Designing and Validating a Model of Reflective Skills for Iranian EFL Teachers

Article info

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop and validate a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers to help them acquire reflective skills. Accordingly, an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was used in two phases. In the qualitative phase, 50 EFL teachers were recruited based on available sampling method from different private language institutes of Fars Province, Iran to participate in semi-structured interviews. The interview data were analyzed following open, axial, and selective coding procedures and the results were used to develop a reflective skills questionnaire. The quantitative phase involved 300 EFL teachers who were selected through available sampling to complete the researcher-made questionnaire. The process of quantitative data analysis was conducted through Cronbach's Alpha test, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). According to the results, a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers was designed consisting of three main components including social skills, pedagogical skills, and transformative skills, with twelve sub-components. The findings offer some implications for policymakers, teacher trainers, and other stakeholders in charge of training and recruiting EFL teachers.

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1. Introduction

Language teaching is a complex process influenced by various factors, with the teacher playing an essential role as an active decision-maker (Nayernia et al., 2022). Indeed, a teacher's features significantly impact classroom instruction. Considering the influence of teacher reflectivity on the teaching process and the close association between learning and teaching, the concept of reflective teaching warrants further exploration. Undoubtedly, students' learning and achievement are heavily influenced by their teachers' characteristics. The strong connection between learning and teaching is well-established, particularly in the context of language education, where these two processes are deeply interconnected (Quan, 2022).

Reflective teaching can be understood as an ongoing process that significantly contributes to a teacher's professional development. This process both enhances pedagogy, and comprehension and aids teachers in making more novel decisions in their instructional practices, thereby expanding their professional knowledge and practices (Mazandarani & Troudi, 2022). Straková and Cimermanová (2018) asserted that the development of reflective thinking, as part of a broader metacognitive awareness, is indispensable in teacher education. It allows for the re-examination of deeply ingrained beliefs, which can be challenging to articulate but are crucial for teaching. Accordingly, teachers, among other things, need reflective skills.

However, there is empirical evidence that reflective teaching has not yet gained the prominence it deserves in the country's EFL education system (Yaghoobi Hamgini & Abedini, 2023). Specifically, many classrooms still operate with a fixed set of materials, delivered through rigid, conventional teaching methods that lack any element of reflection or adaptability. Regrettably, the researcher's experience has shown that many teachers function primarily as lecturers, rarely attempting to reassess or evolve their teaching approaches. More precisely, the banking model of instruction offers little meaningful benefit to either teachers or learners (Freire, 1970).

Research on reflective teaching in Iran remains relatively underdeveloped (Abazari et al., 2023). One possible reason for this gap is that while reflective teaching has been extensively discussed at the theoretical level, there has been little focus on its practical

application. The lack of a clear, comprehensive framework leaves teachers uncertain about how to implement reflective practices in their classrooms. More critically, within Iran's EFL teaching system, reflective teaching, as far as the researcher is aware, has not even been explored as a potential approach, much less as a practical method. In Iran, the traditional view persists that teachers are all-knowing authorities, while learners are merely passive recipients of knowledge.

Specifically, as far as the researcher is aware, no investigation has yet designed and validated a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers. To address this research gap, the current investigation sought to design and validate a model of reflective skills customized to Iranian EFL teachers. The findings of this study may hold significant value for some reasons. First, as global education increasingly emphasizes reflective teaching, any effort to explore teacher reflectivity may be highly important. Developing a model of reflective skills for Iranian teachers may enhance their communication abilities, a critical need in today's interconnected world. Moreover, as Kim (2012) pointed out, reflective teaching benefits learners as well, improving deeper engagement with the subject matter and prompting them to consider the reasons behind their actions. Through tools like journals, reflective teaching may help learners bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical experience. Additionally, the importance of reflective teaching may extend to the construction of new knowledge in teachers. As Yayli (2009) suggested, reflection on prior knowledge is essential for constructive modifications in teaching practices.

Furthermore, this study may be particularly relevant given the close interconnection between EFL teaching and learning, and the strong potential of reflective teaching to enhance the quality and effectiveness of EFL instruction, ultimately leading to greater student success. While some investigations, both in Iran and internationally, have explored reflective teaching from different perspectives (Choy & Oo, 2012; Kaneko-Marques, 2015; Minott, 2015; Silver, 2015; Soodmand Afshar & Farahani, 2015; Zohrabi & Yousefi, 2016), none, to the researcher's best of knowledge, have proposed a model of reflective skills specifically for Iranian EFL teachers. This investigation aimed to fill that gap by addressing the following research question:

RQ: What are Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of reflective skills?

2. Review of the Related Literature
2.1. Theoretical Framework

Dewey (1933) described reflective action as "the active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or alleged form of knowledge in light of the reasons that support it, and the other conclusions to which it leans" (p. 118). According to Griffiths (2000), reflection is most likely to occur when professionals encounter a unique or unexpected situation. In these cases, rather than solely relying on established theories or previous experiences, individuals leverage a diverse array of examples to reinterpret the situation and devise novel solutions. Conversely, reflection-on-action is characterized by a deliberate, retrospective examination of one's performance to gain understandings and learn from the experience (Day, 2000; Garrido, 2023).

Hillier (2005) argued that we can liberate ourselves from the confines of traditional classroom limitations by "questioning and then replacing or rephrasing an assumption that is considered by a majority to be the dominant common sense" (p. 14). Zeichner and Liston (1996) emphasized that not all thought about teaching qualifies as reflective practice. They highlight the distinction between reflective and technical instruction, stating that "if a teacher never questions the goals and values that drive their work, the context in which they teach, or the assumptions underlying their approach, then that teacher is not truly engaging in reflective teaching" (p. 1).

Smith (2001) further differentiated between technical rationality and tacit knowledge, addressing the theory-practice gap. Like Dewey (1933), Schön (1991) believed that reflection is initiated during the process of working through complex and problematic situations. This reflection is an interplay of theory and experience. In such challenging contexts, relying solely on tacit knowledge is insufficient; teachers must draw upon both their theoretical understanding (technical rationality) and the practical insights they have gained through experience.

Richards (2002) and Garrido (2023) proposed several approaches to becoming a reflective teacher, including self-observation, observing others, team teaching, and exploring one's teaching philosophy through writing. According to Richards, the process

of reflective teaching unfolds in three stages:

Stage 1: This stage involves the actual teaching event, such as a lesson or another instructional activity. It includes both the teacher's own teaching and the observation of another's teaching. Stage 2: This stage is the recollection of the event. It involves documenting what occurred without attaching any explanations or evaluations. Various methods can be used at this stage, such as writing a detailed description of the event, recording it via video or audio, or utilizing checklists or coding systems to capture the event's specifics. Stage 3: The final stage, known as review and response, involves objectively describing and reviewing the event. At this stage, the teacher processes and critically questions the event in depth which allows for a thorough examination of the teaching practice.

Richards (2002, p. 5) noted that "while reflective teaching, like other forms of self-inquiry, carries certain challenges such as the time-consuming nature of journaling, self-reporting, or recording lessons, teachers who engage in reflective analysis often find it to be a valuable tool for self-evaluation and professional growth." Reflective teaching highlights that merely accumulating experience is not enough for professional growth. Instead, it is the integration of experience with thoughtful reflection that is an influential driver for teacher development.

Akbari et al. (2010) developed a reflective teaching questionnaire for L2 teachers. They suggested a six-component model of second language teacher reflection, which included practical, cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective, critical, and moral reflection. Besides, Mahmoodi et al. (2013) assessed the relationships among teachers' reflection, classroom management orientations, perceptions of language learning strategies, and students' L2 achievement. A significant correlation between these teacher variables and students' L2 development was found. Among these variables, teacher reflection was the strongest predictor of student success.

Also, Alipoor and Jadidi (2016) aimed to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' reflection and their cognition regarding vocabulary teaching. The study revealed a significant relationship between teachers' reflective practices and their preference for function-based vocabulary teaching methods. Similarly, Zohrabi and Yousefi (2016) investigated the interplay between reflectivity and language proficiency among Iranian

EFL students. A significant positive relationship was found between students' reflectivity and their proficiency test scores. Finally, Yaghoobi Hamgini and Abedini (2023) did a meta-analysis of ten papers on the impact of reflective teaching on EFL students` achievement. According to the results, sample size of the experimental group had a negative effect on the students` achievement. In addition, publication type affected the effect sizes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

This study benefited from an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. In the qualitative phase, grounded theory design was used to develop a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers. Moreover, in the quantitative phase, a quantitative survey design was used to validate the developed model and check its reliability.

3.2. Participants

As the participants of the qualitative phase, 50 EFL teachers, evenly split between 25 males and 25 females, holding either M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), with varying years of teaching experience at twelve private language institutions across Fars Province, Iran were selected through available sampling. The reason for the selection of both M.A. and Ph.D. teachers with different years of teaching experience was that diversity added to the richness of data and consequently, the richness of the emerged model. They were chosen through virtual groups in social networks including WhatsApp and Telegram due to the constraints imposed on the study as a consequence of the prevalence of Covid-19 virus at the time of data collection. All participants were native Persian speakers, and their ages ranged from 30 to 65 years. In the quantitative phase, 300 (150 males and 150 females) EFL teachers with the above features participated through available sampling. The research ethics was observed in sampling the participants of both phases of the study by making the participants informed of the aims of the study. Moreover, the researcher ensured them that their personal information remained anonymous and confidential.

3.3. Instruments

a) Semi-Structured Interview

A Semi-structured interview was designed to explore the participants' perceptions of the reflective skills of Iranian teachers so that a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers could be developed. To design this interview, the researchers used the literature and obtained expert opnions. The interview consisted of 5 open-ended questions on 'how reflectivity can be used in EFL teaching, what reflective EFL teachers do in classroom, the reflective skills of EFL teachers, explanation of these skills, and characteristics of reflective EFL teachers'. The interviews were conducted by one of the researchers in English with no time limitation. For the comfort of the interviewees, it was audio-recorded by the researcher in a one-to-one format in WhatsApp and Telegram. To ensure the credibility and dependability of the data, member checks and low-inference descriptors were employed. Low-inference descriptors involved presenting direct quotations from the interviews which allowed the readers to engage with the participants' perspectives through their own words (Ary et al., 2019). Member checks were also utilized by the researcher to enhance accuracy and respect for the participants. This process involved sharing interpretations of the data with the participants to prevent miscommunication, recognize any inaccuracies, and give participants the opportunity to review what had been written about them. By obtaining feedback, the researcher ensured that the participants' responses were correctly understood and accurately reflected in the study (Ary et al., 2019).

b) Researcher-Made Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on the model emerged from the interview data of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers (See Appendix). The rationale behind designing this questionnaire was to propose a validated reflective skills model through converting the model into a closed-ended questionnaire and running exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Test on the questionnaire data (Jafari et al., 2024; Jalali et al., 2023; Zohrabi et al., 2019). However, there may exist other methods to do this and this is not the only existing method but the researchers found it a prevalent method for validation of the newly proposed models.

Congruent with the emerged model, the questionnaire consisted of twelve sub-

scales including behaving in a socially acceptable manner (items 1 to 5), being able to motivate students (items 6 to 10), managing classroom (items 11 to 15), attending to students' diversity of needs (items 16 to 20), planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies (items 21 to 25), thinking skillfully (items 26 to 30), thinking critically (items 31 to 35), thinking creatively (items 36 to 40), being verbally active (items 41 to 45), giving and receiving feedback from students (items 46 to 50), evaluating one's own teaching (items 51 to 55), and making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching (items 56 to 60).

Accordingly, the questionnaire consisted of 60 items in the form of statements to which the respondents were to answer in a 5-point Likert scale from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4), agree, to (5) strongly agree. It is worth noting that the respondents of this questionnaire were the participants of the quantitative phase (i.e., 300 EFL teachers). However, this was not a self-report questionnaire but it was a closed-ended questionnaire which was developed based on the interview data and the teachers were asked to show the degree of their agreement with its items or judge its items (Jafari et al., 2024; Jalali et al., 2023; Zohrabi et al., 2019).

To pilot this questionnaire, the researchers recruited 100 participants whose demographic features were similar to the participants of the study to ensure its validity and reliability. To this end, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's Alpha test were run. The results of EFA are shown in the next section. Cronbach's Alpha reliability was calculated and the value was .75.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

To collect the data, first, the semi-structured interview was implemented to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers of reflective skills of Iranian EFL teachers. Then, following Ary et al. (2019), open, axial, and selective coding procedures were run to analyze the interview data and develop the model. Open coding was run on the interview data to extract the codes or the recurrent words and phrases in the data. Next, axial coding was run wherein similar codes were categorized as main themes. The outcome of axial coding was identification of 12 themes including behaving in a socially acceptable manner, being able to motivate students, managing classroom, attending to students' diversity of needs, planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies,

thinking skillfully, thinking critically, thinking creatively, being verbally active, giving and receiving feedback from students, evaluating one's own teaching, and making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching. These themes are well-elaborated and supported by some quotes from the participants in the results. In the selective coding, the themes were categorized under three main categories including social skills, pedagogical skills and transformative skills, based on teaching area they covered. Finally, a model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers was emerged that consisted of 3 main components including social skills, pedagogical skills, and transformative skills, each consisting of some sub-components (See Figure 1).

Thereafter, to validate the developed model, a closed-ended questionnaire (described above) was designed and piloted, based on the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers. Next, the piloted questionnaire was distributed among 300 (150 males and 150 females) EFL teachers in WhatsApp or Telegram to be completed and later analyzed by suitable data analysis tests.

To analyze the data, in the piloting phase, the construct validity of the closed-ended researcher-made questionnaire was checked through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) available in SPSS 24. Before running EFA, Bartlett Sphericity test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test were performed to examine the sphericity assumption and Adequacy of content sampling. Then, the optimal number of factors was determined using parallel analysis. Next, EFA was run using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation with the determined factors. The second part of the piloting phase involved running Cronbach's Alpha to check the reliability of the closed-ended researcher-made questionnaire, which was calculated .75, as mentioned before.

Following that, in the main phase of the study, the higher order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) available in the AMOS24 package was run on the questionnaire data to check the construct validity of the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers, using Maximum likelihood estimation method and examining the goodness of fit of the model. Finally, the reliability of the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It is worth mentioning that the validity and reliability of the questionnaire shows the validity and reliability of the proposed model.

4. Results

To answer the research question, first, the following themes were extracted from thematic analysis of the interview data:

1. Behaving in a socially acceptable manner

This theme shows that as perceived by EFL teachers, reflective teachers should have a socially acceptable behavior.

As said by teacher 4:

Teachers should behave well socially. They should have a good behavior in social aspects. Their behavior should be prestigious.

Teacher 18 also stated that:

Teachers should know that their behavior reflects their character and personality. Their behavior is judged by students. This is very important for teachers to have a good behavior.

Teacher 15 also noted that:

Teachers should be careful about their behavior. Behavior of teachers is as important as their knowledge. Even it is more important than knowledge in some cases. Good social behavior is a big advantage for teachers."

According to teacher 26:

Teachers should act in a socially good and standard way. Many students are dissatisfied with teachers' behavior. However, behavior is not just a uni-dimensional concept. It consists of diverse dimensions which should be taken into account by the teachers.

2. Being able to motivate students

As hidden in this theme, reflective teaching is equal, among other things, with the capability to motivate students.

Teacher 17 expressed that:

Teachers should be able to encourage students' motivation. If they increase

motivation of students, they will be helped in learning process. Teachers should pay heed to motivating students.

Teacher 35 explained that:

Motivation is of a key role in language learning. Therefore, the teachers should motivate students in different ways.

Teacher 43 stressed that:

Teachers should use different motivational techniques. This leads to students' learning and success. When students learn better, teachers feel more satisfied in their work.

3. Managing classroom

This theme indicates that teachers should be skillful in classroom management.

According to teacher 29:

Unfortunately, crowded classes are common in Iran. In such situations, classroom management is a big art for teachers. Teachers should make their best to generate balance in the classroom so that the time of classroom is alocated to useful things.

Teacher 10 acknowledged that:

Classroom management is a concern for both novice and experienced teachers. Even teaching experience cannot reduce the difficulties of classroom management for teachers. There exist different models of classroom management which can make teaching easier for teachers.

Teacher 42 mentioned that:

Students learn more effectively in a setting where everything is righty placed and paced. This is technically called classroom management. Over attention to something and ignoring other things do not make teachers successful.

Teacher 35 admitted that:

Teachers should know how to manage the classroom effectively. It is a really embarrassing task for new teachers. If classroom is well managed, improved teacher

reflection can be expected.

4. Attending to students' diversity of needs

As understood from this theme, reflective teachers can recognize needs of students.

Teacher 50 said that:

Teacher reflectivity cannot be separated from fulfillment of students' needs. Students have a variety of needs in English learning, which should be met by education. The first step in need fulfillment is need recognition. This is teachers' duty to recognize needs of students to fulfill them."

Teacher 27 emphasized that:

Reflective teaching is not achieved just by going to the class and presenting some instructions to the students. But it involves other issues which are important in the process and outcomes of teaching. Students have their own needs and these needs have prompted them to be present in English classes. Teachers should be aware of these needs and attempt to meet them.

As stated by teacher 39:

Teachers' success is tied to meeting students' needs. Even if they teach skillfully with the best teaching methods, if they are indifferent to students' needs, they do not gain remarkable results. Students feel disappointed if their needs are not dealt with by the teacher.

Teacher 40 mentioned:

Goal setting is a direct result of having needs. Students, like any group in the society, have their own needs which are worth probing by their teachers. This gives meaning to learning. Otherwise, they will be uninterested in language learning.

5. Planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies

As felt by this theme, reflective teachers should benefit from appropriate methods of teaching and evaluation.

Teacher 44 believed that:

Whether we like it or not, teaching and evaluation methods are the main parts of English teaching job. In fact, teachers are known for their teaching/evaluation methods. After some years of teaching, some teaching and evaluation methods are fixed in teachers. If teachers use appropriate methods of teaching and evaluation, they can be known as effective teachers.

Teacher 36 noted that:

Reflective teaching, whatever definition we assign to it, takes place in companionship with teaching strategies and methods. Students regard certain methods as better than others. They do not think about robustness of theories behind teaching methods used by their teachers. They judge methods based on their own understanding.

In the perceptions of teacher 20:

Teaching and evaluating students are the key issues in teaching job. But we know that not all methods of teaching and assessment are equally influential. Teaching is not a one-size-fits-all job wherein a specific method works for all settings and all students. Each context calls for a specific method. What makes teaching successful is the utilization of appropriate teaching methods. Moreover, teachers should use appropriate methods to evaluate students' knowledge.

6. Thinking skillfully

Thinking skillfully, as a theme extracted from the data, is reflective of the issue that teachers are reflective when they can think skillfully in different situations.

Teacher 31 stated that:

A teacher should think about problems and challenges they face in teaching. This requires a high intelligence. Technical thinking is not possible without intelligence. Intelligence increases the level of teaching success.

Teacher 29 said that:

English teachers should use their mentality dexterously in different aspects of teaching. As a demanding work, teaching English needs thinking skill. There are

various unexpected things in teaching dealing with which is not practical without high thinking ability.

Teacher 6 noted that:

We are busy with a job whose main part is mental. Accordingly, we should think competently. There are various unexpected things in teaching dealing with which is not practical without proper thinking ability.

7. Thinking critically

According to this theme, teachers should be capable of thinking critically.

According to teacher 19:

Critical thinking is a feature of good teachers. Teachers, I think, should not follow and accept everything. They should criticize problematic activities and try to change them. Criticality is an art for teachers.

From the view of teacher 46:

Students should be educated in a way that can express their own ideas in the society. To do so, their teachers should teach them critical thinking. To teach critical thinking, teachers themselves should think critically.

Teacher 30 admitted that:

If teachers can question the existing issues, they will be more successful. It is true that governments do not like questioning, but we should accept the power of it. It is criticizing that makes you powerful. If teachers do not criticize, they are nothing but confirming with no power.

8. Thinking creatively

The perception expressed by this theme is that teachers should think in creative ways.

Teacher 14 said that:

It is necessary for teachers to see things creatively. This eventually opens new ways for them in teaching, solving the problems, and so on. In some cases, thinking like

others do not work. It is a good strategy to think differently.

As perceived by Teacher 47:

You know these days, students have considerable differences with students in the past. They are more intelligent. They like novelty. In such situations, teachers are required to think in novel ways.

Teacher 33 illustrated that:

Teachers should try new ways of thinking to see whether they are effective or not. Old thinking may not be effective in all scenarios teachers are faced. Teachers should resort to new thinking ways to find the best ways to teach.

9. Being verbally active

It is perceived from this theme that teachers should have a high verbal skill.

According to teacher 21:

Some jobs are very much reliant to verbal abilities. Teaching is among them. English teachers should speak well. They should be verbally competent to teach the materials clearly and fluently.

As stated by teacher 28:

Verbal skill plays a paramount role in teaching. I myself, when a student, had a teacher who was not that much knowledgeable. But he talked very well. I always taught that he was very knowledgeable. I want to highlight how much verbal skill is important for a teacher.

As put by teacher 17:

A teacher should be verbally skillful. All teaching activities are done through speaking. It is why speaking is significant in the success of teaching. Clarifying the issues for students is best done verbally. Fortunately, verbal skills are learnable and this is promising for teachers with low verbal abilities.

As teacher 44 perceived:

Although teaching goes beyond talking in class, we cannot ignore the dominance of

this ability. No matter what teaching methods are used by a teacher, he or she should teach by talking. Different types of intelligences are important in teaching. Verbal intelligence is one of these intelligence types with high importance in teaching.

10. Giving and receiving feedback from students

This theme shows that teachers should give feedback to students and receive feedback from them.

According to teacher 50:

Feedback is a concept all of us know and use in teaching. Teachers should make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses by corrective feedback. Without feedback, students are confused about their performance.

As stated by teacher 48:

An indispensable feature of reflective teachers is giving corrective feedback to students to inform them of their errors. Corrective feedback is a useful way to prevent students from making the same error again. They learn the erroneous things and do not use them again. Besides, teachers should also seek feedback from students about their teaching quality. Students see problems which teachers may not.

As perceived by teacher 37:

Teachers should seek to upgrade their teaching reflectivity by asking the students to give them feedback. Some believe that it is a negative point to tell the students to comment on our teaching. But it is wrong. Students' feedback encourages us to progress in our job.

As teacher 9 perceived:

Giving feedback appropriately is a gain-gain game for both teachers and students. It improves learner's performance and at the same time, makes teacher vigilant to learner's level of performance. Teachers can use this strategy in an attempt to increase their teaching reflectivity.

11. Evaluating one's own teaching

This theme states that teachers should self-evaluate their performance.

According to teacher 40:

Teachers ought to evaluate their teaching problems and shortcomings. Inattention to one's shortcomings reduces the teaching quality in long run. Surveying the students is one way to do this. There are other ways to do this, including peer evaluation.

As stated by teacher 38:

Reflecting about one's teaching is a must for teachers. Teachers who regard themselves as free and independent from evaluation do not experience improvements in their working life. Evaluation of oneself is a way to guarantee improvement in the profession.

As perceived by teacher 46:

Regular self-assessment through various techniques including asking from colleagues, students, and even parents of students, can enlighten teachers about their small or big faults. It also reveals teacher achievements. Anyway, teachers who are reflective try to assess their performance.

12. Making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching

According to this theme, teachers should modify their teaching appropriately.

According to teacher 13:

A disadvantage of many teachers is that they are fixed in their teaching. For instance, they follow the same teaching method for years. This makes them look boring. Change should not be ignored. Successful teachers are those who seek revision in different dimensions of their teaching.

As stated by teacher 30:

If teachers do not make changes in their class management, teaching methods, dressing style, and other things, their class is turned into dark rooms devoid of motivation. Students do not like boring classes.

As perceived by teacher 43:

A teacher should be able to modify his usual way of doing things. Being accustomed

to routine procedures is a debilitating factor in teaching job. Instead of sticking to routine things, teachers are better to utilize new methods in teaching. When teachers attempt to remain up to date, naturally, their reflection in teaching is enhanced.

As teacher 49 suggested:

We Iranian people are resistant to change. We should forget this trait in whatever possible way. Students compare us with other teachers, discuss about us with their mates in other places, and expect us to be like new generation of teachers. We should modify our teaching; otherwise, we are nothing but old teachers who are stuck in 50 years ago.

Then, through merging the above themes emerged from the interviews, the following model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers was formed (Figure 1). As it is depicted in the Figure 1, the emerged model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers consists of three main components as follows: Social skills, pedagogical skills, and transformative skills. Social skills consist of three sub-components, pedagogical skills consist of five sub-components, and transformative skills are composed of four sub-components. This model emerged directly from the participants' perceptions, aligning with the grounded theory approach.
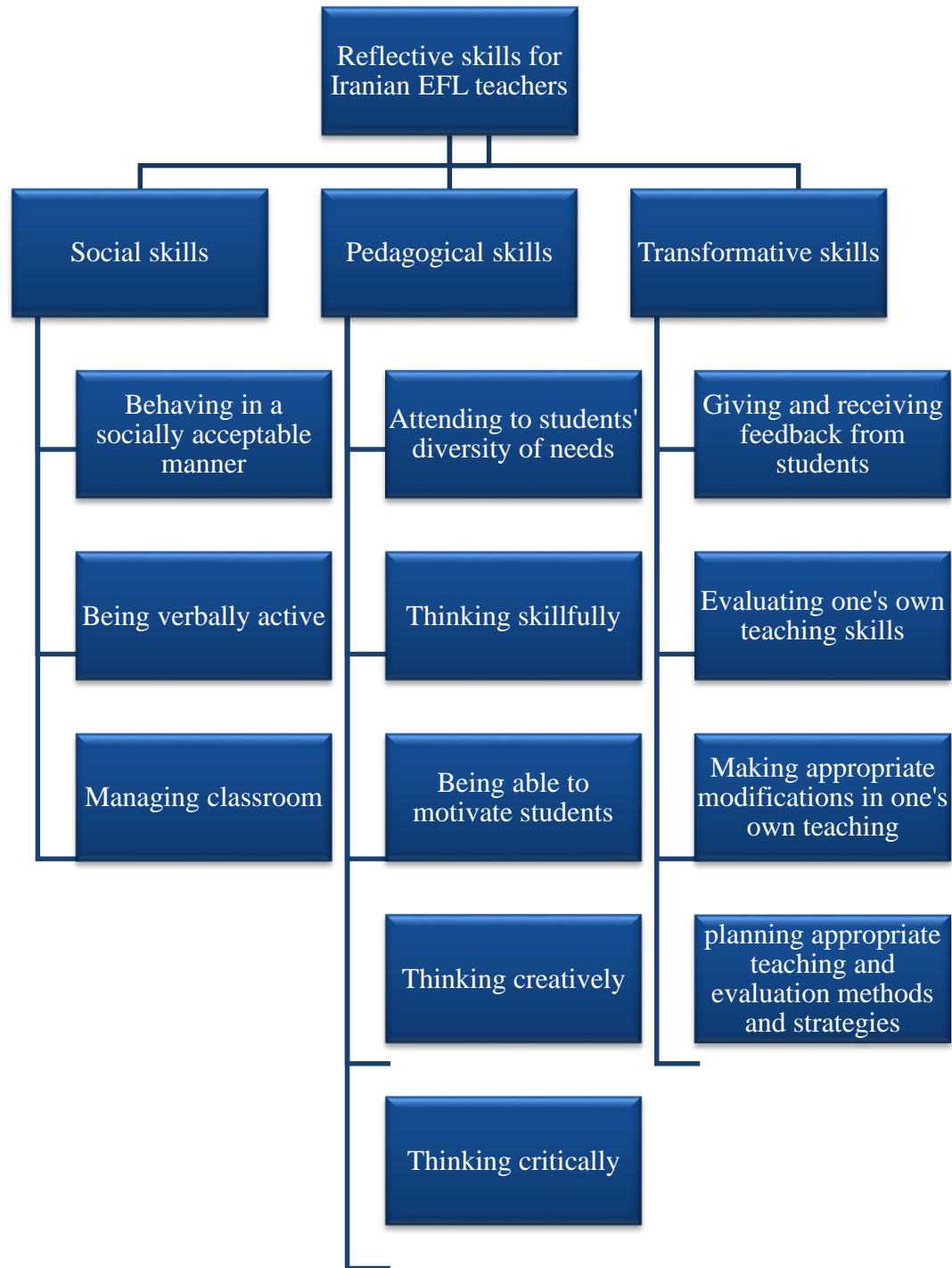
Figure 1.

The *Model of Reflective Skills for Iranian EFL Teachers*

     To calculate the reliability of the emerged model, the reliability of the questionnaire had to be checked as stated before. To this end, Cronbach's alpha test was run whose results are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the Questionnaire

Questionnaire of Reflective Skills for Iranian EFL Teachers	Number of items	Alpha coefficients'
Behaving in a socially acceptable manner	5	0.73
Being able to motivate students	5	0.71
Managing classroom	5	0.70
Attending to students' diversity of needs	5	0.69
Planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies	5	0.68
Thinking skillfully	5	0.59
Thinking critically	5	0.65
Thinking creatively	5	0.75
Being verbally active	5	0.72
Giving and receiving feedback from students	5	0.61
Evaluating one's own teaching	5	0.69
Making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching	5	0.74
Total scale	60	0.81

As shown in the Table 1, the reliability index of the questionnaire (and consequently the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers) is .81. Next, to check the validity of the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers, the collected data through the questionnaire was exposed to EFA using SPSS. In so doing, to conduct a preliminary study on the factor structure of the questionnaire, EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation was used. In addition, parallel analysis script was used to determine the optimal number of factors. Bartlett test was used to evaluate the sphericity assumption and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to evaluate the Adequacy of content sampling. In Table 2, the results of Bartlett and KMO tests are presented.

Table 2.

The Results of Bartlett and KMO

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.67
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5842.39
	df	1968
	Sig.	0.0001

As it can be seen in Table 2, the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at the 0.0001 level. The value of KMO is 0.67. The above-mentioned results are indicators of the suitability of the data that has been collected to validate the instrument (KMO is greater than 0.60, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant). In the second step,

the optimal number of factors was determined using parallel analysis. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

The Results of Parallel Analysis

Component number	E.O	M.E.R	Decision
1	<u>7.96</u>	7.18	Accept
2	<u>5.71</u>	5.12	Accept
3	<u>4.38</u>	4.01	Accept
4	<u>3.70</u>	3.64	Accept
5	<u>3.55</u>	3.32	Accept
6	3.20	2.89	Accept
7	2.95	2.84	Accept
8	2.76	2.51	Accept
9	2.63	2.37	Accept
10	2.44	2.19	Accept
11	1.75	1.37	Accept
12	1.40	1.13	Accept

E.O = the eigenvalues of original data. M.E.R = the mean eigenvalues of random data

As shown in the Table 3, all 12 sub-components have eigenvalues exceeding the mean eigenvalues derived from random data, indicating that the optimal number of factors is 12. Consequently, a 12-factor solution was applied using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation. The results of the exploratory factor analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

The Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Sub-components, and Eigenvalues of related items											
1		2		3		4		5		6	
q1	0.46	q6	0.65	q11	6	q16	0.71	q21	0.37	q26	0.27
q2	0.39	q7	0.54	q12	0.48	q17	0.24	q22	0.66	q27	0.50
q3	0.52	q8	0.37	q13	0.40	q18	0.39	q23	0.53	q28	0.28
q4	0.61	q9	0.44	q14	0.51	q19	0.50	q24	0.22	q29	0.63
q5	0.38	q10	0.60	q15	0.57	q20	0.47	q25	0.25	q30	0.60
Sub-components, and Eigenvalues of related items											
7		8		9		10		11		12	
q31	0.47	q36	0.39	q41	0.30	q46	0.50	q51	0.45	q56	0.33
q32	0.38	q37	0.44	q42	0.66	q47	0.29	q52	0.39	q57	0.48
q33	0.21	q38	0.50	q43	0.49	q48	0.43	q53	0.48	q58	0.50
q34	0.55	q39	0.63	q44	0.46	q49	0.64	q54	0.25	q59	0.39
q35	0.48	q40	0.54	q45	0.38	q50	0.47	q55	0.63	q60	0.65

1: Behaving in a socially acceptable manner, 2: Being able to motivate students, 3: Managing classroom, 4: Attending to students' diversity of needs, 5: Planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies, 6: Thinking skillfully, 7: Thinking critically, 8: Thinking creatively, 9: Being verbally active, 10: Giving and receiving feedback from students, 11: Evaluating one's own teaching, & 12: Making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

As it can be seen in the Table 4, 52 items (all items excluding items 17, 24, 25, 26, 28, 33, 47 and 54) have suitable a factor loading on their corresponding factor. These 12 factors explained 54 % of total variance. This shows that the questionnaire (and consequently the developed model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers) enjoys construct validity.

Then, the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaire were exposed to CFA using AMOS 24 statistical package. To this end, the obtained 12 factor solution was examined by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) available in the AMOS24 package. The result of confirmatory factor analysis using Maximum likelihood estimation method is presented in Figure 2.
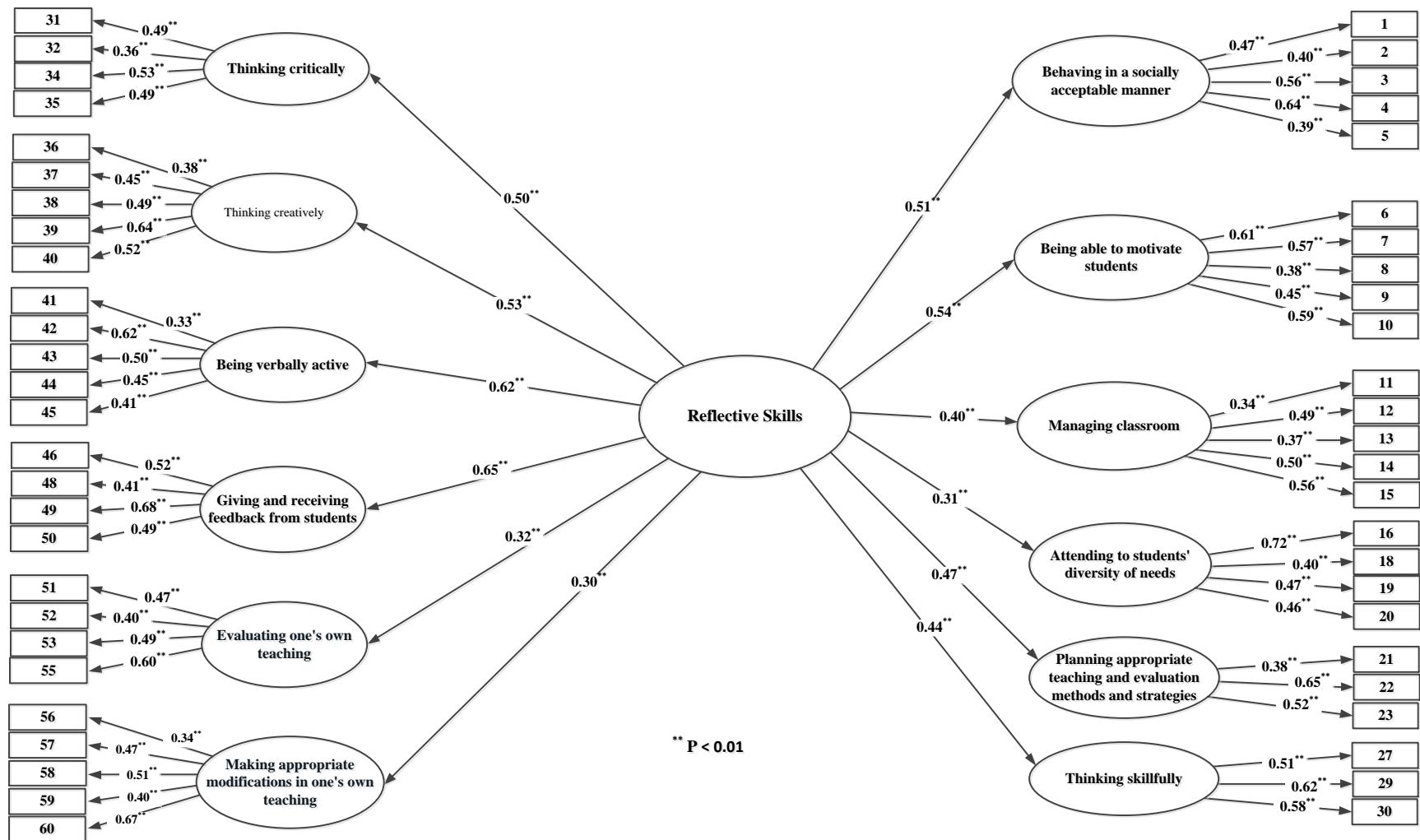
Figure 2.

The Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

As it can be seen in the Figure 2, item number 17 from factor 4, items number 24 and 25 from factor 5, items number 26 and 28 from factor 6, item number 33 from factor 7, item number 47 from factor 10 and item number 54 from factor 11(in sum 8 items) were excluded from questionnaire due to factor loading lower than 0.30. The remaining items exhibit acceptable factor loadings, all significant at the 0.01 level. The model's goodness of fit was assessed, and the most common fit indices are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5.

Fit Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	X^2/df	TLI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Fit indices	2.41	0.92	0.95	0.94	0.90	0.04	0.67
Acceptable Fit indices	< 3	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.08	> 0.05

As it can be seen in the Table 5, the questionnaire (and consequently the developed model of the reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers) has an acceptable fit index.

5. Discussion

To interpret the findings, some sub-components of this model (i.e., evaluation of one's own teaching, making modifications in one's own teaching, and thinking skill) have equivalents in Shulman's (1987) model of pedagogical reasoning (i.e., reflection, transformation, and evaluation). Shulman's (1987) model which is limited to pedagogical reasoning, represents how teachers can develop their practical knowledge through reflection on what is to be taught, transforming it and evaluating their transformation. In addition, the sub-components of managing classroom and planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies could be placed within the component of instruction in Shulman's (1987) model since instruction has been described as the activities associated with doing teaching and classroom management.

Apparently, regardless of context of teaching, reflective teachers move through similar kinds of skills. These skills can somehow be taken as parallel to the phases which are passed by teachers to reach effective teaching. They use their knowledge types to plan and prepare for practice (pre-active phase). They use their knowledge and skills to manage classroom procedures and instruction (interactive phase). They reflect on their

practice and make evaluations based on receiving feedback from different sources to fulfill their professional responsibility that would lead to effective reflective teaching (post-active phase) (Akbari et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the sub-components of motivation and providing feedback are supported in a study conducted in the context of Iran by Mehrpour and Moghaddam (2018) who proposed classroom management, self-assessment, and motivation as among the main categories of teaching effectiveness. This is also in line with Danielson's (2013) framework of teaching where she addressed management components and elements; namely, 'management of instructional groups', 'management of materials and supplies', management of student behavior, and management of transitions as the building blocks of success in teaching. Moreover, the researcher found empirical support for the sub-component of behaving in a socially acceptable manner in the ideas of Pihlström and Sutinen (2012) and Tsui (2003) who agreed on teachers' need to be socially accepted as the resource of knowledge.

All in all, the findings of this study are consistent with the studies by Demirkasimoglu (2010), Khanzadeh Darabi and Memari Hanjani (2024), Mork et al. (2021),Toledo et al. (2017), and Trevisan et al. (2021) which referred to pedagogical knowledge components as influential factors in teaching profession. Also, congruent with this study, Li (2019), Lloyd (2019), Palmer et al. (2005), Wermke et al. (2018), and Yazdanpanah and Sahragard (2017) found creative thinking and classroom management skill as important components of teaching career. Moreover, similar to the present study, in the studies by Fuller (2016), Ibad (2018) and Kell (2019), personality features of EFL teachers including thinking abilities, and motivational skills have been identified as effective on their professional practice.

Accordingly, it can be interpreted that the proposed model in the present study significantly accounts for reflective skills of Iranian teachers. Given that most of the components and sub-components of the developed model are supported empirically by the previous studies as enumerated above (Fuller, 2016; Ibad, 2018; Kell, 2019; Li, 2019; Lloyd, 2019; Mehrpour & Moghaddam, 2018; Palmer et al., 2005; Shulman,1987; Wermke et al., 2018; Yazdanpanah & Sahragard), one may take the model components

and sub-components as essential characteristics of reflective teachers.

In sum, the accomplished results revealed multidimensionality of reflective teaching. More importantly, the findings corroborated that reflective teaching is a complex notion encompassing several factors. It should be noted that although the developed model aligned with Shulman's (1987) model of teacher pedagogical reasoning in many aspects, some sub-components of the model were specific to this study. This is not a negative point and can add to the enrichment of the study. More specifically, the new sub-components add to the breadth and scope of the studies touching reflectivity in EFL teaching and unpacking unexplored features of reflective teaching. It is possible that new sub-components are rooted in the difference in the context of participants' practice as context plays an important role in teachers' reflective teaching.

6. Conclusion

It is concluded that reflective practices can be represented in social, pedagogic and transformative teaching areas. Based on the findings of this study, it can be argued that EFL teachers can experience teaching as a reflective practice. Therefore, resorting to the practices related to these three areas helps them become reflective teachers.

Also, it can be concluded that since the emerged model of reflective skills for Iranian EFL teachers was approved by Iranian EFL teachers (As revealed by the results of EFA and CFA), it can be put into application in related fields including teacher education and preparation programs. In this way, student teachers and in-service teachers will be (more) equipped with the necessary (but probably not sufficient) skills for reflective EFL teaching. This makes them empowered to teach more reflectively.

The outcomes of the present study can enlighten the practice and mindset of various stakeholders in the realm of language education, including policymakers, teacher educators, authorities in charge of recruiting teachers, to take appropriate measures to increase pre and in-service EFL teachers' reflectivity and, as a result, encourage the implementation of the emerged model of reflective skills of Iranian effective teachers in the Iranian EFL contexts. Firstly, given that teaching quality is a fundamental component

of an efficient education system, language policymakers can benefit from the findings of this study. They can promote the enhancement of EFL teachers' reflective practices by providing continuous training to teachers on reflective teaching.

Additionally, those responsible for designing curricula and content for EFL teacher preparation programs may recognize the added importance of incorporating reflectivity-oriented training courses. It is essential for them to incorporate more reflection-based elements into teacher education materials so that teachers recognize the importance of reflective teaching more than before.

Furthermore, the findings of the present study could guide teacher recruitment committees by highlighting the importance of reflective skills as a key criterion for selecting reflective EFL teachers. Incorporating these skills into the recruitment process can help ensure that candidates possess the qualities necessary for reflective teaching and continuous professional growth. In the same vein, the institute managers should choose their teachers wisely, selecting those who obtain a sufficient level of reflectivity. Also, the language institute managers, through holding reflective teaching workshops, courses, and training sessions, would increase their teachers' reflectivity-oriented concepts, in turn enhancing teachers' more just performances in ELT classes.

The findings also show the necessity for education reforms in the Iranian ELT system, advocating for a shift towards a more reflection-based approach rather than a system-directed, top-down model. This shift would encourage teachers to assume a more reflective role in managing various aspects of their professional practice.

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Appendix
Researcher-Made Questionnaire

Dear respondent! Please fill the next questionnaire patiently. Show the amount of your agreement with each statement ticking a cell from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4), agree, to (5) strongly agree.

Number	Sub-scales	Items	1 strongly disagree	2 disagree	3 neutral	4 agree	5 strongly agree
1	behaving in a socially acceptable manner	Teachers should behave well socially					
2		Teachers should have a good behavior in social aspects					
3		Teachers' behavior should be prestigious					
4		Teachers should know that their behavior reflects their character and personality					
5		Teachers should act in a socially good and standard way					
6	being able to motivate students	Teachers should be able to encourage students' motivation					
7		Teachers should motivate students in different ways					
8		Teachers should use different motivational techniques					
9		Teachers are needed to make students motivated					
10		If teachers can achieve the goal of learner motivation, students can learn English more easily					
11	managing classroom	Classroom management is a big art for teachers					
12		Classroom management is a concern for both novice and experienced teachers					
13		There exist different models of classroom management which can make teaching easier for teachers					
14		Teachers should know how to manage the classroom effectively					
15		If classroom is well managed, higher teacher effectiveness can be expected					
16	attending to students' diversity of needs	Teacher effectiveness cannot be separated from fulfillment of students' needs					
17		This is teachers' duty to recognize needs of students to fulfill them					
18		Students have their own needs and these needs have provoked them to be present in English classes. Teachers should be aware of these needs and attempt to meet them					
19		Teachers' success is tied to students' needs					
20		Students, like any group in the society, have their own needs which are worth probing by teachers					
21	planning appropriate teaching and evaluation methods and strategies	Teaching or evaluation methods are the main parts of English teaching job					
22		Effective teaching, whatever definition we assign to it, takes place in companionship with teaching strategies and methods					
23		Teaching and evaluating students are the part and parcel of teaching job					
24		What makes teaching success is the utilization of appropriate teaching methods					

25		Teachers should use appropriate methods to evaluate students' knowledge					
26	thinking skillfully	Thinking appropriately in different conditions requires a high level of aptitude in teachers					
27		Teaching and thinking are intermingled					
28		A teacher should think about problems and challenges to which they face in teaching					
29		English teachers should use their mentality dexterously in different aspects of teaching					
30		There are various unexpected things in teaching dealing with which is not practical without high thinking ability					
31	thinking critically	Critical thinking is a feature of good teachers					
32		Teachers should criticize problematic affairs and try to change them.					
33		Criticality is an art for teachers					
34		To teach critical thinking, teachers themselves should think critically					
35		If teachers can question the existing matters, they will be more successful					
36	thinking creatively	It is necessary for teachers to see things creatively					
37		Teachers are required to think in novel ways					
38		Teachers should try new ways of thinking to see whether they are effective or not					
39		Old thinking may not be effective in all scenarios with which teachers are confronted					
40		Teachers should resort to new thinking ways to find the best ways to teach					
41	being verbally active	Some jobs are closely interrelated to verbal abilities. Teaching is among these jobs					
42		English teachers should speak well					
43		Verbal skill plays a paramount role in teaching					
44		A teacher should be verbally proficient. All teaching activities are done through speaking					
45		Verbal intelligence is one of these intelligence types with high importance in teaching					
46	giving and receiving feedback from students	Feedback is a concept all of us know and use in teaching. Teachers are to make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses by corrective feedback					
47		An indispensable feature of effective teachers is giving corrective feedback to students to inform them of their errors					
48		Corrective feedback is an effective way to prevent students from commitment of the same error					
49		Teachers should seek to upgrade their teaching effectiveness by asking the students to give them feedback					
50		Giving feedback appropriately is a gain-gain game for both teachers and students. It improves learner's performance and at the same time, makes teacher vigilant to learner's level of performance					
51	evaluating one's own teaching	Teachers ought to evaluate their teaching problems and shortcomings					
52		Reflecting about one's teaching is a must for teachers					

53		Regular self-assessment through various techniques including asking from colleagues, students, and even parents of students, can enlighten teachers about their small or big faults					
54		teachers who are effective try to assess their performance					
55		Evaluation of oneself is a way to guarantee improvement in teaching work					
56	making appropriate modifications in one's own teaching	Successful teachers are those who seek diversity in different dimensions of teaching					
57		If teachers do not make changes in their class management, teaching methods, dressing style, and other things, their class is turned into dark rooms devoid of motivation					
58		A teacher should be able to modify his usual way of doing things. Being accustomed to routine procedures is a debilitating factor in teaching job					
59		Teachers should modify their teaching otherwise they are nothing but old teachers who have remained in 50 years ago					
60		When teachers attempt to remain up to date, naturally, their effectiveness in teaching is enhanced					