielson's (2009) opinion might offer another reason for the relationship between trainers' level of education and reflectivity. Danielson (2009) claimed that professional trainers change their way of thinking to adjust the degree of reflection, as the setting requires. Their teaching is recognized by a purposeful ability that helps them to recognize and repeat the greatest activities and explain unexpected practices. Because of their capacity to reflect, skillful instructors understand at what time and what to do, and why to do it.

Considering the third independent variable, which relates to experience and reflective teaching, the outcomes of MANOVA, overall, revealed that the statistical significance of differences between the means on experience and five levels (practical, cognitive, affective, met cognitive and critical reflection) is somewhat considerable and the difference might not be ignored. The high, mid, and low- experienced teachers performed differently in terms of reflection levels. Trainers with a higher level of experience considerably had a higher level of reflection than the mid and low- experienced trainers. As far as previous studies are concerned, only two studies (Nikoopour, 2013; Rashidi & Javidanmehr, 2012b) were found which showed no difference regarding experience and reflectivity, which is not in line with this study. Moreover, this study confirms the results of Ansarian, Farrokhi, &Rahmani (2015) conducted a study to find out about the impacts of the experience on the reflection level of Iranian EFL trainers. The outcomes of the survey indicated that there was an important correlation between years of professional experience and reflection levels. The outcomes showed that years of teaching develop reflective teaching, and directs to increased confidence in way of thinking, problem-solving, knowledge, and deciding on instruction. In addition, this is in agreement with the results of Ansarin et al., (2015) who studied the impact of educational experience on reflection. However, the results were incompatible with those of Unal and Uhan (2012) who did not observe any important effect of experience on reflection. This is in line with Hatton and Smith (1995) and Gelfuso and Dennis (2014) who thought that beginner trainers commonly are involved in their 'survival' in class with a desire to center on technical methods of problem-solving and unwillingness for critical reflection. What's more, beginner trainers gradually study a series of techniques for later utilization in their way of teaching (Richards, 2004).

In a similar vein, this study confirms the results of Soodmand Afshar & Farahani (2015) that revealed, teaching experience considerably discriminated against Iranian EFL trainers considering reflective teaching; and the high-experienced team considerably performed better

than the mid-experienced team who, in turn, performed better than that their low-experienced counterparts. Trainers with more teaching experience are found to favor the greatest teacher management compared to novice trainers (Bailey and Johnson (1999), Swanson, O'Connor, and Cooney (1990), Martin and Baldwin (1993)).

The fourth research question aimed to investigate the interaction among variables. According to the analysis of this study, each variable would be considered regarding the five dimensions of reflection. The findings of data analysis showed that Iranian English instructors outperformed at the level of meta-cognitive reflection. Based on Flavell (1976), meta-cognition is an active monitoring and consequent regulation. These results are not consistent with Dinkelman's (2000) and Liou's (2001) studies in that teacher use critical reflection more frequently than the other levels. The results of this research don't confirm the earlier studies that Ghaslani (2015) studied demographic variables consisting of gender and experience on the level of trainers' reflectivity. The outcomes did not reveal any major differences among teachers regarding age and experience with reflectivity. In addition, in studying the impact of teaching experience and gender on teaching methods, Baleghizadeh and Shakouri (2014) could not find any important relationship between teaching experience and teaching methods. Moreover, there was no considerable relationship between teacher gender and teaching style.

Consequently, preparing self-reflective practices in educational setting influences the improvements of the benefits of education. It also provides the chance to analyze earlier actions and decisions before moving to the next stage. As a result, it enables teachers to make more thoughtful decisions in later stages (Goodman, 1998). These similar findings highlight the importance of meta-cognition in education, particularly in teaching. Neil (2002) adds to the strengths of this idea by noting that the use of meta-cognitive strategies provokes one's way of thinking and can result in more insightful learning and enhanced performance.This finding confirmed Dağkıran's (2005) study. She reported that Turkish EFL teachers, similar to Iranian teachers, are sometimes involved in cognitive reflection. This approval could be the result of the number of participants, cultural context, or teacher education programs. However, this study is in contrast with Normohammadi (2008) who reported that in her study teachers were less engaged in cognitive reflection compared to affective elements. This different finding might be due to the willingness of the teachers in the regions studied by Normohammadi rather than the teachers in the areas investigated in our study. Another reason can be the encouragement received by the teachers in those areas to apply cognitive reflection in their classrooms.

Data analysis on this research showed that Iranian EFL instructors sometimes use practical reflection in their classrooms. One possible reason for this low level of involvement in practical reflection might be the low facilities allocated to the teachers since through practical reflection; teachers utilize various devices or processes for the reflective practice. These devices and processes may include surveys and questionnaires, audio recordings, observation, action research, teaching portfolios, group discussions, and analyzing critical incidents (Farrell, 2004; Murphy, 2001; Richards and Farrell, 2005; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). Noormohammadi's (2008) finding on this element was almost in line with our study since in that study, the practical element was the fourth implemented factor among five reflection elements. Surprisingly, the lowest level of reflection identified in data analysis was an affective element in which EFL teachers were more concerned with their learners' learning styles and their affective and emotional responses. Performing reflection about learners, knowing their learning strategy, and getting feedback from them can be a way to help learners 'learning, thus infusing movement into the process of teaching. Iranian EFL teachers significantly practiced higher levels of met cognitive and critical reflection than cognitive, practical, and effective reflections. In addition, they employed critical reflection more than cognitive, affective, and practical reflections in their classrooms. These

results are also consistent with Dinkelman's (2000) and Liou's (2001) studies in that teachers use critical reflection more frequently than the other levels.

In another study, Moradkhani and Shirazizadeh (2017) examined the impact of situational variations on the level of EFL trainers' participation in reflection and discovered context-related issues, which can assist or impede the reflection procedure. Eighty-five Iranian EFL instructors took part in the research answering the English-language teaching reflection questionnaire established by Akbari, Behzadpour, and Dadvand (2010). Ten candidates set a follow-up interview too. The outcomes revealed active participation of the candidates in lower levels of reflection (cognitive, practical, and affective. Further, there was no difference between the two groups of the state and private zone trainers in terms of higher levels of reflection (i.e. meta-cognitive and critical reflection). In addition, five major elements comprising institutional requirements, trainers' approach to instruction, understanding of reflection, academic support, and accessibility of sources were created to be useful in trainers' participation in reflection. Furthermore, the interview outcomes referred to the employment of all five components of reflective teaching at different levels. This was in agreement with Farrel (2008), who came to the conclusion that reflective practice occurs on a range with slight personal distinctions among trainers (Copeland, Birmingham, La Cruz, & Lewin, 1993), showing the improbability of reflective teaching for all trainers. Also, the findings of Dağkıran's (2015) examination on the standing of Turkish EFL trainers in reflective teaching were in agreement with those of this research, since Turkish EFL trainers adjusted reflective practices. In general, the instructors understood the social and essential features of the larger setting in their insights into reflective teaching. They appeared to understand that reflection not only represented classroom settings exclusively but also directed critical and analytic skills. They also accepted the fact that reflection could happen before, during, or after a teaching experience. They believed that reflective teaching helped them progress students' presentation, find weak and strong points, create experienced conclusions, and significantly assisted them to study the relationship between their beliefs and actions. Reflection was viewed as a device that freed trainers from presenting in automatic and routine methods, helped to lead in a creative way, and improved students' performance. (Appendix C).

Reflection was also viewed as a meta-cognitive skill that needed planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation of an individual's teaching with a glance to development. Meanwhile, the interviewees stated many inhibitors for reflective teaching comprising lack of time, lower level of encouragement, contextual obstructions, preplanned syllabi, severe teaching responsibilities, class size, the inadequacy of teacher education plans, and low level of experience. These results were similar to Shirazizadeh and Moradkhani (2018) who found parallel obstacles in reflective teaching. Consequently, it can be concluded that reflective teachers are more successful in applying reflective practice in their classrooms; thus, improving their profession.

Conclusion

The results pointed out that teachers with reflective practice and self-evaluation teach more effectively and they are more successful in their job. Also, the results showed that EFL teachers need to incorporate their experiences of journal writings as contextual factors in reflecting their experiences into practice to teach effectively. This is aligned with the findings proposed by Zahid and Khanam (2019) who addressed the effect of RT practices that improve the efficacy and performance of English language teachers in pre-and in-service courses. Instructors also may revise and modify their teaching strategies through reflective practice which affects learners' achievements in the classrooms. This line of research can help the teachers to gain experience and enable them to practice reflective skills in their practicum. Pedagogical policymakers need to pay attention to training modules in which RTI is included. In light of RT, learners may take

benefit from dynamic revisions coming from the teachers who revise teaching strategies and renew their methodologies of language teaching. Thus, educational policymakers should include the use of RTI in the English language curriculum. This may affect reflective practice training strategies as part of their course work for continuous revision of teaching EFL practices. Further, the results of this research showed that reflective practice of teachers is a significant factor that enhances the students' learning. Malimir and Mohammadi (2018) supported the results of this research and confirmed that reflective practice is a professional requirement that causes life–long learning for teachers and students. One of the teachers' responsibilities is to discover what goes on in learners' minds, find out their feelings and thoughts, and reflective practice promotes teachers to feel their learners, their needs, and their abilities. Learners with special attitudes and aptitudes may arrive at different interpretations of what we say. Reflection is a vital part of any learning process. Students have the right of questioning and offering ideas to have an important part in their education. They learn from their daily experiences and examination of what and why happenings. Involving in asking questions about the reasons for pieces of evidence develops a kind of self-discovery and maybe changes one's assumptions that lead to a holistic understanding of various situations. By thinking in the development of learning and instruction new thoughts and solutions come to the minds to solve the problems.

The outcomes of this research can refer to the gap that should be bridged for making possible in-service teachers' reflective knowledge performances. On the other hand, the perception and procedure of reflecting on one's method of teaching are seen as an important part of increasing information and hypothesis of instruction and is consequently a major issue in one's proficient improvement. Besides, the professional staff improvement has to provide in-service trainers with professional training courses about reflective practice and work with the school directors to produce questions in their schools. Supplying teachers with in-service training programs for example thinking skills, problem-solving and decision-making techniques, and guided reflective practice that will help them to overcome their limitations and mistakes is thought to develop their reflective thinking methods. Finally, the findings imply that teachers have to pay additional attention to useful, constant, and open-ended learning engagements that will make easy reflective learning activities that are very useful for dealing with the dynamic and complicated nature of the teaching occupation.

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