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SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

The relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness: A structural equation modeling approach

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between English Foreign Language teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness. Moreover, years of experiences in teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness were explored. The participants comprised 115 EFL teachers teaching at different language institutes in several cities of Iran. Their selection was based on convenience sampling, and the participation was entirely voluntary. In this study, two instruments were used: the English language teaching reflection inventory and Effective teaching questionnaire. Pearson's correlation coefficient, independent sample *t*-test, and structural equation modeling (SEM) were run to analyze the causal relationships among the components. Results of structural equation modeling indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between the subscales of teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness. In addition, there was a strong positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and experience. Also, there was a weak positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching reflectiveness and experience. Finally, these findings were discussed with reference to the context of Iran.

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

In teaching profession, teachers evaluate their teaching by means of some reflective practices to improve their teaching quality. Also, teaching effectiveness means meeting educational goals and plans and students' success. So, the main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between English language teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness. With this aim, 115 English teachers teaching at different language institutes in several cities of Iran were selected. For assessing teachers' level of reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness, two questionnaires were used. After gathering the questionnaires, some statistical approaches were done. Finally, the results of those statistical approaches showed that there was a strong positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and experience.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, there have occurred changes in teacher education attitudes. Teachers moved beyond methods with the aim of achieving better results (Salmani Nodoushan, 2011, p. 1). In ESL context, teachers and practitioners came to this conclusion that no method is best for every situation. Teachers are not any more passive transmitters of information, but they are active, critical thinker, and autonomous teachers. Teachers adapted themselves with post method pedagogies proposed by Kumaravadivelu (1994). ELT teachers (teachers who teach English language) started to examine and change their approaches, attitudes, behaviors in order to be more effective in their classrooms. Thus, teachers started to move beyond usual classroom circumstances and appraise outcomes of teachers' pedagogical decisions by watching and considering one's own instructing, and utilizing perception and reflection as a method for achieving change. This way to deal with instructing can be portrayed as "Reflective Teaching" (Richards, 2013, p. 1). Borg (2011) argues that the final aim of reflective teaching is improving teachers' teaching quality. Moussa-Inaty (2015) considers reflection as effective instruments for growth and intellectual development. Also, Motallebzadeh, Hosseinnia, and Domskey (2016) regards reflective teaching as a powerful tool for developing and empowering teachers.

It is supposed that being a reflective teacher influence in the amount of their teaching's effectiveness. Teaching effectiveness has been defined differently by different people in different contexts based on their aims and constructs. According to Borich (1994), for teaching effectiveness, a teacher should prefer teaching and effective learning, and teaching should be obvious, various, and promote the success amounts of students in order to achieve their educational aims. The truth of the matter is that we have sufficient knowledge about the components of effective teacher. In spite of the fact that specific investigations and models for teacher effectiveness have unobtrusive contrasts, every one of them concur that the check for teacher effectiveness is student learning (Barry, 2010, p. 3). Paolini (2015) believes that those teachers who have commitment to their profession and do educating as an art that needs qualification and expertise are in a high level of teaching effectiveness.

Many studies have been done to examine effectiveness of different types of reflective teaching tools. However, scare studies have been implemented for examining involvement of teachers in reflective practices as a whole. Also, Moradkhani, Raygan, and Moein (2017) mentioned that few studies have been done to explore the relationship of involvement teachers in reflective practices with enhancement of teachers' performance. So, in an attempt, they investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy. Their findings revealed that teachers' reflective practices had a significant positive effect on their self-efficacy. Therefore, because of scarcity of studies in this field, this study aimed to engage in this important issue from the point of view of its relationship with effective teaching. So, the main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Reflective teaching

Reflection refers to a kind of "mental processing" with a special aim that is related to complicated or unorganized notions (Moon, 1999, 2004). Richards (2013) defines reflection as a mechanism in which an experience is remembered, considered, and assessed, usually in relation to a broader aim. Tice (2004, p. 1) mentions reflective teaching means examining what you carry out in the classroom, thinking about its purpose, and thinking about if it effective—a process of self-observation and self-evaluation. Pollard and Collins (2005) remark that the notion of reflective teaching promotes the professional development and competency. It helps teachers to develop and improve themselves as a core of professional development. Teachers by doing reflective teaching can find their teaching

strong points and weaknesses and can try to overcome them. Bartlett (1990) (as cited in Richards, 2013, p. 1) points out that being a reflective teacher requires moving beyond a basic concern with educational strategies and "how to" questions and asking "what" and "why" questions that consider instructions and managerial strategies not as means in themselves. In order to do reflective teaching, different reflective tools have been proposed by many researchers (Murphy, 2001, Tice, 2002) such as peer observation, video or audio recording, diary keeping, journal writing, and so on.

Many researchers have implemented different studies to examine effectiveness of different types of reflective teaching tools and techniques. Fatemipour (2013) in his study investigated effectiveness of different types of reflective teaching tools by means of a researcher-made questionnaire related to the teachers' perspectives. Their findings reveal that there were significant differences among the kind of data that different reflective tools obtained. They found that Teacher Diary was the most efficient tool. At the second place, Peer Observation was efficient. After peer observation, Students' Feedback was effective. And finally, audio recording was the least efficient tool. In another study, Motallebzadeh et al. (2016) reported on the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers about the effects, strong points and weaknesses of peer observation. As a result of those viewpoints, it can be resulted that peer observation as a reflective instrument could significantly influence on Iranian EFL teachers' professional development. Lofthouse and Birmingham (2010) examined the effect of video-recording in the classrooms as a tool for professional development of teachers. Based on their findings, they found positive and substantial effects on using the video-recording by teachers in the classroom. Moussa-Inaty (2015) in an attempt examined the effect of some guidelines on reflective writing on a group of interns in the College of Education. According to their findings most interns selected to utilize the guiding questions when they try to write their reflections. There was also a significant positive effect on the use of those guiding questions on reflective writing.

2.2. Teaching effectiveness

Because teachers as the most important members of the society are responsible for having depositary of all the resources—the human intelligence and they are holding the luck of other individuals and the civilization in their hands, they have achieved an exclusive position in societies all over the world (Borkar, 2013).

According to Borkar (2013), the effectiveness of the educational system largely depends upon the effective teachers. Paolini (2015) mentioned that remarkable teachers are culturally keen, respectful, sensual and charming. They encourage students to work to their talents by setting high, yet reasonable prospects, focusing free communication, and asking challenging thinking problems that provoke discussion.

Barry (2010) argues that teaching effectiveness can be understood by examining what effective teachers know and do in their daily professional practice. Also, he (2010) adds that these require a deep understanding of topic, learning theory and learner distinctness, planning, classroom educational techniques, knowing individual learners, and evaluation of student understanding and skill with learning achievements. Also, according to Barry (2010) effective instructors are familiar with their students' reality, desires, and needs. They are familiar with their students' learning styles, their strengths and their weaknesses as learners. They are professionals in their subject matter … but more essentially, effective teachers always consider their students' learning. Marsh and Roche (1997) argued about the evaluation of teaching effectiveness that teaching effectiveness can be assessed by current learners, past students, the instructor himself or herself, colleagues, managers, or trained observers. Instructors' self-evaluations are effective because they can be collected in all educational contexts.

During the recent decades, researchers have carried out much about teacher effectiveness. Chi, Yeh, and Wu (2014) in their study with the aim of investigating the effects of well-being, social support, principal leadership on teaching effectiveness, the mediating impact of well-being between social support and teaching effectiveness, and the moderating effect of principal leadership

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between social support and teaching effectiveness, found that (1) social support will positively and significantly affect teaching effectiveness, (2) social support will positively and significantly affect well-being, (3) well-being will positively and significantly affect teaching effectiveness, (4) principal leadership will positively and significantly affect teaching effectiveness, (5) well-being has mediating effect between social support and teaching effectiveness, and (6) principal leadership has no moderating effect between social support and teaching effectiveness. In another study, Reynolds, Ross, and Rakow (2002) made a comparison among Professional Development School (PDS) and non-PDS graduates in the United States in terms of retention in teaching, teaching effectiveness, and perceptions of professional preparation. According to their results, there were no significant differences in retention in teaching and effectiveness and small but significant differences favoring PDS over non-PDS teacher education programs. Kafi and Motallebzadeh (2015) in an attempt investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' effective teaching and the language learning motivation of Iranian EFL learners. They found a significant positive relationship between teachers' effective teaching and the L2 learners' language learning motivation.

As mentioned in review of literature part, no study has addressed the relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness. The following research questions were posed and were investigated in the current study:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness?

RQ2: Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and reflective Teaching in their years of experiences?

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants
The participants are 115 EFL teachers teaching at different language institutes in several cities of Iran. Their selection was based on convenience sampling and the participation was entirely voluntary. They were 50 females and 65 males whose age varied from 20 to 37 (M = 28.42, SD = 3.21) with 1 to 15 years of teaching experience (M = 8.24, SD = 2.79). The teachers had all majored in the various branches of English such as teaching, literature, and translation at B.A. or M.A. or PhD. This group of participants completed the English language teaching reflection inventory.

3.2. Instruments
In this study, two instruments were used: the English language teaching reflection inventory, and Effective teaching questionnaire by Umme Kulsum (2000).

3.2.1. The English language teaching reflection inventory
The English language teaching reflection inventory is designed by Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010). This scale includes 29 items and assesses participants' reflective practices in five subscales. The first one is practical reflection (six items), which is exercised when teachers share teaching-related issues with their colleagues, observe other teachers' classes or have their peers observe their classes with the aim of making improvements in their instruction, and keep reflective journals about their class performance. The second subscale, cognitive reflection (six items), refers to teachers' conscious efforts to be engaged in professional development by, for example, attending conferences or reading professional journals. Affective reflection (three items) is the third subscale, comprising attempts that teachers make in order to gain a better understanding of students' background and elicit their ideas about various teaching tasks. Metacognitive reflection (seven items), which is the fourth subscale, encompasses three themes, i.e. teachers' personal beliefs about the nature of teaching, critical appraisal of their own performance, and interpretations of their own teachers' behavior. Finally, the last subscale, critical reflection (seven items), pertains to teachers' knowledge of the socio-political factors of teaching and the influence of these factors on the classroom context.

The scale should be responded based on a five-point Likert scale varying from (1) "never" to (5) "always". The scale has high reliability and validity indices (Akbari et al., 2010). The reliability coefficient was .911 for total reflective teaching, which shows the scale enjoys high reliability. The reliability coefficient for sub-scales was: Practical = .89, Cognitive = .83, Affective = .92, Metacognitive = .77, and Critical = .79.

3.2.2. Effective teaching questionnaire

 Teacher effectiveness questionnaire was developed and validated by Umme Kulsum in 2000. It consisted of 60 items. The scale has five distinct areas that included classroom management, the preparation for teaching and planning, knowledge of subject matter, interpersonal relations, and teacher characteristics (Buela & Joseph, 2015). The reliability of this scale was calculated by Goed (2011) as .85.

3.3. Procedure

 The data collection of this study took place in April and May 2017. This correlational study collected quantitative data through two questionnaires. The participants (EFL teachers) answered the reflective practices questionnaires in the presence of the researcher. The questionnaire took about 30–40 min. There was no limitation of time in doing. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, the teachers received the questionnaires. Moreover, the process of distribution of questionnaires was done via email. We explained the purpose of completing the questionnaire and asked them not to write a name on them. They were required to provide demographic information such as, gender and years of experience only. After gathering the data, they were calculated in SPSS software (24.0 version) and were analyzed by Structural equation modeling software by Amos software.

4. Results

In the present study, before analyzing, the data were screened and two missing data were estimated using "expectation maximization algorithm. Descriptive statistics of sub-factors of teachers" reflective practices and teaching effectiveness are presented in Table 1. Because the number of items was different in the various subscales of both questionnaires, an average item score was computed for each sub-construct, ranging from 1 to 5.

 Results of correlations between five sub-factors of teachers' reflective practices and five sub-factors of teaching effectiveness are given in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, there is positive and significant correlation between total reflective practices and total teaching effectiveness ($r = .61$, $p<.05$). In addition, among five sub-factors of teachers' reflective practices, affective reflection has the highest correlation ($r = .62$, $p<.05$) and critical reflection has the lowest correlation ($r = .42$, $p<.05$) with total teaching effectiveness.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables			
	N	**Mean**	**Std. deviation**
Practical	115	3.49	1.11
Cognitive	115	3.71	1.07
Affective	115	4.32	2.41
Metacog.	115	2.83	.98
Critical	115	3.47	1.22
Total Ref.	115	3.50	2.20
Cl. management	115	4.21	1.11
Preparation	115	3.98	2.02
Knowledge	115	4.19	1.75
Interpersonal rel.	115	3.99	1.12
Characteristics	115	4.25	.75
Total eff.	115	3.58	2.09

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Table 2. Results of Pearson correlation						
	Cl. management	Preparation	Knowledge	Interpersonal rel.	Characteristics	Total effectiveness
1. Practical	.25**	.63**	.30**	.41**	.35**	.50**
2. Cognitive	.22**	.41**	.56**	.35**	.15*	.47**
3. Affective	.40**	.55**	.62**	.73**	.23**	.62**
4. Metacog.	.46**	.40**	.45**	.35**	.37**	.45**
5. Critical	.19*	.31**	.32**	.51**	.11	.42**
6. Total reflective	.31**	.42**	.54**	.69**	.29**	.61**

*Correlation is significant at the level of .05.

**Correlation is significant at the level of .01.

In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness, path analysis was used in which only single indicators are employed for each of the variables in the causal model. Path analysis is SEM with a structural model, but no measurement model. Figure 1 indicates the interrelationship among teachers' reflective practices and four sub-factors of teaching effectiveness. A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit. As the model shows, all the fit indices, CFI (.93), GFI (.95), and the chi-square/df ratio (2.256), except RMSEA (.097), lie within the acceptable fit thresholds based on Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, and King (2006). Hence, it can be concluded that the proposed model had an acceptable fit with the empirical data.

As indicated in Figure 1, all five dependent variables positively and significantly are predicated by reflective practices: classroom management (β = .25, p < .05), the preparation for teaching and planning (β = .31, p < .05), knowledge of subject matter (β = .45, p < .05), interpersonal relations (β = .56, p < .05), and teacher characteristics (β = .21, p < .05).

To answer the second research question aiming at examining relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness, reflective Teaching and their years of experiences Pearson correlation coefficient was performed. Table 3 shows the results of Pearson correlation between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and their years of experiences.

Figure 1. Interrelationship among teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness.

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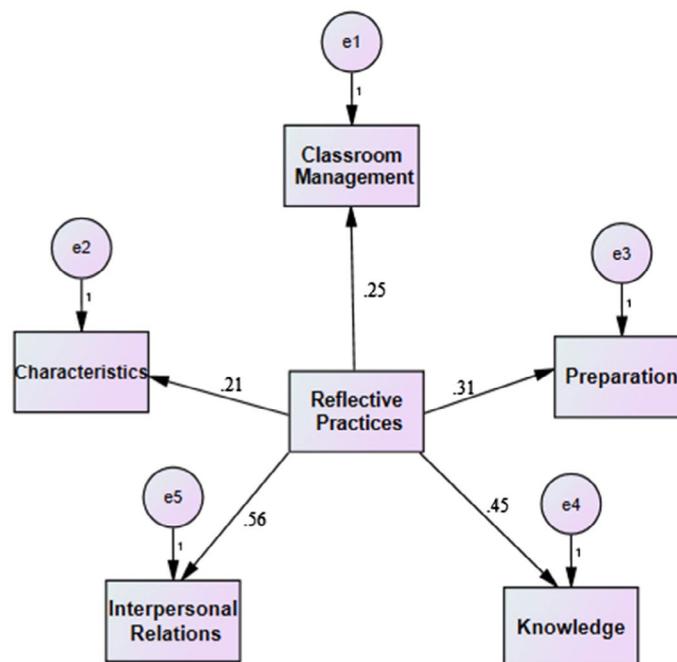
Table 3. The results of Pearson correlation between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and their years of experiences					
	Cl. management	Preparation	Knowledge	Interpersonal rel.	Characteristics	Total effectiveness
Experience	.56**	.52**	.65**	.42**	.35**	.59**

**Correlation is significant at the level of .01.

Table 4. The results of Pearson correlation between EFL teachers' level of reflective teaching and their years of experiences					
	Practical	Cognitive	Affective	Metacog	Critical	Total Ref.
Experience	.26**	.17*	.21**	.10	.05	.15*

*Correlation is significant at the level of .05.

**Correlation is significant at the level of .01.

As it can be seen in Table 3, there is a strong positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and experience ($r = .59$, $p < .05$).

Table 4 shows the results of Pearson correlation between EFL teachers' level of reflective teaching and their years of experiences.

As it can be seen in Table 4, there is a weak positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching reflectiveness and experience ($r = .15$, $p < .05$).

5. Conclusion and discussion

The objective of the present study was to investigate relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness. Moreover, years of experiences in teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness were explored. For this purpose, two questions were posited: (1) "Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and their teaching effectiveness?" and (2) "Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and reflective Teaching in their years of experiences?"

The first research question was addressed by examining the proposed model with SEM. The last research question was answered using Pearson correlation coefficient.

As the results indicated there were positive and significant correlation between total reflective practices and total teaching effectiveness. In other words, higher scores on teachers' reflective practices correlated with high effective teaching. In addition, among five sub-factors of teachers' reflective practices, Affective reflection has the highest correlation and Critical reflection has the lowest correlation with total teaching effectiveness.

To answer the second research question aiming at examining relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness, reflective Teaching and their years of experiences Pearson correlation coefficient was performed. According to the results that there was a strong positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching effectiveness and experience. Also, there was a weak positive and significant relationship between EFL teachers' level of teaching reflectiveness and experience.

This finding corroborates previous research (Akbari, 2007; Javadi & Khatib, 2014; Mahmoodi & Ghaslani, 2014). This finding is in line with the research evidence obtained in Cimer, Cimer, and Vekli (2013) who investigated the importance of reflection and reflective teaching for teachers in terms of their contribution to ensure effective teaching. They concluded that "since effective teaching involves more than reflection, reflection and reflective skills may not be the only factors to become effective teachers" (p. 133). Also, they recommended that "reflection should be incorporated into

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both pre- service and in-service teacher education courses for the purpose of growing effective teachers" (Cimer et al., 2013). In an attempt, Moradkhani et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' reflective practices and self-efficacy. Their findings revealed that teachers' reflective practices had a significant positive effect on their self-efficacy. Ashraf and Hosseinnia (2017) in their study examined the relationship between professional ethics and teacher effectiveness. Their results have shown that there is a significant relationship between those two variables. In another study, Hosseinnia (2017) also found the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and teaching effectiveness. So, various factors have positive relationship with teaching effectiveness. Also, it has been revealed that some factors have negative relationship with teaching effectiveness. Javadi and Khatib (2014) investigated the relationship between reflective teaching and teachers' burnout. Their findings showed that teachers' reflection was significantly and inversely related to their feeling of burnout ($r = −80$, $p < .05$). Moreover, the Step-Wise Multiple Regression indicated that the components of burnout, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment can negatively predict teachers' reflection. Besides, Akbari (2007) declared that, level of teachers' reflective teaching practices changes their beliefs, values, and their personality and these changes can finally enhance their performance and decrease their level of burnout. In other words, teachers' reflective teaching practices can help them to perceive their own abilities and finally can prompt their personal accomplishment. Furthermore, EFL teachers can more reflect on their interaction with their students to enhance their interpersonal relationship. This can ultimately help them to increase their effectiveness in their classes.

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