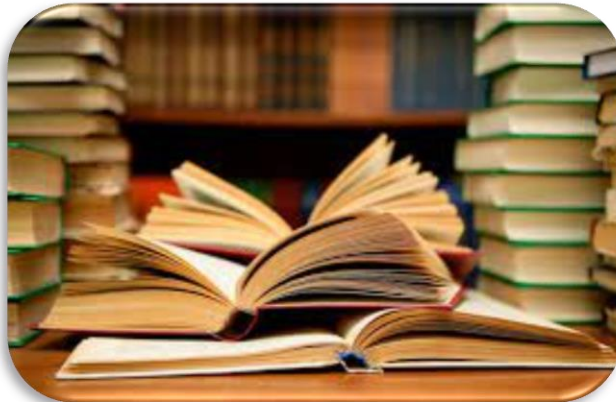## Research Paper

Investigating the Iranian Practices in Teaching English in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The major objectives of this research were to develop an understanding of what policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices, indicate the main pedagogies that English teachers use, and enhance our understanding of these teachers' responsibilities and roles. The research was carried out on a sample of 728 English teachers from junior and senior high school in 32 provinces of Iran. Self-reporting questionnaires were conducted as a survey method. The results of this study indicate those teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching might extremely conflict with those of policymakers' attitudes and perceptions in these areas. It is apparent that the general language level of Just over half the sample (53%) of teachers is lower than intermediate. The in-service and pre-service training offered to English teachers requires to be considerably strengthened. A wide range of materials for teaching students at schools is required. As a consequence of a gap between classroom practice and pedagogic policy, the curricula and pedagogies underpinning the teaching of EFL students also need some changes. Overall, the evidences from this study recommend that current Iranian practice in teaching English to students in schools should be modified. Present study has important implications for future practice.

Keywords: Iranian teachers, Pedagogies, Policy, Practices, Syllabus Documents

بررسی اسناد خط مشی/برنامه‌درسی تدریس زبان انگلیسی به دانش آموزان

اهداف اصلی این مطالعه ارائه درک درستی از اسناد خط مشی/برنامه‌درسی و آموزش زبان انگلیسی به دانش‌آموزان میباشد، و سعی نموده تا روش‌های آموزشی اصلی مورد استفاده معلمان را نشان داده، و درک بهتری از نقش‌ها معلمان و مسئولیت‌های آنها را ترسیم نماید. این تحقیق بر روی نمونه ای از 728 معلم زبان انگلیسی در دبیرستان های متوسطه اول و دوم، 32 استان ایران صورت پذیرفت. برای جمع آوری اطلاعات پرسشنامه‌های خود گزارش‌دهی استفاده شد که به صورت الکترونیکی از طریق اینترنت توزیع گردید. نتایج این مطالعه نشان می‌دهد که سیاست گذاران در آموزش زبان ممکن است باور هایی در مورد آموزش و یادگیری داشته باشند که به شدت با نگرش ها و نظرات معلمان در تضاد باشد. سطح زبان عمومی بیش از نیمی از نمونه (53٪) از معلمان پایین تر از متوسط است. آموزش پیش از خدمت و ضمن خدمت ارائه شده به معلمان زبان انگلیسی باید به میزان قابل توجهی تقویت شود. طیف گسترده‌ای از مواد درسی برای آموزش دانش آموزان در مدارس مورد نیاز است .آموزش‌ها و برنامه‌های درسی زیربنای آموزش زبان انگلیسی به عنوان یک زبان خارجی به دانش آموزان نیز نیازمند تغییراتی است. در مجموع، این یافته ها نشان می دهد که رویه فعلی ایرانیان در آموزش زبان انگلیسی به دانش آموزان در مدارس باید اصلاح گردد. نتایج حاصل از این مطالعه تعدادی پیشنهاد مهم برای عملکرد بهتر در آینده ارئه میدهد.

واژگان کلیدی: معلمان ایرانی، آموزش‌ها، خط مشی‌ها، شیوه‌ها، اسناد درسی

INTRODUCTION

According to Copland & Garton (2014), researches of teaching English to language learners have recently been developed, indicating the increase demand among the students learning English in countries of the worlds. The British Council claimed that English is spoken at an intelligibility level by some 1.75 billion people around the world – that's one in each four. By 2020, they estimate that two billion people will be using it or learning to use it. English is being presented to ever more students and in numerous countries across the world English is presently obligatory at school (Nikolov, 2009a; Pinter, 2006). Learning English language is compulsory for the junior and senior high school students in Iran too. In December 2017, Human Resources Planning and ICT Center of the Ministry of Education of Iran reported that the total number of public and private students in Iran's schools is 14338403. According to this report, 3310748 students study in the junior high school, and 2617850 students study in senior high school because of this, English teachers are in increasing demand around Iran; this indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of Iranian practice in teaching English to EFL students. The increasing demand in teaching English as foreign language to students in Iran during the half a century ago raises some questions over how the teacher teach English in this kind of classes.

Enever and Moon (2009) holds the view that, in spite of the very fast growth in learning of English language among people across the world, policymakers have to indicate the priorities for designing effective language policies, implementing the best program, and for facing the real challenge to ensure that policy is influentially and continually used in the practice of English classrooms.

Johnstone (2009) explained the universal introduction of English in schools of as 'possibly the world's biggest policy development in education'. English is the first choice of foreign language in most countries across the world. In most of European countries like Croatia, Poland, Hungary, English is increasingly the first choice (Enever and Moon, 2009; Nikolov, 2009b).

LITURATURE REVIEW

Recruitment and training

In some countries across the world, those involved in education provide some basic teacher training when their educational policies were announced. In countries like Italy English teachers should participate in more than 300 hours of training in both language proficiency and methodology, in other country such as a Korea, English teachers were participated in 120 to 240 hours of training to help English teachers enhance their English teaching skills and language proficiency (Shim and Baik, 2003).

According to Akbari & Dadvand (2014), recruiting EFL teachers in Iranian schools is according to exam, next short term teacher training period, they argues that these procedures are not according to what they are really tried to achieved.

The classroom context

There are certain problems in English class that might make a number of obstacles against teachers following national policy. Wedgwood (2007), for example, argues that overcrowded classroom are common problem in a lot of countries and English teachers assume this makes it impossible and difficult to introduce more learner-centered teaching method. According to Li (1998), these teachers cannot observe the use of language by their students (Li, 1998) or Working in pairs and groups (Hoque, 2009).

According to Gay (2002), Student diversity creates challenges to novice teachers if they are not familiar with culturally responsive teaching (CRT). McLaughlin (1992) argues that English language learners are generally considered problematic, as a result of their linguistic and cultural diversity.

Garton, Copland and Burns (2011) Claims that in EFL setting, most language learners learn language in schools. Policymakers in many countries across the world have progressively presented English into different age group with considerable impacts on English language learning, teaching, and practices.
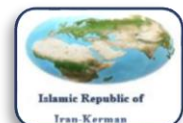
The importance of qualified teachers

Teaching is a vital career and has led to build many societies and countries. Policymakers in many countries accept that qualified teachers are the main factor to the maintenance and improvement of intelligent, informed people in community (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Students will learn English better if classrooms are driven by well-trained teachers; Allen (2007) mentioned that training is greatly important in shaping the teachers' self-confidence and in developing the teacher's act. According to Richards (2001), a language teaching program must be supported by many factors as schools, teachers, learners, and teaching process in order to have a high-quality teaching. Additionally, he believes that among those elements, it is teachers of English who play a crucial role.

In 1999, UNICEF reported that teachers should be at the center of the education transformation, but a lot of teachers feel like they are under siege... teachers status seems to have diminished and it is a universal phenomenon (Robinson & Colin, 2003).

The British Council in 2012 claimed that 70% of students who are learning the English language in many countries are younger than 18 years old; Ellis and Knagg (2012) claimed that about more than 6 million teachers teach English to those students. So that considerable and maybe permanent change in the ELT industry rather than small change is needed (Cameron, 2003; Ellis & Knagg, 2012); Emery (2012) argues that a similar change in the staffing and resourcing of schools and the more practice for pre-service teacher preparation programs will be necessary.

UNESCO (2015) mentions the success of an education system depends on the teachers who teach it. Teachers are needed to achieve quality and universal education for all people. Tsui (2003) claim that teacher' knowledge shapes practices, but according to him their knowledge is also shaped by the practices. This indicates a need to link between knowledge and practices.

Nezakat-Alhossaini and Ketabi (2003) recommended that in order to ensure better English as foreign language classes in Iran; teacher education system is necessary to be more unified, determined in regard to course practicality, employment opportunities, study, course content and hours.

Teacher pre-service and in-service trainings

According to Richards and Farrell (2005), to reach favorable outcome of the whole educational system in which the teachers teach English; chances for in-service and pre-service teacher preparation programs are highly important.

Studying countries' practices in teaching English language to EFL learners formed the central focus of a study by Garton, Burns and Copland (2002) in which they found that in-service training and pre-service preparation and of teachers of young learner are notably vital and must be impressively encourage.

Cameron(2003) claims that there is a misconception in the ELT market that teaching English is easy that can be done by inadequately trained teachers in English language teaching. The acute obstacle for English teachers is insufficient in-service and pre-service teacher preparation program, in spite of the vital of training teachers to work with English language learners (George 2009; Navarro 2008; O'Brien 2011; Reeves 2006; Short and Fitzsimmons 2007). The results of the research by Walker et al. (2004) indicted that almost 87% K-12 English teachers did not hold any instruction in English language teaching. This shortage of teacher preparation programs bring into questions about the quality of training and the deficiency of teachers' perception about techniques of dealing language learning and teaching (Clair 1995), problems of learners from diverse backgrounds and the individuals demand (Nelson-Barber 1999), working normally with EFL students (Ortiz et al. 2006; Reeves 2006), and the designing of curriculum for EFL learners (O'Brien 2011).

Teachers' level of English proficiency

A number of studies that have examined teacher language knowledge (e.g., Chacón, 2005; Eslami & Fatahi, 2008) claimed that English teachers' level of proficiency in English acts a considerable role in the classes. In the same vein, Butler (2004) points out, there appears to be some closely correlational relationship between teachers' English proficiency and the anticipation that countries have of EFL teachers.

According to Richards (2017), English-for-teaching approach is a kind of approach that he claims contribute the field of ELT and better performance of particular task by English teachers.

According to Cullen (1994), just a few English teachers training period can reach the goal of improving the communication of the language instead of only language knowledge. He also finds that in countries; specifically where teachers don't use the language as mean of instruction, the primary attention of EFL teachers is the requirement to develop their own language proficiency with the intention that they use their English knowledge more confidently and fluently in their the classes.

Importance of language skills and components

According to the integrated-skill theoreticians, all skills of language are closely related to each other. In addition, they points out that learners should use all language skills simultaneously in cooperative, practical, and meaningful activities (Carrasquillo, 1993; Farris, 1989; Farris and Kaczmarski, 1988). The integrative approach, compared to traditional approach isolated language approach, encounters learners to real language and experiences; this approach encourages the students to communicate naturally. If listening, speaking, reading, and writing are integrated with each other, real interaction and authentic language is taught; if they are separated from each other, a language is taught (Oxford, 2001).

Although extensive research has been carried out on teacher education around the world, (e.g. Garton, Burns& Copland, 2011), it appears to be a few study into teaching English language to students from teachers' perspective in Iran. Lack of this kind of research may cause some deficiencies in practice. This study attempts to obtain data which will help to address these gaps. In order to achieve the aim of this study, the following research objectives have been identified:

1. Discover what policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices around Iran.
2. Explore and indicate the major pedagogies that English teachers use in Iran
3. Develop an understanding of English teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities.

This research aimed to address three main research questions:

RQ1: What policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices around Iran?
*RQ2: What are the major pedagogies that English teachers use?*
RQ3: What are Iranian English teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities?

METHOD

Participant

Snowball sampling was used in this study. Snowball sampling involves a 'chain reaction' where the "researcher identifies a few people who meet the criteria of the particular study and then asks them to identify further appropriate members of the population" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 98). The research was carried out on a sample of 728 EFL teachers from junior and senior high school in 32 provinces of Iran. Just over half the sample (56%) was female and other (44%) were male. Most of them worked in urban areas (69%). Participants' ages ranged from 23 years old to 66 years old with most of them holding M.A. and B.A. degrees and some of them Associate and PhD degrees (Appendix 1, Table 2, 3, 4).
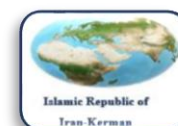
Instruments

According to World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing global pandemic that endanger the health and enforced social distancing for the whole world (World Health Organization, n.d.). Researchers find a way to overcome this problem and maintain the health of the participants in this study, the cross-sectional survey was conducted electronically through google form. Online surveys was used to increase sample Geographical diversity; as was mentioned by De Vaus, (2002) and Dörnyei, (2009) in this way, diverse samples of data may be collected in an economic, efficient, and standardized manner. Participants were also kept away from the risk of Covid 19 disease.

The researcher used four questionnaires to collect the data. In the first phase of the research, the researcher employed the demographic questionnaire. In the second phase of research, policy/syllabus documents asking respondents to reflect on the most influential document in teaching English in Iranian in order to discover what policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices around Iran. In the third phase of research, major pedagogies, the researchers focused on mapping the major pedagogies that English teachers use in Iran. The final phase, teachers' roles and responsibilities questionnaire, were used in order to gain insights into better understanding of Iranian English teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities.

It is extremely important that data be validate and reliable in terms of the research questions which sought to explore and reflect on personal experiences but generalize those experiences where possible to resonate with the wider population of EFL teachers. Because of this, the list of questions in this study needed to be reliable and validate to teachers in other contexts. Teachers themselves created that list from the questionnaires and the list was authenticated by the interviewees and by practitioners and conference delegates who received that information as well as in terms of the contents of the literature. In addition, all the participants were asked the same questions. Finally, the data was gathered over a one-year period from a number of different sources, through a number of different channels and from a range of provinces and contexts. That it appears consistent might also support its credibility, since the various sources seem to converge on the same issues.

Design

The mixed methods design adopted as a systematic approach to investigate the Iranian practices in teaching English to students in schools by gathering data and performing computational, mathematical, and statistical techniques. The researchers collected data from English teachers by using sampling methods and conducting online surveys, the results of which were presented in the form of numerical.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers got a recommendation from their university for the Ministry of Education in order to receive the required permission for this research. Then Ethical approval was gained from Ministry of Education, the survey was disseminated, the case studies were carried out, and informed consent was obtained from teachers involved in the studies.

An electronic questionnaire contains questions which are presented through Google-Form so they can be answered by participants. The contents of the answers were automatically calculated by Google and presented in Google-generated spreadsheets and charts.

The pilot Word Document questionnaires, however, were downloaded into password-protected folders on the laptop and printed as hard copies. To maintain respondent anonymity, the papers were shuffled then assign an identifying number or code to each participant sequentially from 1 to 95 with the prefix P for Pilot. The emails and names of participants were kept in the safe folder that aims to protect

the identity of the survey participants. The electronic version was easier, quicker and that there is no way for anyone to identify respondents.

A systematic approach investigated the Iranian practices in teaching English to students in schools by gathering data and performing computational, mathematical, and statistical techniques.

RESULTS

English language teacher profiles

Many teachers in the survey were students before they become a teacher (51%), many of them did not start their teaching careers as their first career (37% of them worked in another job before they became a teachers), 7% of teachers did not have a job before becoming a teacher, and 5% were teachers of other subjects (Figure1, below).

Figure 1

Occupations of participant Pre-ELT

What did you do before you became an EFL teacher?

- Student
- Teacher (of another subject)
- Working (but not as a teacher)
- Not working
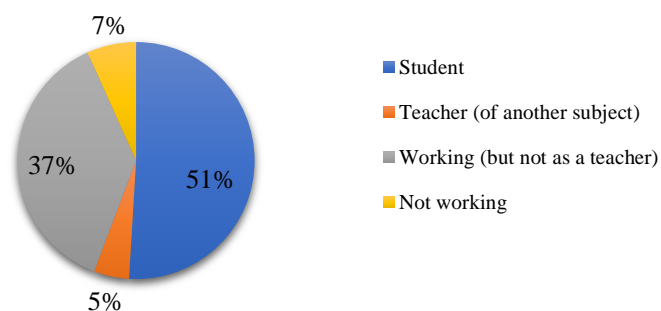
From the answers to the questions on motivation to become a teacher (Figure 2, below), it can also be seen that around 43% of the respondents became a teacher because they liked to teach English, 35% needed a job, and 16% were working but not as teachers while others had other sources of motivation.

Figure 2

The reason to be an English teacher

Why did you become an English language teacher?

- To teach English
- Working (but not as a teacher)
- needed a job
- Other
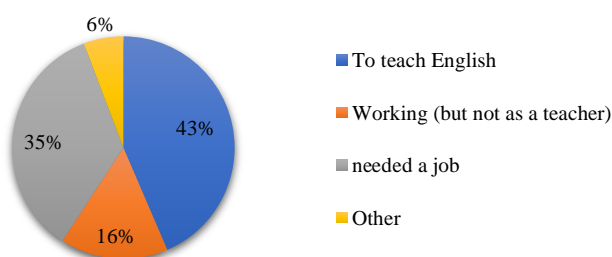
About 28% percent of the participants report that their level of English is intermediate, 28% upper intermediate, 18% advanced, 15% pre intermediate, 8% elementary, 6% of participants believed that they have native speaker competence in English, and 2% of them are beginner (Figure 3, below).
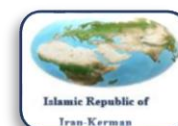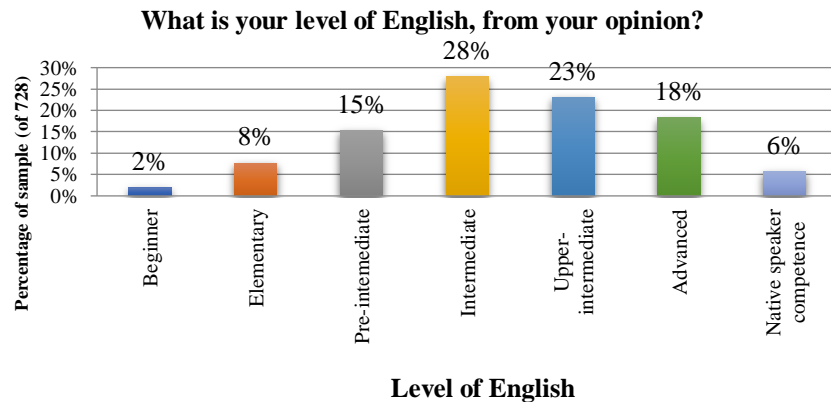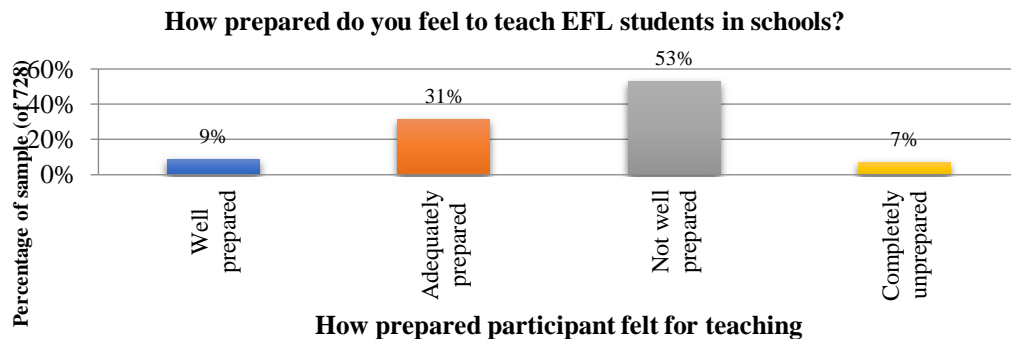
Figure 3

teachers' English language levels description

What is your level of English, from your opinion?

The aim of this part was to investigate the extent to which EFL teachers perceived themselves capable and ready to teach English at school level. The majority of those who responded to this item (53% of the questionnaire) said they did not feel well prepared, 31% felt adequately prepared, 7% completely unprepared, and 9% felt well prepared to teach students in schools (Figure 4):

Figure 4

How prepared participant felt for teaching English

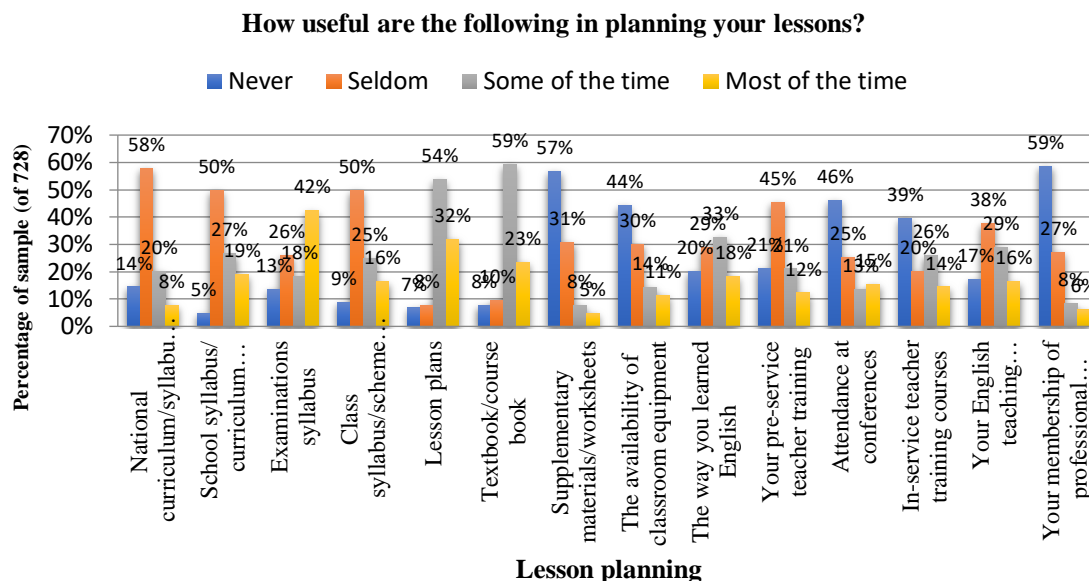**How prepared do you feel to teach EFL students in schools?**

Policy/syllabus documents

The key question in this study sought to determine what policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices around Iran. The results, as shown in Figure 5, indicate that most influential document in Iran is the lesson plan; with 32% of respondents who answered a survey rating this as useful and 54% rating this as very useful. The course book is also selected as highly influential; with 59% of teachers to the survey rating this as useful and 23% rating this as very useful. Other items in order of importance include class syllabus/scheme of work, examinations syllabus, school syllabus/ curriculum guidelines, the way one learned English, one's English teaching colleagues at school, pre-service teacher preparation, in-service teacher preparation courses, attendance at conferences, the availability of classroom equipment, supplementary materials/worksheets, and membership of professional organizations. The chart below shows more detailed information.

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Figure 5
Lesson planning

How useful are the following in planning your lessons?

■ Never ■ Seldom ■ Some of the time ■ Most of the time

Major pedagogies

One of the main questions addressed in this study was, "what are the major pedagogies that EFL teachers use in Iran?" this section of the questionnaire required respondents to give information on alignment of students' syllabus to Ministry of Education of Iran. Almost all of the participants (94%) use course materials produced by Ministry of Education, as shown in Figure 6 below:

Figure 6
Origin of syllabus used by teachers

Alignment of students syllabus to Ministry of Education of Iran curriculum

■ Yes
■ No
■ Not sure
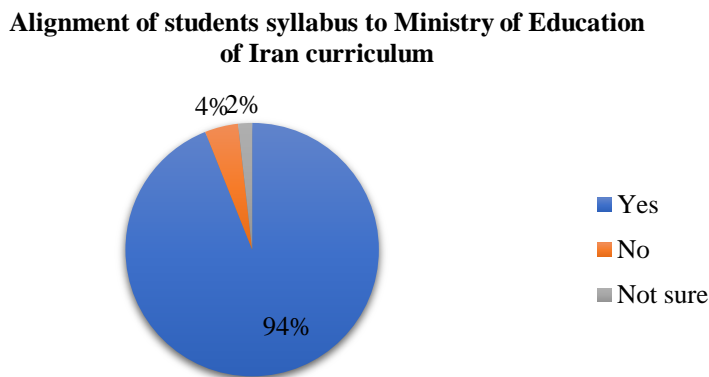
The results of this research indicate that Iranian EFL teachers used large number of activities in their English classes. It is somewhat surprising that among the list of activities presented in the study, translation exercises were the most famous activity among all responses. Other traditional activities, including students repeating after the teacher (64%), students copying from the book/board (64%), grammar exercises (63%), students reading out loud (59%), students memorizing words and phrases (rote learning) (58%), grammar explanations (58%) students repeating after the teacher(64%), dictation (57%) and role-playing(52%) were also popular (see Table 5 below).
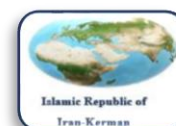
Table 1

Activities used every lesson or often by the teachers

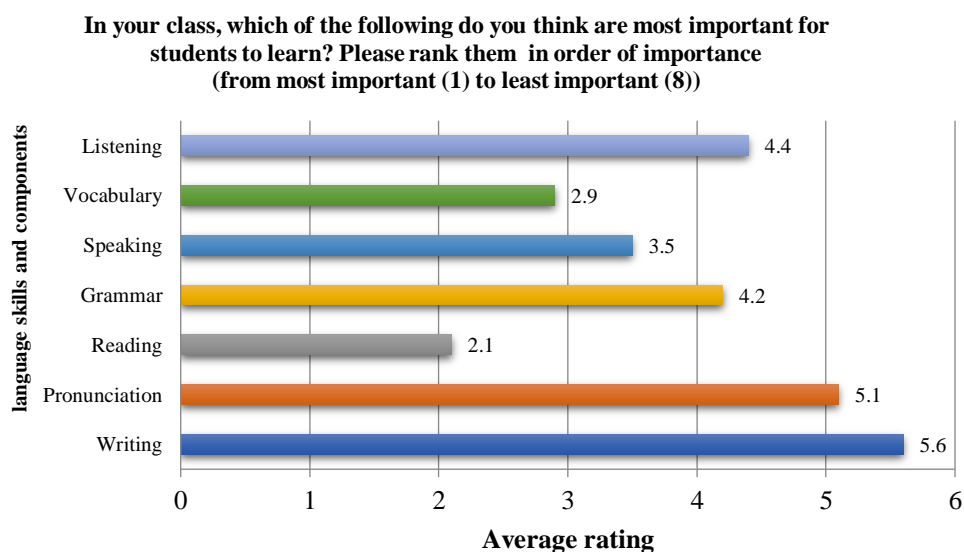| Activities	Percentage of sample (of 728)
Translation exercises	91%
Students repeating after the teacher	64%
Grammar exercises	63%
Students copying from the book/board	61%
Students reading out loud	59%
Students memorizing words and phrases (rote learning)	58%
Grammar explanations	58%
Dictation	57%
Role-play	52%

Some activities like watching videos/TV and making things used by the minority of teachers in their English class (see Table 6 below). Some activities that less than 31% of participant reported using never or rarely were a combination of creative and traditional: children telling stories, songs, rhymes and/or poems, project work, creative writing, activities on the computer, teacher reading stories, playing games, handwriting exercises, and reading silently. The least surprising aspect of the data is in the low report of children doing computer work as a result of a lack of computers, internet, and smart board in most of schools.

Table 2

Activities used rarely or never by teachers

Activities	Percentage of sample (of 728)
Filling gaps/blanks in exercises	41%
Spelling exercises	37%
Listening to CD/tape recorder	31%
Reading silently	29%
Handwriting exercises	26%
Playing games	26%
Teacher reading stories	20%
Activities on the computer	17%
Creative writing	16%
Project work	15%
Rhymes and/or poems	14%
Songs	14%
Children telling stories	14%
Making things	7%
Watching videos/TV	6%

In the follow-up phase of the study, the teachers were asked about language skills and language components that would be most important for students in class to learn; reading was ordered as the most important skill, it is followed by vocabulary and speaking. Other items in the order of importance are grammar, listening, pronunciation, and writing (see Figure 7 below).

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Figure 7

Important of language skills and components

In your class, which of the following do you think are most important for students to learn? Please rank them in order of importance (from most important (1) to least important (8))

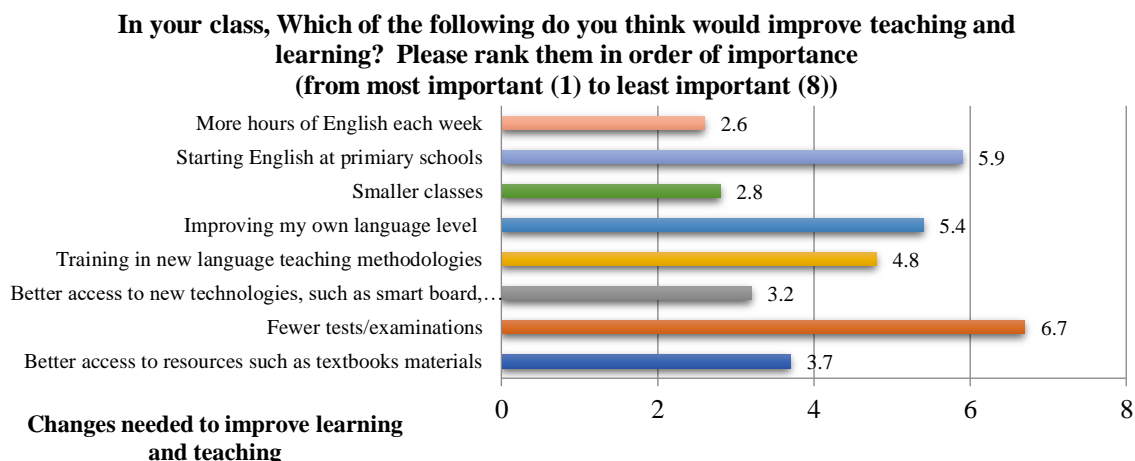## Teachers' responsibilities and roles

The results obtained from Survey show that EFL teachers have to give students homework, prepare tests, lessons, and supplementary materials and they need to mark homework and exams. Just 6% can select their own course books for their students which indicate that for a majority of participants (94%), this crucial lesson planning document is imposed. Nearly 374 teachers (38%) spend their own money for their classroom resources; these can be anything from microphones, batteries, and laptop. approximately 7% of teachers are responsible for planning out-of-school language learning activities. The themes identified in these responses are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Responsibilities

As a regular part of your job, do you …
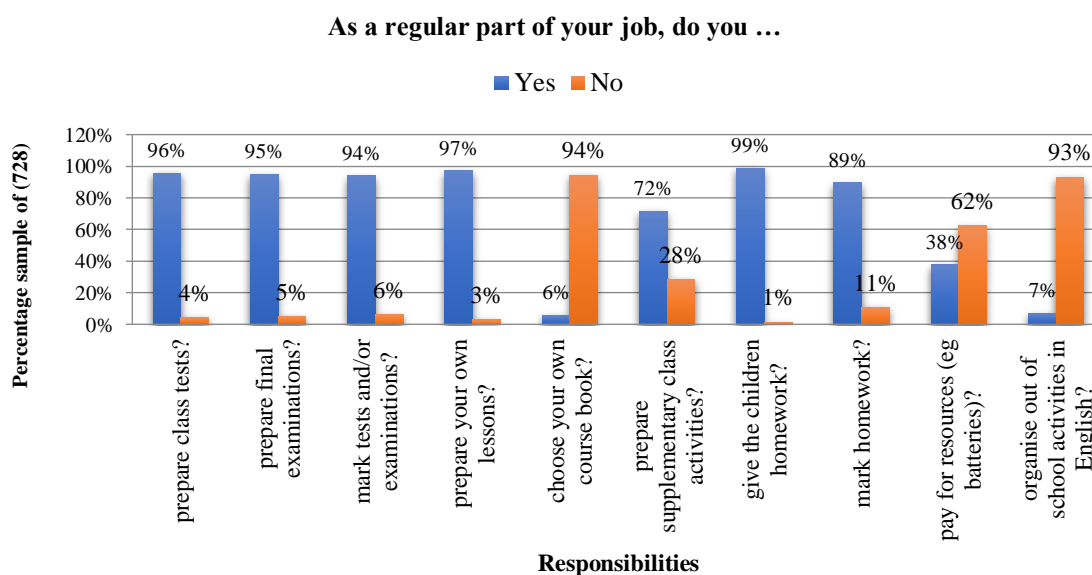
The subjects were asked about major factors that would help teaching and learning in schools, more hours of English and smaller classes was ordered as main factors, followed by facilitating access to modern technologies including smart boards, computers, CDs, and tablet; resources such as materials and textbooks; and training in foreign language teaching methodologies (see Figure 9 below).

Figure 9
Changes needed to improve learning and teaching

In your class, Which of the following do you think would improve teaching and learning? Please rank them in order of importance (from most important (1) to least important (8))

Change	Value
More hours of English each week	2.6
Starting English at primiary schools	5.9
Smaller classes	2.8
Improving my own language level	5.4
Training in new language teaching methodologies	4.8
Better access to new technologies, such as smart board,…	3.2
Fewer tests/examinations	6.7
Better access to resources such as textbooks materials	3.7

Changes needed to improve learning and teaching

DISCUSSION

Recruitment and training
Reasons to take up teaching as profession

According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) 2005, the relationship between teachers-related motivation and quality of teaching are verified in different cultures. It is significant to have teachers who are motivated enough. This study indicates that around 43% of the respondents became a teacher because they like to teach English, 35% need a job and 16% working but not as teacher, while others have other sources of motivation. However, only a small number of participants (43%) chose teaching as their career because they like it and more worryingly, 57% of them have other sources of motivation such as needing the job, and working but not as teacher (teaching is their second job). Teachers who are not motivated enough, may not engage to teaching process as much as necessary because they do not have sufficient meaning or purpose in their career. These types of teachers have less self-driven, and are less persistence. Several researches (e.g., Davis & Wilson 2000; Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012) have found direct correlation between teachers' motivation teachers' career satisfaction.

The current study found that many teachers in the survey were students before they become a teacher (51%), many of them did not start their teaching careers as their first career (37% of them worked in another job before they became a teachers), 7% of teachers did not have a job before becoming a teacher, and 5% were teachers of other subjects (Figure 1). Present study indicates many teachers did not initiate their profession as English teachers so the needs of in-service teachers training are particularly necessary in for them.

Teachers' level of English proficiency

According to Richards (2010), in order to have effective English teachers, those involved must help them to reach a certain level of English proficiency. In the same vein, as mentioned in the literature

review; Butler (2004) points out, there appears to be some closely correlational relationship between teachers' English proficiency and the anticipation that countries have of English teachers. Approximately, all English teachers in Iranian schools are non-native speakers of English, the quality of their career preparation and their levels of English language proficiency are really important. The most striking aspect of the data is that about 53% of participants in this study think their level of English is intermediate or lower than intermediate.

### How prepared participants felt for teaching English

As mentioned in the literature review, Allen (2007) believed that teacher training is highly crucial in shaping self-confidence of teachers and in improving their performance in the class. The results of this study indicate that just over half of those surveyed think they are not well prepared (53%) or they are completely unprepared (7%) to teach students in schools (see Appendix 2, Figure 5). To overcome this problem in-service training Pre-service preparation of English teachers needs to be considerably strengthened. UNESCO may provide a solution too; according to UNESCO (2002), the web as information resources provides crucial lessons for teacher education centers that provide teacher development. In countries with lack of access to modern technology infrastructure, it's a good idea to use print-based materials, television, and radio for addressing educational needs of teachers.

Policy/syllabus documents

One of the main discussions in language teaching and learning is policy/syllabus documents. What the EFL teachers do by using particular types of activities in English class is to improve the students' learning. According to Garton, Burns and Copland (2011), English teachers in various countries of the world are affected by variety of documents types including local and government documents, such as curriculum offered by schools.

The results, (as shown in Appendix 2, Figure 6) indicate that the lesson plan is the most influential document in Iran; with 32% of teachers rating this as useful and 54% rating this as very useful. Another important document was also the course book; with 59% of respondents to the survey indicate this as useful and 23% rating this as very useful. Teachers seemed eager to follow Ministry of Education policy and use Iranian national curriculum documents to support this implementation. The reason for this is not clear, but it may be due to the fact that English teachers must teach the curriculum specified by the Ministry of Education and they have no other choice. Strict guidelines were seen as rather constraining. The present findings seem to be consistent with the question which found 94% teacher claimed that these courses are aligned to Ministry of Education curriculum for learning English language (see Appendix 2, Figure 7). Teachers should have more freedom in choosing the curriculum according to the language level of students and class conditions so that they can run the class according to their needs. As noted by Sahlberg (2011), teachers' accountability and the pressure they feel, as well as the decline of teacher autonomy and independence is a main issue in many regions of the world at the time of the Global Education Reform Movement that follows, in its core, the neoliberal agenda. In addition, as noted by Biesta (2010), the lack of chances for teachers to shape their activities and its conditions, as well as prescriptive curricula and oppressive regimes of testing and inspection in many countries have caused a problem lead to de-professionalization of teachers.

The most surprising aspect of the data is in the number of participants who found examinations syllabus as useful item when planning; over half of those surveyed indicated these documents as useful or very useful. This could be due to wash back. 'Washback' define as the influence in which exams have on learning and teaching (e.g. Hughes, 1989; 1996; Saville, 2000; Cheng & Curtis, 2004). Bailey (1996) introduced a model comprised of two aspects of washback (a) washback to the learner originated from the effects on test-takers and (b) washback to the program involving curriculum developers, teachers,
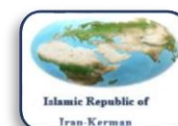
counselors, administrators, , and so on. English teachers seem to be influenced by the latter in Iran. As was claimed by Alderson and Wall (1993) and Messick (1996), washback can force learners and teachers do things "they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test".

Major pedagogies
Activities used by the teachers

A major criticism of Iranian practice in teaching English to students is the kind of the activities used by teachers. The most common activates across all responses were traditional activities such as translation exercises including students repeating after the teacher, grammar exercises, students copying from the book/board, students reading out loud, students memorizing phrases and words, grammar explanations repeating after the English teacher, dictation,(see Appendix 1, Table 5). Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of these activities is that with these activities, it is not possible to achieve the goals of the book mentioned by the authors in the introduction of the book. The majority of teachers never or rarely use some activities like watching videos/TV and making things (see Appendix 1, Table 6). Other activities that less than a third of those who responded using never or rarely were a combination of creative and traditional: telling stories, songs, rhymes and/or poems, project work, creative writing, activities on the computer, teacher reading stories, playing games, handwriting exercises, and reading silently. According to Prensky (2001), the students of today are all familiar with computer and internet. They utilize new instructional technologies in their learning and constructing knowledge. The least surprising aspect of the data is in the low report of students doing computer work as a result of a lack of computers, internet, and smart board in most of schools in Iran, as well as least attractive course books, technology, indicate that real language learning does not occur in the Iranian schools although these kind of activates are really necessary and helpful for teaching language. On the other hand, teachers prefer to use activities focus on the learning of forms rather than function. So the teachers' role is to teach structural aspects of language explicitly and learner's role is to learn grammatical patterns, linguistic structures, and decontextualized vocabulary. Through these sorts of activities, learners gain knowledge which is called metalinguistic knowledge, and some scholars call them declarative or explicit knowledge. (Ellis, 1994; Hulstijn, 2005; Paradis, 2009). Making a best choice and use of activities for the EFL students is an important issue (Criado, Sánchez, and Cantos, 2010). Teaching students in schools should be built upon sort of activities, such as arts, rhymes, songs, games, stories and crafts such as mask-making, drawing, and puppetry. Number of published books around the world have these kinds of activities, for example Family Friend, Top Notch, American Files, etc., which uses songs, chants, cartoon stories and coloring task.

Language skills and components

As mentioned in the introduction of the English for schools Prospect book, the author claims that for the first time in this book, the four skills that build language proficiency, listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught simultaneously, and none of these skills is left out for the benefit of the other. However, in response to a question, participants were asked about language skills and language components that would be most important for students in class to learn; reading was chosen as the most important; it is followed by vocabulary and speaking. Other items in the order of importance are grammar, listening, pronunciation, and writing (see Appendix 2, Figure 8). Therefore, according to the teachers' responses, it can be stated that the main purpose of the course books have not been achieved. All aspects of language interrelate and intertwine. It is necessary here to clarify exactly for teachers the goals for which the book has been written by providing necessary training to teachers in applying new teaching activities. A majority of teachers are under-prepared to teach English at schools and many of them are left to find out

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how to achieve the goals in which the course books have been written. By integrating language skills, a language is taught; however, if teachers incorporate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into the classroom, real interaction is taught (Oxford, 2001).

Teachers' roles and responsibilities
The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that a teacher is responsible for giving students homework, prepare tests, lessons, and supplementary materials and they must mark homework and exams. The majority of those who participated (94%) in this study felt that lesson planning document is imposed to them, which means that only 6% can choose their own course book. The most The most striking aspect of the data is in the result that, 374 teachers (38%) pay for their own resources; this means that one in three teachers are spending their own money on classroom supplies, anything from microphones, batteries, laptop to project over crowded classes, although teachers' salaries are low compared with other jobs in Iran. The Ministry of Education must provide the necessary teaching facilities for teachers and students. Policymakers across the world accept that qualified teachers are the main factor to the maintenance and improvement of intelligent, informed people in community (Richardson and Watt, 2006). In order to improve a quality in teaching, a language teaching program need to be supported by the numbers of important parameters as schools, learners, teachers, teaching process and parents.

Changes to make that will improve learning and teaching
Many scholars hold the view that the improvement of learning processes and/or learning condition is the main purpose of school improvement (Hargreaves et al., 1998). In present study when researchers asked teachers about changes that may help teaching and learning English in their classes, more hours of teaching English and smaller classes was selected as the most important factor, followed by availability of latest technologies such as CDs, tablet, and laptop; resources such as materials and textbooks; and training in EFL teaching methodologies (see Appendix 2, Figure 10). Surprisingly, development of the teacher's English language proficiency were ranked as less important despite the fact that the general language level of these teachers (Just over half the sample (53%)) are probably intermediate or lower than intermediate (see Appendix 2, Figure 4).

CONCLUSION
The importance of English as a main international and most understood language is indisputable today. It has been argued that English language provides an important opportunity to full access to the world of information, power, technology, and science, intercultural understanding, entertainment, as well as improved memory and many other fields (Crystal,2000; Nunan 2001; British Council; 2013). The major objectives of this research were to develop an understanding of policy/syllabus documents inform teaching English to student practices, indicate the main pedagogies that English teachers use, and enhance our understanding of these teachers' responsibilities and roles. Findings of the present research builds on existing body of literature by providing data on the practical and theoretical implications of positive principal support on Iranian practice in teaching to EFL students at schools. Taken together, these results recommend that:

Recommendation 1
It is apparent that the general language level of over half of those surveyed is lower than intermediate. The policymaker and Ministry of Education must impose strict measures to ensure that teachers with a high proficiency in English are recruited. In the same vein, the teachers training (in-service training, and

pre-service teacher preparation) of these teachers also need to be strengthened considerably; as was mentioned by Richards (2010), English teachers require reaching a certain proficiency threshold in.

Recommendation 2
Iranian English Teachers should have more freedom in choosing the curriculum according to the language level of students and class conditions so that they can run the class according to their needs. As explained earlier, the lack of chances for teachers to shape their activities and its conditions, as well as prescriptive curricula and oppressive regimes of testing and inspection in many countries have caused a problem lead to de-professionalization of teachers (Biesta, 2010).

Recommendation 3
A major criticism of Iranian practice in teaching English to students is the kind of activities used by teachers. The most popular learning activates among all responses were traditional activities. In addition, there are activities that only focusing on form instead of function. A wide variety of activities for teaching students is required. Teachers should be taught new teaching methods as well as the use of appropriate modern educational activities.

Recommendation 4
Unfortunately, English teachers in Iranian schools do not teach all four skills of language equally well and some of them such as listening and writing are ignored by them while they are teaching. Moreover, English teachers very often misunderstand the method, because they have received little or no training and have to be self-taught in its practical applications. All language skills in teaching students should be considered equally important and none of them should be ignored for the sake of the other. Hereby, the needs of in-service and pre-service teachers training are vital. It is crucial here to clarify exactly for teachers the goals for which the English Books at schools have been written by providing necessary training to teachers in applying new teaching methods.

Recommendation 5
More worryingly, almost one-thirds of the participants pay for their own resources; this means one in three teachers is spending their own money on classroom supplies, although teachers' salaries are low compared with other jobs in Iran. The government and Ministry of Education should provide the necessary facilities, including computers, televisions, smart boards, and other electrical appliances to improve teaching quality.

Recommendation 6
Policymakers in EFL context may hold views about language practice which might extremely opposite to those of the teacher's attitudes and perceptions. As a result of all these factors is often a gap between classroom practice and pedagogic policy. Teaching and learning objectives should be clearly explained to teachers. The description of teacher training and textbooks in EFL context should completely be coordinated in a way that will support teachers use the books in practice.

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Appendices
Appendix 1 – Table of Survey results
Table 1
Geographical distribution of pilot sample

Province from which they responded	Number of respondents
Tehran	18
Isfahan, Markazi, Semnan, Qazvin, Qom, Kerman, Zanjan, Lorestan	20
Kermanshah, Kurdistan, Hamadan, Ilam	12
Razavi Khorasan, South Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchestan	12
Hormozgan, Khuzestan, Bushehr, Fars	16
Ardabil, Mazandaran, Golestan, East Azerbaijan	17
TOTAL	95

Table 2
The demographic characteristics of the pilot sample

Respondents' gender	Age range of respondents

Male: 41	23-29: 23
Female: 54	30-39: 42
	40-49: 17
TOTAL = 95	50-59: 11
	More than 60 year:2
	TOTAL = 95

Table 3

Geographical distribution of main sample

Province from which they responded	Number of respondents per Province	Province from which they responded	Number of respondents per Province
Alborz	42	Kurdistan	11
Ardabil	9	Lorestan	13
Bushehr	12	Markazi	14
Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari	14	Mazandaran	25
East Azerbaijan	53	North Khorasan	8
Isfahan	56	Qazvin	7
Fars	42	Qom	9
Gilan	9	Razavi Khorasan	54
Golestan	21	Semnan	12
Hamadan	18	Sistan and Baluchestan	14
Hormozgan	14	South Khorasan	7
Ilam	7	Tehran	133
Kerman	14	West Azerbaijan	21
Kermanshah	25	Yazd	11
Khuzestan	35	Zanjan	14
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	7	TOTAL	728

Table 4

The demographic characteristics of the main sample

Respondents Gender	Respondents age	Career stage of respondents	Level of education	Location of current school:
Male: 321 (44%)	**23-29:** 217 (30%)	**Less than 5 years:** 224 (31%)	**Associate's degree:** 127(17%)	**Urban (town/city):** 502 (69%)
Female: 407 (56%)	**30-39:** 315 (43%)	**5-9 years:** 119 (16%)	**Bachelor's degree:** 384 (53%)	**Rural (village/countryside):** 97 (13%)
TOTAL= 728 (100%)	**40-49:** 154 (21%)	**10-14 years:** 147 (20%)	**Master's degree (MA,**	**Urban and rural (both of them):** 129 (18%)

		MSc): 203 (28%)	
50-59: 35 (5%)	**15-19 years:** 88 (12%)	**Doctorate (PhD):** 14	TOTAL= 728 (100%)
More than 60 year: 7 (1%)	**20-24 years:** 70 (10%)	**TOTAL= 728** (100%)	
TOTAL = 728 (100%)	**More than 25 years:** 84 (12%)		
	TOTAL= 728 (100%)		

Table 5

Activities used every lesson or often by the teachers

Activities	Percentage of sample (of 728)
Translation exercises	91%
Students repeating after the teacher	64%
Grammar exercises	63%
Students copying from the book/board	61%
Students reading out loud	59%
Students memorizing words and phrases (rote learning)	58%
Grammar explanations	58%
Dictation	57%
Role-play	52%

Table 6

Activities used rarely or never by teachers

Activities	Percentage of sample (of 728)
Filling gaps/blanks in exercises	41%
Spelling exercises	37%
Listening to tape recorder, DVDs, and CDs	31%
silent reading	29%
Handwriting exercises	26%
Playing games	26%
Teacher reading stories	20%
Activities on the computer	17%
Creative writing	16%
Project work	15%
Rhymes and/or poems	14%
Songs	14%
Children telling stories	14%
Making things	7%
Watching videos/TV	6%

Appendix 2 – Figure of Survey results
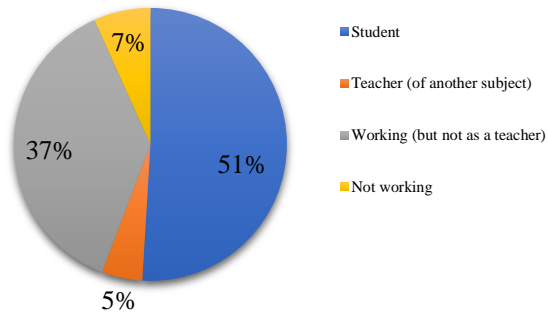
What did you do before you became an EFL teacher?

- Student
- Teacher (of another subject)
- Working (but not as a teacher)
- Not working

Figure1

Occupations of participant Pre-ELT

Why did you become an English language Teacher?

- To teach English
- Working (but not as a teacher)
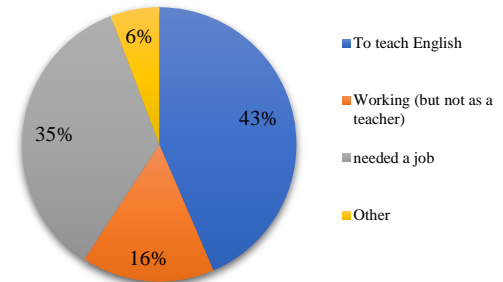- needed a job
- Other

Figure 2

The reason to be an English teacher

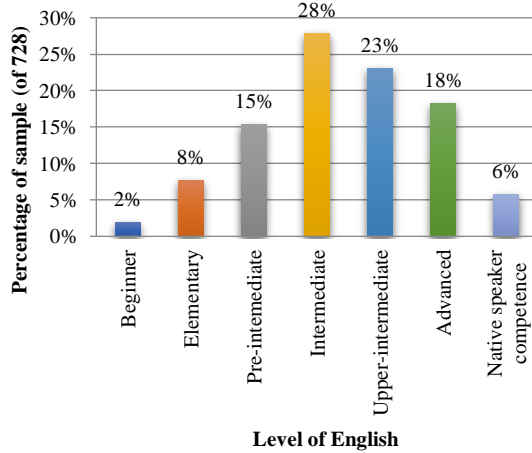**What is your level of English, from your opinion?**

Figure 3

teachers' English language levels description

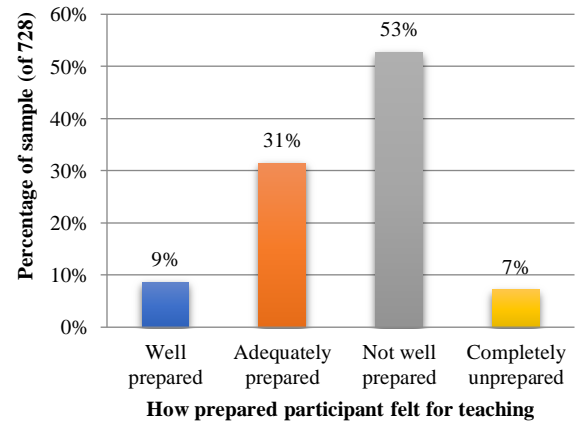**How prepared do you feel to teach EFL students in schools?**

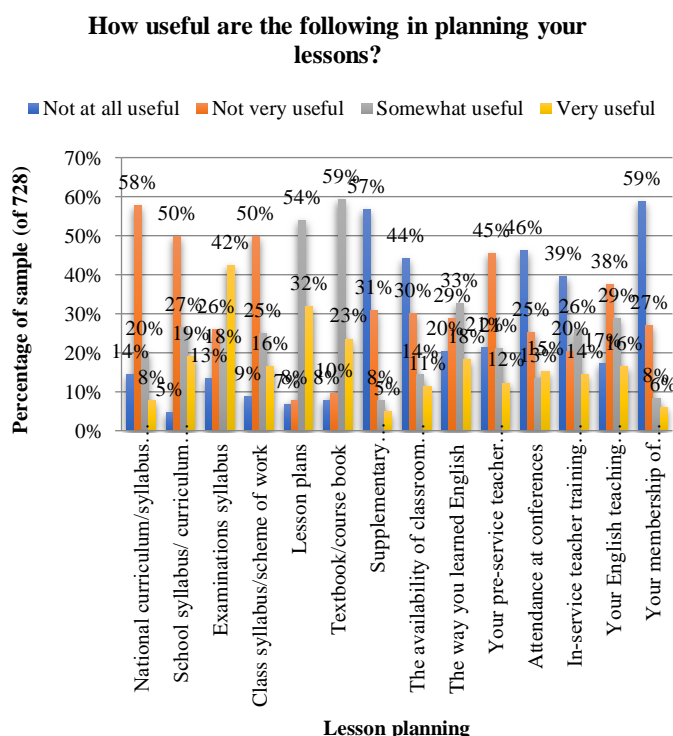
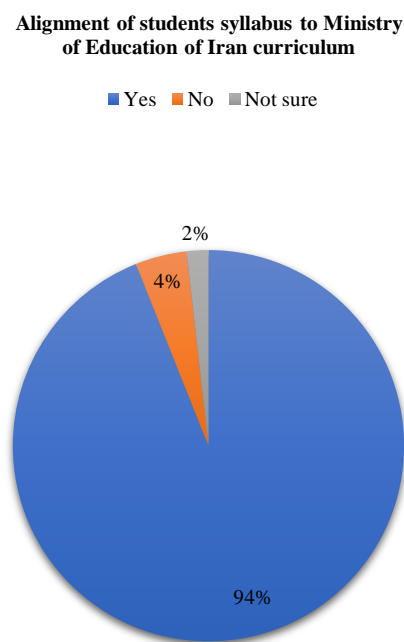**Figure 4**

How prepared participant felt for teaching English

How useful are the following in planning your lessons?

Figure 5
Lesson planning

Alignment of students syllabus to Ministry of Education of Iran curriculum

Figure 6
Origin of syllabus used by teachers

in your class, Which of the following do you think are most important for students to learn? Please rank them in order of importance (from most important (1) to least important (8))

Figure 7
Important of language skills and components

As a regular part of your job, do you …

Figure 8
Responsibilities

In your class, Which of the items below would help teaching and learning? Please rank them in order of importance (from most important (1) to least important (8))

More hours of English each week — 2.6
Starting English at primiary schools — 5.9
Smaller classes — 2.8
Improving my own language level — 5.4
Training in new language teaching methodologies — 4.8
Better access to new technologies, such as smart board,… — 3.2
Fewer tests/examinations — 6.7
Better access to resources such as textbooks materials — 3.7

Changes needed
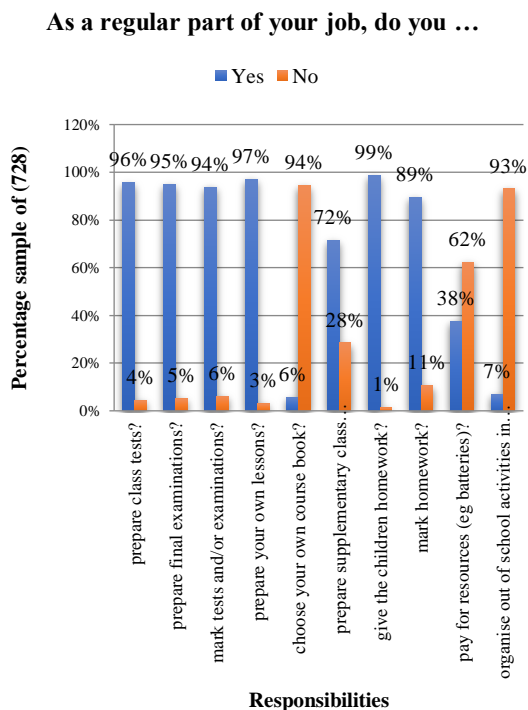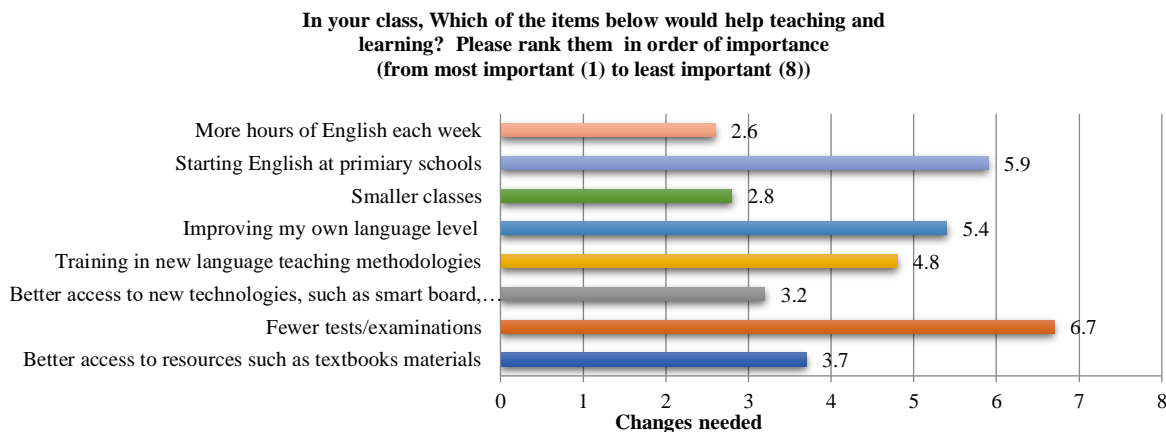
Figure 9
Changes needed to improve learning and teaching

Biodata
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