



Research Article

EFL Teachers' Professional Development Needs: A Comparative Phenomenological Analysis for Face-to-Face and Online Instruction

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Submission History</p> <p>Received: 2023-04-28</p> <p>Accepted: 2023-06-01</p>	<p>Teachers must be prepared to shift from face-to-face to online classes in emergencies like COVID-19. Fortunately, electronic learning made teaching a second or foreign language online possible. Online teaching requires EFL teachers to acquire new knowledge, skills, and competencies. Professional development (PD) is necessary to assist teachers in developing new pedagogies and competencies and coping with recent roles in online learning contexts. In effect, this study aimed to screen EFL teachers' main professional development needs for quality teaching in both face-to-face and online environments. By employing a theoretical sampling technique, the researchers conducted phenomenological research and interviewed 18 experienced EFL teachers who had practiced online teaching during Pandemic. Semi-structured interviews were held, recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were analysed using open, axial, and selective coding. Finally, it was manifested that EFL teachers have six PD needs for face-to-face classes namely pedagogical, language knowledge, classroom management, assessment, educational psychology, and material development needs. Moreover, findings revealed that EFL teachers' PD needs for online teaching could be classified into five main categories including pedagogical, content, designing and technological, communication and social skills, and classroom management needs. It is concluded that EFL teachers might feel uncomfortable teaching online courses because of the many roles and responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to determine EFL teachers' PD needs and competencies so that teacher educators and language institutes can design PD programs for online teachers. Findings have theoretical and practical implications for electronic learning experts, EFL teachers, teacher trainers, and language institutions.</p>
<p>Keywords</p> <p>EFL teachers</p> <p>Online Teaching</p> <p>Professional Development Needs</p>	

Introduction

The advancement in educational technology and the 2019's Pandemic (Coronavirus Disease) have affected all aspects of human existence. Education is one area that has been affected by technological advancement and the Pandemic. According to Barjesteh et al. (2021), COVID-19's attack on the system of education left the learning of many students in limbo, and language institutes, schools and universities had to shift from traditional face-to-face classes to electronic online classes overnight. This new paradigm was not without its challenges. Many teachers and learners were unskilful to use the new platform and could not exploit its full potentials (Safdari, 2022). Besides, many educators engaged in in-service and pre-service teacher training courses have trouble planning for online or blended learning (Hartshorne et al., 2020; Muhayimana, 2020). English language teachers, like other educators, have problems using online learning approaches.

Professional development (PD) is essential in guaranteeing a contribution to students learning and academic achievement (Misra, 2018; Misra & Chauhan, 2020; Mizell, 2010). PD has been defined as the teachers' effort to strengthen their practices and experiences throughout their careers. They assume that teacher professional development refers to a variety of formal and informal experiences of an individual or collective process that should be accomplished by the teachers (Nugraha & Maulida, 2021). Professional development not only refers to formal processes such as a conference, seminar, workshop, course, or college, but it also takes place in informal contexts like peer discussion, group discussion, independent reading, or self-studies (Mizell, 2010).

Tanang and Abu (2014) argue that a fundamental contributor to student learning and academic achievement is the commitment to self-improvement. Policymakers and educators agree that promoting teachers' PD is the key to success in the changing globalized world (Bautista & Oretga-Ruiz, 2015). Similarly, Lisnawati (2019), in his study in Indonesian has stated that the professional development of teachers consists of three requirements: "(1) pedagogical, personal, personal and interpersonal skills, (2)

implementation of an up-to-date curriculum for language teaching and learning, (3) Producing graduates with 21st-century skills" (cited in Nugraha & Maulida, 2021).

In recent decades, teaching excellence and PD to improve student learning and academic outcomes have become essential and relevant for teachers (Powell & Bodur, 2019). Developing teacher quality is needed to improve the quality of education (Borg, 2018). However, issues related to PD have appeared in teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). These issues stem from a lack of knowledge about planning PD, ignorance of the different types and qualities of PD, and ignorance of local EFL teachers' thoughts on PD initiatives (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019). It is now well known that the Covid-19 Pandemic and technological advancements affected education. Teachers then must prepare to postpone face-to-face classes. Fortunately, technological advances have made it possible to teach and learn EFL online and gradually without face-to-face classes (Shin & Kang, 2018). Teachers then need to shift to online learning to engage students in education. This significantly increased teachers' workload due to the need to transfer teaching materials to an online learning environment and use applications (Allen et al., 2020).

Teachers need to upgrade their qualifications and equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve the quality of their teaching performance in the online learning environment (Barjesteh et al., 2021). Therefore, professional development research related to the use of technology in language learning is recommended (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Although there is a great deal of research and good practice on online language learning, there is little guidance on how language teachers can be prepared to teach in an online learning environment and what skills are required to teach in that environment (Compton, 2009). Despite the recent online learning movement and growing interest in PD, there is still a lack of knowledge about how teachers perceive online PD experiences, how they implement what they have learned, and which experiences they prefer. Research addressing the above lack of knowledge is recommended to gain insights and guidance for

the delivery of online PD (Parsons et al., 2019). Therefore, this study aims at exploring EFL teachers' PD needs for online teaching and compare PD needs for face-to-face and online instruction.

Review of the Related Literature

Teachers' PD is mainly known for their typical growth. It usually caters for a long-term goal and helps teachers grow their understanding of teaching and themselves as teachers (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Sadeghi & Richards, 2021). PD consists of many activities designed to improve teachers' competence. Teachers can develop their profession in different forms and activities (Safdari, 2021), starting from simple informal and individual activities like reading articles and books related to their profession to large-scale formal and well-organized activities held by teacher training institutes, universities, and organizations such as Ministry of Higher education and Ministry of Education (Borg, 2018). Recently, online PD has been increasingly flourishing. Thriving educational and information technologies enable different forms of PD activities (Parsons et al., 2019). The technological advancement paved the way for all language teachers worldwide to obtain PD credentials and academic certifications online (Shin & Kang, 2018). Online teacher professional development (OTPD) is prospective for enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, and competencies through flexible, low-cost, and large-scale alternatives on various topics. It refers to teacher professional development in courses, seminars, workshops, discussions, resources, and other forms within an online environment, synchronously, asynchronously, or blended through websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts, social media, and other platforms. However, excellent outcomes are not guaranteed by just having access to OTPD (Powell & Bodur, 2019).

The professional development of teachers has been studied and presented in different ways in the relevant literature (Kelly, 2006; Mann, 2005). However, at the heart of such attempts has always been the understanding that professional development is significantly related to teachers'

learning, learning how to learn, and putting their knowledge into practice to contribute to the growth of their students (Bolam, 2000). Professional teacher learning is a fairly complex process that requires the emotional and cognitive involvement of teachers, both collectively and individually, and their ability and willingness to examine where each individual stands (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Reis-Jorge, 2007; Runhaar, Sanders & Yang, 2010).

In a study conducted in the Iranian context by Ravandpour (2019), the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and their self-efficacy was investigated. She selected 247 EFL teachers teaching at language institutes in different cities. Two instruments were used: a self-efficacy scale and a CPD questionnaire. The results showed that all CPD scales are significant positive predictors of self-efficacy: decision-making, collaborating, updating, and reflecting. Also, it was found that CPD has the lowest positive correlation with student engagement and the highest positive correlation with instructional strategies. Also, it was reported that the correlation between total self-efficacy and CPD is statistically significant.

Atmojo (2021) investigated the EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of online teacher professional development (OTPD) experiences to improve their competencies for teaching online language learning amidst the COVID-19's Pandemic. 42 EFL teachers were selected through convenience sampling. The data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results revealed many essential findings regarding EFL teachers' practices and perceptions of experiencing OTPD during the Pandemic.

Nawab (2020) explored how teachers, school leaders, and education department officials in rural Pakistan perceive PD. Using a survey method and questionnaire tool, data were collected from the participants. Results showed that a large number of the participants associated PD with external learning opportunities. Moreover, there was a lack of common understanding among stakeholders regarding the meaning of PD. They analyzed the data using

factor analysis and reduced the PD needs to four main areas: a) educational psychology and technology, b) teaching, communication skills, and assessment, c) material development, and d) language and metalanguage skills.

Qadhi and Floyd (2021) explored female English language teachers' perceptions and experiences of continuing professional development in Qatar. They interviewed 16 female English language teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in Qatari institutes. Results revealed that the participants had different experiences of CPD based on their professional and personal characteristics. Based on the study's findings, they suggested revising the PD model. Similarly, Nugraha and Maulida (2021) assessed English teachers' PD needs during the Covid 19's Pandemic. They recruited a member of the English Teachers Support Group in Subang, West Java. They used semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire to collect the data. Results revealed that the participants had a positive perspective toward PD. They also suggested that courses or workshops are the most helpful in PD activity.

In another study, Sadeghi and Richards (2021) explored the type of PD activities English teachers in Iran participate in and attempted to understand the motivations behind their participation. They interviewed 24 English teachers at private language institutes and public high schools. They reported that public school teachers did few PD activities, and the types of PD activities private teachers were engaged in varied from watching educational videos and consulting online courses to reading ELT textbooks. The main motivations for participating in PD activities ranged from *no motivation* to promoting the English language to teach at university.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the PD needs of EFL teachers for online and face-to-face instruction. It also aimed at making a comparison between these two types of PD needs. To be more specific, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' professional development needs for face-to-face classes?
2. What are EFL teachers' professional development needs for online classes?

Methodology

Participants

The informants, whose age ranged from 30 to 45, were selected among the English language teachers who have been teaching English at different language institutes both before and during the Pandemic. Their teaching experiences ranged from 5 to 10 years. They were selected through theoretical sampling. As the number of informants depended on the data saturation, approximately 30 EFL teachers were nominated, but only 18 (10 male and eight female ones) were interviewed. The data saturation occurred when the 18th teacher was interviewed. To have a homogenous group of participants, only certified EFL teachers holding Masters of Arts (MA) degrees in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) were invited to participate in the study. Ten participants were interviewed through online applications such as Google Forms and Skype, but eight were interviewed at language institutes in which they worked. In line with the ethical considerations, the researchers advised participants that participation in the study would be voluntary, and they might be invited for follow-up interviews. They were also asked to sign the informed consent letters and were assured that the data would be kept confidential. Furthermore, it was clearly announced that participants could withdraw from the study at any stage and at any time.

Design

Due to the nature of the study, it was necessary to use the research method of phenomenology. Phenomenological studies examine human experiences through the descriptions of the people involved (Cohen et al., 2017), and such experiences are referred to as lived experiences. Phenomenological studies explain the importance that experiences have for each subject. This type of qualitative research is mainly used to study areas with little or no

knowledge. In the present study, TEFL teachers who experienced teaching both online and traditional face-to-face classes were selected. The researcher collected the data through in-depth interviews.

Data Collection Procedure

As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue, "Qualitative study evaluations collect data from in-person interviews, direct observations, and written documents such as private diaries." One data collection tool that allows for a deep understanding of the phenomenon is an interview, including individual online and face-to-face interviews (Tavakoli, 2012). In the same fashion, Cohen et al. (2017) maintain that the interview is the most commonly used data collection method for phenomenological studies. In other words, the most direct and effective research method for phenomenology is through interviews (Cerbone, 2014). Therefore, the data collection procedure of the current study underwent three stages of a) the in-depth interview, including helping the interviewees (i.e., the informants) construct their experiential contexts, b) helping them construct their experiences, and c) encouraging them to reflect on their experiences (Cerbone, 2014). Therefore, the key elements for asking questions in the three stages, based on the related studies, included: a) the PD activities for teaching traditional face-to-face classes with what and how, b) PD activities for teaching in online classes, C) how they do the PD activities for both types of classes, and d) how they choose and design PD activities, which allows teachers to reflect on what they do to develop their profession as teachers. Moreover, the researchers did their best to listen carefully and patiently to the interviewees talking about their experiences. The interviewer also wrote down the PD activities of the participants and then listened carefully to the interviewees' descriptions. The interviewer sometimes provided feedback but did not interrupt the interviewees, which was helpful for interviewees to explain their thoughts in a relaxed and stress-free manner. The voices were recorded and transcribed into text word by word by the researcher. In the end, the texts were sent to the interviewees for probable revision and correction.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data (Cerbone, 2006), four steps were taken into account: 1) listening to interviewees' explanations of experiences and activities of PD to comprehend them completely, 2) converting the interviewees' perceptions into texts, 3) recognizing the meaningful words and phrases related to the PD activities, and 4) and summarizing the descriptions about the most commonly reported PD activities extracted from the interviewees' descriptions. Following the abovementioned steps, two coders induced the thematic codes jointly using repeated reflections and discussions. The two coders were the interviewer and university professor, experts in professional development and phenomenological analysis.

The researchers referred to Guest et al.'s (2012) systematic approaches and methods of applied thematic analysis, including a) the concepts of descriptive analysis, b) codebook development, c) data reduction techniques, and d) cluster analysis. Indeed, thematic analysis is closely relevant to phenomenology because it stresses the participants' feelings, perceptions, and experiences. The thematic analysis was conducted through a coding process in six phases of familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarje, 2013). Then, the researchers examined and re-examined the textual data to generate meaning and further refined the themes. We analyzed and re-analyzed the texts to generate meaning and later refined the themes. Techniques for meaning generation include recognizing the themes and patterns, grouping themes, making comparisons and contrasts, sorting variables, and classifying the details. The coders began reading the transcripts and writing the main themes to begin the thematic analysis and categorize the extracted themes in terms of PD activities for online and traditional classes. Then, we revised the categories/sub-categories of the initial themes via combining, dividing, or refining actions until main themes (emergent codes) describing EFL teachers' PD activities for online and face-to-face traditional classes emerged.

Results

The findings of the study are presented in two main parts. EFL teachers' PD for traditional classes are presented in the first part, and EFL teachers' PD activities for online classes are incorporated in the second part.

EFL Teachers' PD Needs for Face-To-Face Classes

The findings revealed that for face-to-face classes, teachers have six PD needs: 1) Pedagogical needs, 2) language knowledge needs, 3) classroom management needs, 4) assessment needs, 5) educational psychology needs and 6) material development needs. Each theme is explained in detail as follows:

Pedagogical Needs

EFL teachers should understand the fundamentals of teaching and pedagogy. The first main pedagogical needs of the participants have thematically coded second language teaching and learning theories, such as communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, computerized-based language learning, and collaborative learning. As mentioned by 9 EFL teachers, they need to learn more about recent changes in second/foreign language teaching methods. This theme is confirmed by participant 2, who confessed that during in-preservice training courses, they had not learned about task-based teaching, constructivism, Zone of proximal development learning approaches, or teaching to kids. Participant 11 also stated, "I attended some workshops on teaching kids, and I observed other colleagues learn how to teach kids effectively."

The second type of pedagogical PD needs was thematically coded as using appropriate teaching strategies for students with different language needs and proficiency levels, classroom assessment, and learners' engagement techniques. For instance, participant 3 stated that teaching face-to-face classes require suitable teaching strategies developed through workshops, reading books, and watching teaching clips through downloading tutorial clips. This quotation is in line with participant 6, who stated that motivating and engaging students in traditional classes require relevant skills, strategies, and techniques which I developed through attending formal in-

service training workshops presented by teacher educators from famous language institutes in Tehran.

The third type of pedagogical needs was thematically teachers' needs for approaches to teaching English to language learners with different proficiency levels and ages. Participant 1 stated that for teaching face-to-face classes, teachers need to learn strategies and techniques for teaching students with different proficiency levels. Participant 12 also mentioned that face-to-face classes consist of students of different ages; therefore, they need to employ different strategies for teaching young and adult language learners.

The fourth pedagogical need was thematically coded as teachers' knowledge for promoting learner autonomy. Participant 15 stated, "I attended workshops to learn how to promote the EFL learners' autonomy and engagement in classroom discussions."

Language Knowledge Needs

Thematic analysis of the interviews showed that EFL teachers need to update their knowledge of language skills and sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, idioms, and collocations, knowledge of supra-segmental features, and discourse and pragmatics. The findings are supported by quotations from participants 1, 10, and 17. For instance, participant 1 stated that "I listened to audio podcasts and watched videos to improve my listening." Participant 10 also stated, "I usually read recently published books to improve my vocabulary, idioms, and collocational knowledge." Participant 17 also stated that "I attended workshops on writing skills."

Classroom Management Needs

The third type of teachers' PD needs was thematically coded as classroom management needs. Participants stated they need to learn how to manage classroom time, avoid distractors, create team and group learning, and engage inactive and less motivated language learners. For instance, participant 7 stated, "I learned workshops on effective classroom management to develop my skills for managing my classes." Participant 11 also stated, "Some language

learners are not motivated, and they usually interrupt the classes. I have recently read a paper titled *Effective Classroom Management Strategies and watched podcasts and teaching videos.*" In addition, participant 17 declared, "I usually observe experienced teachers' classroom and try to learn some strategies for effective classroom management."

Assessment Needs

Findings also revealed that teachers need to update their knowledge of language assessment and teaching, developing test items, classroom assessment, assessing language skills and subskills, and types of assessment such as dynamic assessment, portfolio assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment. The participants' most frequently reported PD activities were reading books and papers on language testing, attending online and face-to-face workshops on test development, reading sample test items, and surfing the websites for downloading sample test items for language skills and sub-skills. For instance, participant 15 stated:

"There are different ways for developing assessment skills, such as searching for a language test for language skills, sub-skills, and the other language issues such as pragmatics. There are some books on test development and validation, which I recommend my colleagues to read. Sample TOEFL and IELTS books are good sources for adopting and adapting language test items."

Educational Psychology Needs

The next type of EFL teachers' PD was thematically coded as educational psychology. It consists of different sub-themes: teaching motivation strategies, strategies for regulating teachers' and learners' emotions, strategies for decreasing the language learners' classroom anxiety, and strategies for avoiding burnout and improving teaching efficacy. Participants stated that they need to attend workshops on educational psychology, such as classroom anxiety and enhancing the language learners' motivation, teachers' psychological well-being, etc. They also mentioned that they found tutorial podcasts and seminal books and papers very effective for professional development.

Material Development Needs

Findings also revealed that the textbook suggested by language institutes is not enough and suitable for language learners as they are not homogenous. Therefore, as they stated, they need to develop their knowledge of material selection, adaptation, and adoption, syllabus design, evaluating textbooks, developing fewer plans, and engaging the students in material selection which is called a negotiated syllabus. For instance, participant 3 stated, "I found negotiated syllabus very effective and useful, therefore I read 5 papers on negotiated syllabus written by Iranian and non-Iranian scholars." In a similar fashion, participant 3 mentioned that these are books on Material development for EFL learners, which I read them and suggest my colleagues read them.

EFL Teachers' PD Needs for Online Classes

The PD needs for online classes were categorized into five main themes: 1) pedagogical skills, 2) content skills, 3) design and technological skills, 4) communication and social skills, and 5) classroom management skills. Each of these themes consists of some sub-themes, which are presented as follows:

Pedagogical Skills

Effective online EFL teachers should understand the fundamentals of online teaching and pedagogy. They need to demonstrate this knowledge through different strategies and skills. The first main pedagogical needs of the participants were thematically coded learning theories of online teachings, such as learning styles, learner-centered approaches, and collaborative learning. As mentioned by 10 EFL teachers, electronic learning is based on a set of theoretical theories and assumptions. They need to learn learning styles that suit different types of online, offline, and blended e-learning approaches. The following quotations exemplify the themes:

"In electronic classes, I could not see the students listen to their comments and suggestions, therefore felt obliged to develop my knowledge of the learner-centered approaches to language learning". Participant 11 also stated that collaborative learning through social networking

is an alternative to a face-to-face group and team collaboration. She further added, "I attended some workshops and watched some videos to learn how to foster collaborative learning."

The second type of pedagogical PD needs was thematically coded as designing and using suitable teaching strategies, online classroom assessment, and learners' engagement techniques. For instance, participant 9 stated that teaching online classes requires appropriate teaching strategies, which they attempted to develop through attending online workshops, learning papers and books, and watching teaching clips on YouTube and other websites. This quotation was confirmed by teacher eight who stated that engaging the language learners in online classes requires suitable skills and techniques, which he had developed through self-studies and attending workshops and watching instructional videos as he declared.

The third extracted finding was thematically coded as teachers' showing interest and enthusiasm and motivating the language learners. Participant 1 stated that for online classes, teachers need to have high interest and enthusiasm to attract the students and avoid language institute quitting. Participant 3 also mentioned, "I needed to develop specific skills to motivate language learners to attend online classes. I did my best to attend workshops and read some books and papers to learn how to motivate language learners in online classes."

The fourth finding was coded as teachers' professional development activities for fostering language learners' interaction and collaboration in online classes. Participant 14 stated that learners' collaboration could be an alternative to group and team discussions at language institutes. Therefore, increasing learners' interaction and collaboration in online classes need specific skills which teachers need to develop through in-service training courses or self-studies.

Content Skills

As mentioned by the participants, online teachers need to develop their professions through learning four skills, each stated as follows. Teachers need to develop skills for stating learning objectives based on the language

learners' characteristics and proficiency levels (n=9). They also need to develop an outline that specifies the components and elements of the course (n=8) and develop or adapt appropriate and various resources which accommodate language learners with different learning preferences and styles. The following quotations illustrate the themes:

Participant 7 stated, "In order to develop and adopt materials and resources for online learning, I attended two workshops and watched videos on different websites." This also confirms the statements expressed by participant 18 who clarified that they consulted with some colleagues who had experienced teaching English language skills to EFL learners using online learning platforms such as LMS (i.e., Learning Management System).

Design and Technological Skills

The third main professional development activities were thematically coded as design skills. As it is a demanding task to design and develop online courses, language institutes must have an instructional designer and technologist, media and graphic designers, and a production team (Abdous, 2011). These individuals work collaboratively to produce high-quality online courses (Haughton et al., 2014). However, online teachers need their profession to understand and apply instructional design models, and theories, presenting the syllabus in different formats such as PowerPoints, etc.

In addition, findings revealed that online teachers have to learn technological literacy skills to assess different technological resources and tools, such as email, LMSs, Internet browsers, video and chat applications, and productivity software and applications. The participants also need to be equipped with the latest renovations and updates of educational software and technology.

Communication and Social Skills

Findings revealed that active communication skills are essential to engage online learners. Participants stated that online teaching teachers need to know how to use different communication instruments (e.g., video chat,

email, text messages, etc.) Participants also stated that online teachers must communicate efficiently and promote learner interactions. For instance, participant 9 argued that he had tried to learn how to facilitate and maintain interactive discussions and information exchanges among the learners and their parents, request information and ask questions, and create and develop respectful relationships.

Classroom Management Skills

Another EFL teachers' PD needs for online classes was thematically coded as classroom management skills. Participants stated they need to learn how to manage classroom time, avoid distractors, create team and group learning, and engage inactive and less motivated language learners. For instance, participant 7 stated, "I learned workshops on effective classroom management to develop my skills for managing my classes." In the same fashion, participant 11 stated, "Some language learners are not motivated, and they usually interrupt the classes. I always pursue books and papers related to classroom management strategies and watch teaching videos." Furthermore, participant 17 stated, "I observed some experienced teachers' classroom and learned some strategies for effective classroom management."

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the professional development needs of EFL teachers for teaching online and face-to-face classes. Findings revealed that teachers have pedagogical needs, content needs, design and technical skills, communication and social skills, and classroom management skills for online classes. A number of the related studies also reported pedagogical needs (e.g., Abdous, 2011; Albrahim, 2020; Alman & Tömer, 2012; Bailie, 2011; Kasprabowo et al., 2018; Munoz Carril et al., 2013; Nugraha & Maulida, 2021). Therefore, in line with the findings of this study and the related studies, it can be inferred that these tasks, skills, and competencies are useful in creating and designing PD opportunities for online teachers. PD needs assessment analysis scales might be developed based on the explored qualities to

identify the PD goals and procedures (Albrahim, 2020; Baran & Correia, 2014). Online teachers can also employ the developed scales to self-evaluate their abilities and competencies and then assess their learning and training needs as self-regulated, and self-determined learners. Finally, competencies could be employed as a protocol to guarantee online teachers' qualification and readiness to teach in online learning.

PD activities provide EFL teachers with a significant opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills, remain up to date on innovations, and collaborate with colleagues from other countries. Subject-specific or pedagogical-specific online PD communities can serve as distinct learning environments. According to Utami and Prestridge (2018), web browsing also provides advantages regarding what is globally available. Teachers can learn and grow professionally in a variety of online spaces and social media sites around the world. By participating in online PD communities and social media sites, teachers must be aware of these opportunities and take advantage of them.

Finding also revealed that EFL teachers have different needs to teach more effectively in face-to-face classes: pedagogical needs, language knowledge, educational psychology, assessment and material development. Findings are echoing the results of a number of studies (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2020; Hismanoglu, 2010; Karimi, 2011) which indicate that language proficiency is not the only important predictor of teaching effectiveness, but teachers need other competencies and skills which they need to develop through formal and informal in-service training courses. It can also be mentioned that teachers' pre-service training courses on language teaching do not guarantee good teaching (Simegn, 2014). Based on the findings of the related studies, it can be argued online and face-to-face EFL teachers need to have general pedagogical knowledge, assessment knowledge, material development knowledge, and educational knowledge. However, online educators need to have knowledge of technology, design and skills, and social and communication skills (Ölmezer-Öztürk Aydın, 2018; Xu & Brown, 2017).

Conclusion

Findings of this study bear a number of theoretical and practical suggestions and implications for electronic learning experts, language institutes, teacher trainers, EFL teachers, and teacher development centers. The results show that online classes have the potential to and potency to serve language education in a more serious fashion. The findings could also be used by language institutes to assess the professional development needs of EFL teachers. Language institutes can also learn about the priority and urgency of EFL teachers' professional development requirements so that they can help them meet the most pressing requirements to improve EFL teachers' teaching quality and keep them up to date. In addition, it could be concluded that teaching online might be considered time-consuming because of the numerous roles and responsibilities of online teachers; therefore, online teaching skills and competencies must be identified and clarified for EFL teachers. Furthermore, when EFL teachers are recruited for online and face-to-face classes, the management sector of the institutes need to plan regular PD activities for the teaching staff regarding who should be hired as a teacher and who should not. These professional development activities have the potential to further motivate interested teachers. However, it is believed that teachers should not follow a single PD path because students learn in different ways and teachers teach using different methods and techniques. This idea is also supported by Smith (2007) who asserts that there is no one-size-fits-all treatment for PD.

Finally, caution must be taken in interpreting the observed results since there have been a few number of limitations that prevent full generalization of the findings. First of all, a qualitative study inherently defies generalization and remains context-specific. Secondly, owing again to the qualitative nature of the study, the number of participants was limited which in turn keeps the findings within the local milieu of the study. As a result, it is recommended to prospective researchers to replicate this study or conduct similar projects in other settings and contexts with different samples and individuals. If results of such studies are accumulated and meta-

analyzed, it will be possible to obtain a more vivid picture of the situation and make more confident decisions.

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