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Iranian EFL teachers' reflective practices and learners' evaluation of teachers' effectiveness: Exploring possible relationships

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Abstract

Although reflective teaching is believed to be a significant feature of effective teachers, there is little empirical evidence to demonstrate its influence on learners' evaluation. This study examines the relationship between EFL teachers' degree of reflection and learners' evaluation of teacher effectiveness. Data were collected from 71 Iranian EFL teachers teaching at the private language institutes and 296 language learners who evaluated their respective teachers. Reflective teaching inventory designed by Akbari, Behzadpour, and Dadvand (2007) was administered to the teachers and their learners' evaluation was elicited through Murdoch's (2000) checklist. The statistical analysis revealed significant positive relationships between reflection subscales and learners' evaluation. It was thus assumed that understanding how reflection can change language learners' evaluations can shed light on the role of reflection in improving teachers' performance and consequently learners' appraisal. Hence, 10 teachers with the highest degree of reflection participated in follow-up interviews. Analysis of the interview data indicated the role of reflection subscales in enhancing teachers' ratings as perceived by their learners. In line with these findings, the implications for teachers, administrators, and teacher education are discussed.

Keywords: EFL teachers, reflective practice, learners' evaluation, mixed-methods design

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1. Introduction

As a crucial aspect of learning about teaching, the concept of reflection was put on the map in the field of language teacher education by Wallace (1991). The field of teacher education faced a significant paradigm shift since the traditional teacher education programs provoked a valid criticism from the professionals who viewed the teachers as active participants in the construction of curricular content (Zeichner, 1983). By the replacement of the traditional view with the new approach to teacher education, known as inquiry-oriented approach, reflective practice (RP) was adopted to be among the foundations of teacher education programs (Loughran, 2002) since proponents of inquiry-oriented approach believe that in this orientation the opportunity to inquire into teaching practice and reflect upon classroom performance is given to the teachers.

Although Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) are credited as pioneers in raising the underlying concepts of reflective practice, the notion is believed to have a Cartesian basis (Akbari, 2007). From Descartes' view point, one must withdraw into oneself, reflect about what one has been accepting and increase one's wisdom and self-awareness to generate the universal knowledge. As Fendler (2003) points out, in the area of teaching, the action of reflecting on the practices by the teachers, will help them understand about the self, resulting in generating knowledge and finding solutions to the probable problems.

In the continuum of interpretations which are based on the various definitions of reflective practice, the notion of *problem* can be considered as a common element of reflection (Jay & Johnson, 2002; Loughran, 2002) and the teachers who are constantly trying to identify problems and find possible solutions to the identified problems by examination and evaluation of their own practice are counted among reflective teachers (Moradkhani, 2018). A number of definitions of reflection have been put forward but in essence, it is an action based on "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9).

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The results of teachers' involvement in on-going process of reflectivity and critical examination of themselves can be utilized as a source for the following decisions and actions. An English language teacher's plans for language teaching can be under the influence of reflective thinking, which is enumerated as a necessary feature of efficient teachers. Most teacher educators would argue that reflection is an essential tool in professional development (Burton, 2009) as it can facilitate teaching, help teachers make more innovative decisions and increase their professional knowledge and ability (Barkhuizen, 2009; Borg, 2007, 2009; Farrell, 2006; Ma & Ren, 2011).

Furthermore, a sheer volume of studies suggests that teachers and their instructional approaches are considered as the key resource in the educational settings, playing a critical role in improving education standards; therefore, it should be ensured that teachers are skilled, competent and well resourced (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Hattie, 2009; Papay, 2012; Scheerens et al., 2007). In the same vein, it has been argued that evaluation of teacher effectiveness is necessary for strengthening the effectiveness and quality of teaching and for professional development (Huber & Skedsmo, 2016; Wright & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2012). There are several resources for teacher effectiveness evaluation. As Socha (2013) maintains, the students as one of these sources of information are able to evaluate teaching in an accurate way. The reason can be students' direct and extensive engagement in interaction with the teachers and their performance. Therefore, their evaluation of teacher effectiveness can be very informative and enlightening (Aleamoni 1981; Stronge & Ostrander 1997).

Reflective practice has been promoted in the academia as a powerful tool to enhance students' achievement (Kaung, 2020; Wyatt, 2020). Nonetheless, empirical research on how teachers' involvement in reflection may promote student satisfaction is scanty. To partially address this lacuna, the present study set out to investigate the relationship between the degree of teacher reflection and evaluation of teacher effectiveness by students. The other objective of this research is to discover factors that may contribute to the possible relationship between teachers' involvement in reflection and students' evaluation of them. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated in this study:

1. Is there any significant relationship between the degree of teacher reflection and evaluation of teacher effectiveness by students?
2. If so, how teachers' involvement in reflection may help them get better ratings from their students?

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2. Review of Literature

2.1. Teacher Reflection

As teaching entails numerous complexities, it requires reflection, evaluation and making necessary changes to solve the problems (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011). The significance of reflective teaching has been endorsed by many educational researchers (e.g., Akbari, 2007; Lee, 2005; McLaPacheco, 2011; Song & Catapano; 2008). Engagement of the teachers in reflective practice can help them gain new insight of their practice (Farrell, 2016). It is highly recommended to consider reflection as a significant element in teacher education programs for both preservice and in-service teachers (Borg, 2007, 2009; Barkhuizen, 2009; Farrell, 2006).

As a matter of fact, almost all teachers think about different aspects of their recent classroom and teaching, seeking for the ways to enhance their teaching skill; but it is generally believed that among these teachers only the ones with a higher degree of effectiveness, seeking for solutions to the existing or anticipated problems, drawing effective conclusions and implications for their classroom teaching and taking actions to improve in their profession would be getting noticeably constructive and satisfactory results (Gun, 2010). Conducting an investigation into different aspects of classroom teaching, the teachers can think and decide about the appropriate procedure to use. The procedures include teaching journals, concept mapping, lesson reports, survey and questionnaires, audio and video recordings, observation, and action research (Abednia et al., 2013; Harford & MacRuairc, 2008).

The current literature on teacher reflection is indicating a common trend followed in most of the studies, which is investigation of the effect of teacher reflection on teachers' practices. In a study taking the former trend, Choy and Oo (2012) probed the effect of teacher's reflection on teachers' instructional change and pedagogical improvement. Results of the study confirmed that while most of the studied teachers conducted self-assessment, they did not think about the changes in their teaching strategies. Interestingly, this research suggested that teachers' level of reflection does not affect their teaching practices. In another study taking the same trend, the impact of reflective teaching on new teachers' teaching practices was examined by Silver (2015). A significantly positive relationship between the reflective teaching and teachers' instructional practices was found.

Moreover, Dervent (2015) aimed at determining the effect of reflective thinking on the professional teaching practices of pre-service physical education teachers and to explore their reflective

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levels. The results demonstrated that reflective teaching helped pre-service physical education teachers to focus on their application of their knowledge and to generate a conscious awareness of their professional development. This means that reflective teaching leads to professional development in proper planning, class time management, and use of facilities.

In the context of Iran, Moradian et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between reflectivity in teaching and job satisfaction of Iranian EFL teachers. Results of data analysis indicated that there was a significant relationship between teachers' reflectivity in teaching and their feeling of job satisfaction. Besides, all components of job satisfaction (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment) were found to be negatively correlated with teachers' reflectivity in teaching.

Moradkhani and Shirazizadeh (2017) reported that engagement in reflective practice is associated with less burnout since reflective practitioners encounter less difficulties tackling teaching-related problems. Having found that reflection is negatively correlated with burnout, the researchers investigated the factors hindering teachers' reflection using interviews. As a result of interview data analysis, they categorized the impeding factors into four categories of teacher related, job related, curriculum related, and student related issues.

Kaung (2020) and Wyatt (2020) indicated that teachers' involvement in reflective practices leads to higher student achievement. Additionally, Hosseini Fatemi et al. (2011) investigated the effect of teachers' reflection on their learners' writing achievement in a single study the results of which proved a significant effect for teachers' reflection on learners' writing achievement. The impact of English teachers' reflection on EFL learners' speaking proficiency (accuracy, fluency, and complexity) was evaluated as well, with the results indicating that teachers' reflection significantly affects Iranian EFL learners' oral performance (Rahnama et al., 2016).

2.2.Teacher effectiveness evaluation

The importance of evaluation of teaching is further stressed by the fact that many researchers have shown growing research interest in a wide range of teacher evaluation issues such as student evaluations of teaching. In a study designed by Wright and Jenkins-Guarnieri (2012), a comprehensive overview of student evaluations of teaching was provided with regard to their validity, potential biasing variables, practical use and effective implementation. The results demonstrated that student evaluations of teaching

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are related to student achievement and appear to be valid measures of teaching effectiveness. They are found to have implications largely free from gender bias and mostly effective when applied with consultation strategies.

Students' feedback is proven to be a valuable resource for improving teachers' quality of teaching and it can be implemented in teacher education courses by encouraging the pre-service teachers to make use of their students' perceptions of quality of teaching in order to make remarkable progress (Krammer et al., 2018). Besides, the student evaluation of teaching can be used to estimate student satisfaction (Hadad et al., 2019). In another research, Hadad et al. (2019) captured students' and instructors' perceptions of teaching evaluation criteria. The findings are useful for instructors in order to identify those criteria that are more important to students.

The EFL teachers' success was evaluated by their students in an investigation by Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al. (2018). Significant correlation between teachers' practices of continuing professional development (CPD) strategies and teachers' success suggested the intense effect of teachers' collaboration, reflection and decision making on students' evaluation.

Teachers' language proficiency, class management, affective factors, appearance and dressing style and ability to build the right rapport with the students are regarded as determinants of teacher effectiveness as it is confirmed by Kaboodvand (2013), exploring perceptions of Iranian learners, their parents and language teachers about characteristics of effective language teachers in public schools. Taken together, the evaluation of teacher effectiveness can impact the quality of the teachers' performance (Wright & Jenkins-Guarnieri, 2012). Bowman (2013) studied the role of teacher effectiveness evaluation models in delivering a quality education and the consequences of using such evaluation models. A significant relationship between teacher effectiveness evaluation models and education quality was found.

In an effort to identify and elaborate useful approaches to utilize student evaluation of teaching in order to improve teaching, Golding and Adam (2014) found that the experienced teachers take a reflective approach to evaluations, using the evaluation data for improving learning outcomes of their students and also their own teaching.

Navidinia et al. (2014) sought to examine the effectiveness of the current teacher effectiveness evaluation system in Iran from EFL teachers' perspectives. The results indicated the current teacher

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effectiveness evaluation system was not conducive to teacher professional development and teacher accountability.

In addition, many studies on teacher effectiveness evaluation have been conducted in the form of review papers. In a study of this type, Campbell et al. (2004) reviewed research on teacher effectiveness, identified problems of current teacher effectiveness models and proposed a model of teacher effectiveness, taking differential effectiveness into account.

Notwithstanding the valuable researches in relation to teachers' reflection and teacher effectiveness evaluation, empirical research on this matter is still in its infancy. The significance of this research lies in the value of teachers' reflection and the identification of its relationship with learners' evaluations of teacher effectiveness which might be of help in teachers' improvement and attainment of professional goals. The current study was an attempt to explore this relationship and find the factors which may cause the possible relationship between the variables by employing a correlational and exploratory design.

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3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of 71 Iranian EFL teachers (42 females and 29 males), who were selected through convenience sampling, participated in this study. Their age varied from 21 to 40 (M =27.30) and their teaching experience ranged from one year to 20 years (M =6.35). Thirty-seven of the teachers were the Bachelor graduates or students in English-related university courses (i.e., Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), English Literature, and English Translation), 20 of them were the Master graduates or students in TEFL, and the others had different non-English degrees. They were informed that they might be invited to attend an interview on a voluntary basis.

Besides, one class wherein each teacher taught was selected through convenience sampling and the students of these classes participated in the study. The total number of participating students was 296 (180 females and 116 males). The number of students who voluntarily took part in the study for each teacher ranged from 3 to 7 (M = 4.16) and their age varied between 9 to 28 years.

3.2.Instruments

The already validated English Language Teaching Reflection Inventory (ELTRI), developed by Akbari et al. (2010), was used to measure teachers' reflection. The questionnaire consists of 29 Likert type five-point items (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always). Akbari et al. (2010) validated this instrument in the Iranian context and calculated its Cronbach's alpha reliability as .91.

Moreover, to elicit students' evaluation of their teacher effectiveness, an adapted version of Murdoch's (2000) checklist was used. The checklist was translated into Farsi first, since it was to be responded by students. The instrument contains 54 Likert items divided in three parts: ELT competences with 24 items, general teaching competences with 10 items, and teaching competences with 20 items. Each item is followed by a five-point range from 1 to 4 (i.e., 4 = excellent, 3 = above average, 2 = average, 1 = unsatisfactory) and N/A meaning not applicable.

3.3.Data collection and analysis procedure

In line with the nature of the research questions underpinning this study, a mixed-methods design was employed. In order to collect the data, the sample of participants was selected from the target population at the outset. The researchers asked the teachers and their students to participate in the study. They ensured that the participants' anonymity would be observed and that the confidentiality of their private information would be respected. One hundred twenty ELTRIs were distributed among the teachers in the form of hard copies. After receiving 78 completed copies (a response rate of 65%), the researchers distributed 350 hardcopies of Teacher Evaluation Questionnaires among the learners. These questionnaires were translated in Farsi (the learners' native language) to make sure that lack of appropriate proficiency in English would not make a language barrier. Three hundred thirteen questionnaires were completed and returned (a response rate of 89.42%).

The carelessly completed questionnaires were removed from the collected data. Therefore, the remaining questionnaires for final analysis included 71 ELTRIs and 296 Teacher Evaluation Questionnaires, the responses of which were fed into SPSS. Descriptive statistics were calculated and Cronbach's alpha and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) tests were employed to check the reliability of the data and normality of distribution respectively. The preliminary analyses indicated that there was no

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violation of the mentioned assumptions. The relationship between the scales of reflection and students' evaluation were examined through Pearson Correlation afterward. Since a strong correlation was found between the two variables, 10 teachers with the highest degree of reflection were invited to take part in an interview. Interviews, which were conducted in Farsi, were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, translated into English, and thematically analyzed. The coding process followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) three-phase approach: open coding, axial coding, and labeling. Transcripts were segmented into meaningful units, which were then grouped into thematic clusters and categorized according to the reflection related factors that contribute to students' higher evaluation. Coding was conducted by the first author and reviewed by the second; disagreements were resolved through discussion to enhance analytical reliability.

4. Method

4.1. The relationship between EFL teachers' reflection and students' evaluation

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure the normality assumption is met. Descriptive statistics of the variables were calculated by SPSS and the reliability of the reflection inventory and its subscales were examined as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics of teachers' reflective practices

	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	SD	Alpha	KS Sig.
Reflection	4.59	2.21	3.36	0.64	0.85	0.06
Practical	5.00	1.33	3.32	0.91	0.86	0.18
Cognitive	5.00	1.67	3.58	0.93	0.88	0.20
Affective	5.00	2.00	3.62	0.81	0.87	0.07
Metacognitive	5.00	3.00	3.92	0.51	0.89	0.20
Critical	4.00	1.00	2.52	0.67	0.91	0.18

The significance values of the KS test range from 0.06 to 0.20, suggesting the normal distribution of the collected data. On the other hand, the values of Cronbach's alpha, varying from 0.85 to 0.91, signify a high degree of internal consistency i.e. reliability of teachers' responses.

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Pearson Correlation was run to explore the relationship between the variables. The findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between the two variables. The results in Table 2 evidence a strong positive correlation between participants' total reflection and students' evaluation scores, $r=0.85$, $p<0.05$, which shows that the higher the teachers' reflection, the higher evaluation scores they would receive from their students. Considering the subscales of the reflective inventory, they are positively correlated with evaluation scores (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Correlation between teachers' reflection and students' evaluation.

	Students' evaluation
Reflection	*0.85*
Practical	0.86
Cognitive	0.88
Affective	0.87
Metacognitive	0.89
Critical	0.91

4.2.Contribution of teachers' involvement in reflection to students' evaluation

Observing a strong correlation between the two variables, individual semi-structured interviews were run with 10 teachers with the highest degree of reflection to figure out how their involvement in reflection helped them in getting better ratings from their students. Findings are presented here in the light of the contribution of the five reflection subscales to students' decisions in rating their teachers. In order to protect interviewed teachers' identities, pseudonyms are used.

4.2.1. Contribution of practical reflection

Considering practical reflection, the interviewees referred to their successful experience of planning for the classes followed by reflecting upon their achievements or failures in putting the plans into action. They attached great importance to resolving the problems through this procedure. Some of them

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emphasized the significance of discussing the problems with the colleagues looking for their advice. Reza's (one of the interviewed teachers) comments are the most compelling in this regard:

> As a teacher graduated in TEFL, I have habituated myself to writing my plans before the class even if in brief. I consider what is needed to be done based on the lessons and learners' weaknesses and I think about the ways to address deficiencies. It's important for me to achieve my goals and put my plans into practice successfully. Also I'd like to know how other teachers teach the lessons that I teach but some of my colleagues don't like others to observe their classes, which is easily detected in their behavior. So I discuss the problems with well-educated and successful colleagues, especially the ones who are friendlier. In many cases their ideas and solutions are of great help.

However, Sina had experienced a more comfortable situation:

> When I wanted to start teaching in this institute, they gave me a plan for observing the classes. I observed two sessions of each teacher, totally 10 sessions. I could ask some questions after each session and most of the teachers helped me. Although I had passed the TTC, still I was confused a bit and the teachers' pieces of advice helped me behave more confidently. I still make use of the valuable things I learnt in my observations.

The interviewees also talked about their experiences of being observed by others. Some of them had negative attitudes toward having an observer in the class because of the change in classroom atmosphere, anxiety, learners' feeling less comfortable or concentrated, etc. On the other hand, some of them viewed it as an opportunity, especially if the observer was a knowledgeable one. They referred to its benefits associated with teachers' higher endeavor to take active steps toward improvement by utilizing the feedback they get.

4.2.2. Contribution of cognitive reflection

Cognitive reflection as the next subscale pertains to teachers' conscious efforts aimed at professional development by conducting action research, attending conferences, and reading professional books and papers. The interviewees were aware of the benefits of professional development and mostly claimed that they try to take actions in this regard. In the words of Sara:

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> I am connected to a large number of TEFL graduates, proficient teachers, and teacher trainers through social media. We share different books, papers, videos, and practical points. We are informed of different conferences and workshops and also we can consult with each other to decide about attending in them.

In addition, Mina commented on her attempts for her professional development:

> As a teacher educated in a major relevant to my profession, TEFL, I think without involvement in professional development, I may be stopped from moving forward. I study relevant books or search the internet to get useful ideas. By studying and searching for new information and useful practices, I can update my information and make use of the new things I learn. Also, I have tried watching demonstration videos to learn specific techniques and develop my knowledge. However, it requires the knowledge of teaching so that you can analyze and criticize teachers' performance.

4.2.3. Contribution of affective reflection

Teachers' reflection on learners' emotional responses to the instructions is known as affective reflection. All the interviewees believed that following learners' interests, preferences, and needs can be really influential. Commenting on this issue, Fatemeh said:

> When I started teaching, I had a really bad feeling because I was not welcomed in some classes and I couldn't communicate with learners well. It seemed that they didn't like the class and practices, but I tried to find out their interests. Then I focused on those types of activities more or I gave them options to choose the activities, homework, etc. After a while, I could see their enthusiasm for taking part in class and in activities.

4.2.4. Contribution of metacognitive reflection

The other reflection subscale (i.e., metacognitive reflection) deals with teachers' knowledge of their own attitudes, personality, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Most of these teachers believed in their job as a significant one in spite of many other teachers. They cared about their effectiveness and viewed it as a source of their own satisfaction as well. Although, these were not the only themes within this

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subscale. All of these interviewees were certain about the considerable impact of discovering their own strengths and weaknesses as well as reflecting on inconsistencies in their practices. Regarding teachers' beliefs, Matin stated:

> I always remember one of our best instructors in BA, Mr. X, who always reminded us that we have a great responsibility and we have the ability to make great changes through training the learners. That's why I don't think of my job as a trivial one. I do my best to make positive changes, which in turn makes me feel satisfied. I feel that I can do something important and I feel my learners are satisfied with me too.

The effective role of self-monitoring is clearly demonstrated in Ziba's remarks:

> I mostly probe into the problems and think about the reasons why I do not achieve some goals in order to eliminate the pitfalls. Moreover, I reflect on the practices I have applied and instructional strategies I have had in more satisfying sessions seeking my strengths in order to develop. I have experienced it affecting student achievement positively.

4.2.5. Contribution of critical reflection

Reflecting upon the aspects of pedagogy associated with the socio-political effects on learners' social lives falls in the category of critical reflection. The high correlation between this component and student evaluation shows the tendency to topics such as discrimination, social class, poverty, etc. In addition, the teachers claimed that their learners are better engaged in the class when they start discussing such issues. On the other hand, some of them talked about the significance of critical thinking as teachers who care the consequences of their decisions and performance. Elaheh stated:

> I knew that my students are satisfied with me because I think of the events influencing my teaching and students' satisfaction and take required actions. I have criticized the decisions made by the institute whenever it was necessary. For example, once I criticized the supervisor since she didn't monitor what some teachers did, which resulted in my students feeling they were discriminated against. As a result of my critical outlook, many students find that their rights are not violated and all students must take the classes and exams serious. I understood that they are really sensitive about

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such matters, I mean discrimination, rights, etc. and after that I could feel their satisfaction with me and our class.

5. Discussion

In the quantitative phase of the study, it was found that teachers' reflection can exert influence on learners' appraisal, which signifies that more reflective teachers are noticed as more effective teachers in view of learners. Key factors for effectiveness are the instructional approaches that the teachers take (Creemers & Kyriakides 2008; Hattie 2009; Papay 2012; Scheerens et al. 2007) and effective teachers are those who promote learning and learners' satisfaction by reflecting on instructional designs to choose in order to make use of activities and methods that are more effective and desired by learners (Socha, 2013). Hence, as it was reported in this study and is often cited in others, reflective practices can lead to effective teaching (Frontier & Mielke, 2016).

The association of learners' evaluation to the degree of reflection confirms Socha's (2013) claim concerning the learners as an accurate resource for evaluating and obtaining information about teachers. It is also opined by Blair and Valdez Noel (2014) that learners' provision of insights on teaching and course effectiveness are considered to be rich resources of information. It can be argued that the instructors and teachers can benefit from student feedback in increasing their involvement in reflective practices. Huyber (2014) points out that learners' evaluation can result in teachers' reflection about the various aspects of their teaching in order to find ways to improve in required areas. In fact, the relationship between teachers' reflection and learners' evaluation of their effectiveness is not one-way.

The qualitative phase, which dealt with the interviews, provided noteworthy information about the teachers' perceptions of their ratings and their influential practices. The major thematic patterns out of the interviews indicated different reflective practices or perceptions with discernible impact on learners' evaluation of their teachers. Researchers have underscored the influence of effective and qualified teachers on learners' achievement (Besharati & Mazdayasna, 2017). An interesting point about the interviewed teachers was their educational background since they were mostly studying or graduated in a major relevant to their job (i.e., TEFL) and they believed that it was contributory in their reflective practices like writing reflective journals as they benefit from the knowledge of reflection. Besides, the ones in less relevant or irrelevant majors had passed teacher training courses in reputable centers and

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were familiar with the concept to an acceptable extent, which highlights the notable role of knowledge of reflection in impressing learners' judgement. This echoes the importance of teaching reflection in teacher education programs (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2018).

In addition, teachers' education was efficient in their awareness about the significance of professional development and taking actions in this regard. It was another distinctive factor which had affected the learners and their ratings. The same idea is opined by Tabatabaee-Yazdi et al. (2018), referring to teacher professional development as a requirement for teachers to be knowledgeable enough and to increase learners' achievement efficiently.

The teachers' modesty, their acceptance of the need to learn more from others and their tendency to take part in observation sessions if possible, or to ask questions and utilize the experiences of others to commence development can reveal the impact of teachers' personality on reflective practices they take and consequently their learners' evaluations of them.

The commonalities between teachers' attitudes towards their profession was an outstanding sign suggesting their positive attitudes as a facilitative factor in their effectiveness. In other words, teachers' positive feeling about their profession is driven from their interest in teaching (Moradkhani & Shirazizadeh, 2018) and as an internal motivation their passion encourages them to feel satisfied by searching for solutions of their challenges, gathering information about learners' preferences, and assisting learners to reach their goals. These teachers feel greatly responsible for helping the learners and are aware of the significance of their job.

Moreover, the teachers were not surprised by their ratings and claimed that they believe in their ability to satisfy the learners and to accomplish their responsibilities. In the same way, Bolitho (2016) asserts that the teachers feeling better about themselves have a better feeling about their learners and it causes their learners' positive feeling and attitude toward their teachers. Also, the teachers' beliefs in their ability to accomplish their goals, known as self-efficacy, is associated and correlated with teachers' involvement in reflective practices as it is reported by Moradkhani et al. (2017). It means that teachers who are more deeply engaged in reflection have a unique ability to put efforts into solving the problems, apply more effective techniques and motivate the learners to be more active.

The participating teachers who were metacognitively reflective acknowledged the significance of possible chances to be informed of their strengths and weaknesses through procedures like being

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observed or self-monitoring. However, finding the strengths and weaknesses cannot be sufficient by itself. The decisions made about the ways to make progress accordingly can impact teachers' performance and then learners' opinions about their teacher as implied in Snead and Freiberg's study (2017).

Finally, the strong relationship between critical reflection and learners' evaluations was an unexpected finding of the study, which can be related to the immediate context of teaching, sociopolitical troubles the teachers or learners are exposed to, teachers' and learners' interest in higher order sociopolitical concerns, and their awareness of these issues. Moreover, the value of critical thinking for the teachers might be the result of its contribution to their decisions to make required changes in order to diminish the limitations.

6. Conclusion

In response to the call for developing localized teacher education programs that address the specific contextual needs of Iran's language institutes (Askarpoor et al., 2022), and the recognized necessity for explicit instruction of reflective practices within such programs (Afzali, 2018), the present study underscores the significance of designing teacher education initiatives that purposefully aim to cultivate reflective practitioners. Teaching the concept of reflection and its procedures, not only theoretically but also practically, must be of a high priority to educators, as the knowledge of reflection and observing its outcomes is proven to influence the quality of teaching and teacher practices, which can result in higher achievement and satisfaction of learners. Unless the teachers enjoy the knowledge and practice of reflection, they will not know the value or benefit of keeping reflection journals, observation, professional development, or consultation with colleagues.

Moreover, teachers must be encouraged to participate in observations and professional discussions. Planning observations and asking teachers to write observation reports is recommended. Holding friendly discussions at the end of each semester to report the total conclusions of observations and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement can make these plans more purposeful. Also, some critical sessions can be held during the semester to criticize the videos of different teaching demonstrations to involve teachers in professional dialogues with their colleagues and raise their knowledge of language teaching and ability of critical thinking.

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In addition, announcing some conferences and workshops in the institute and inviting the teachers to take part can have a profound effect on their professional development and their tendency to learn more. After all, providing an atmosphere so that the learners can evaluate the teachers voluntarily at the end of the semester and providing the results to the teachers can make them think about their practices more.

The moderating effect of gender, experience, educational degree and other demographic factors on the relationship between reflection and learners' evaluation of teachers was not examined, which comprises an avenue for future research. Furthermore, the language learners and teachers in private language institutes were studied in this piece of research. The results in public schools might be different due to their nature and objectives and requires further study.

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