

## Effect of Reflective Teaching on Iranian EFL Teachers' Attitude; A Qualitative Study

Yeganeh Malakooti\*

B.A Student, Farhangian University, Zahedan (Sistan & Baluchistan) Branch, Iran  
[malakootiyegane@gmail.com](mailto:malakootiyegane@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the impact of reflective teaching on the function of teachers and totally EFL classes by considering an interview-based framework. Accordingly, a semi-structured interview including 10 EFL teachers has been regarded for the research. The data that has been allocated to this research is gathered by means of grounded theory. three categories has been exported from the result of this research 1) changing the teaching style of teachers, 2) increasing the quality of teachers' teaching, 3) reducing teachers' teaching errors, were categorized. The results showed that reflective method increases the attractiveness of learning and provides appropriate and correct teaching for students.

1

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language. Iranian EFL Teachers. Reflective Teaching. Teachers' Attitude.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. English as a Foreign Language

How do humans communicate with each other? One might say there are many paths up the mountain: a hearing speaker describes the use of a basket fish trap by closely aligning his speech with manual gestures depicting the shape of the trap and how it functions (Enfield, 2009, p. 188); a deaf signer unifies lexicalized manual signs within a bodily re-enactment of herself as a young child to express the sense of surprise and wonder she experienced as she learned signed language for the first time (Fenlon et al., 2018, p. 96); while a deaf blind signer reaches for the hand of a hearing shopkeeper, gestures "how much?", and then invites the shopkeeper to trace numbers on his palm (Kusters, 2017, p. 400). In each context, each individual engages with others in their environment on their own terms, making use of the various bodily articulators (a voice, hands, body) and strategies for communicating (speech, visible and tactile actions, numerical symbols) available to them in that moment and physical space. In doing so, they position themselves as independent agents embedded within an intricate and dynamic network of social relationships, someone who effects social actions and is affected by others' actions in turn (Levinson and Enfield, 2006; Enfield, 2013). Therefore, different creatures utilize language in different ways to communicate whether with each other or nature.

Among all the languages in the world, English is the most commonly used and lots of people have been studying it during a long time as a school subject. English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight. Development of communicative language skills and cultural insight can promote greater interaction, understanding and respect between



persons with different cultural backgrounds. (KD, 2006, 2013: 2) Thus, EFL teachers play an impressive role to give their students a positive insight about this subject matter.

English as a foreign language (EFL) has been taught widely as a compulsory subject in many educational institutions in Iran, from primary schools to tertiary institutions. The efficacy of English teaching and learning attracts a lot of interest from Iranian people and society. The government has set out a number of policies and initiatives in order to improve the quality of EFL teaching and learning in their education system. However, it seems that there have been a number of challenges for EFL Iranian teachers, and a lot of problems inhibiting EFL teaching and learning in Iran (Mettianen, 2018).

## 1.2. Iranian EFL Teachers

Due to the importance of creating a positive perception for EFL learners, it is highly vital for EFL Iranian teachers to consider a set of effective methods for students to facilitate the process of mastering.

A lot of effort has been expended to uncover teachers' beliefs in language teaching (Borg, 2006; Chen & Goh, 2011; Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, & Son, 2004), and teachers' beliefs have a great influence on their teaching practices (Borg, 2003; Chen & Goh, 2011). According to Williams and Burden (1997), "teachers' deep-rooted beliefs about how languages are learned will pervade their classroom actions more than a particular methodology they are told to adopt or course book they follow" (p. 57). Yilmaz (2011) found that teachers rate themselves to be more efficacious in instructional strategies than in class management or student engagement.

Teachers also perceive themselves to be better in reading and speaking skills than in writing and listening skills, and tend to use communication-oriented strategies more than grammar-oriented strategies. It is hypothesized that the more proficient the teachers believe themselves to be in the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), the more efficacious they feel (Mettianen, 2018).

Teachers' perspectives have been explored in many various aspects of English language teaching. Teachers' challenges in English language teaching attract a great deal of research interest and discussion from educators and scholars. Teaching practices can be affected by many factors, and recognizing the challenges that teachers encounter in their teaching is very important (Mettianen, 2018). It not only helps teachers to employ appropriate teaching techniques to improve their professional practice but also encourages teacher educators to design effective teacher preparation and training programs to reduce the teachers' difficulties and increase the quality of teaching (Chen & Goh, 2011). Consequently, all of them have been enthusiastic to enhance the level of teaching by taking advantage of reflecting practices so they have started utilizing various methods to enhance quo norms. Therefore, they have gone beyond methods by considering a reflective approach toward teaching.

## 1.3. Reflective Teaching and Practices

Reflection or "critical reflection", refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action (Mettianen, 2018). Bartlett (1990) points out that becoming a reflective teacher involves moving beyond a primary concern with instructional techniques and "how to" questions and asking "what" and "why" questions that

regard instructions and managerial techniques not as ends in themselves, but as part of broader educational purposes.

Reflective teaching refers to a consistent evaluation of teachers from their own classes, students, and lesson plans. Reflective teaching is a process that teachers observe their own teaching process and the result of that, plus gathering descriptive data to figure out where a change is needed for improving the current situation. The result of reflective teaching is that teachers could have adaptable lesson plans and perspectives toward teaching.

Many different approaches can be employed if one wishes to become a critically reflective teacher, including observation of oneself and others, team teaching, and exploring one's view of teaching through writing. Central to any approach used however is a three-part process which involves (Aronson, 2017):

**Stage 1:** The event itself The starting point is an actual teaching episode, such as a lesson or other instructional event. While the focus of critical reflection is usually the teacher's own teaching, self-reflection can also be stimulated by observation of another person's teaching (Aronson, 2017).

**Stage 2:** Recollection of the event The next stage in reflective examination of an experience is an account of what happened, without explanation or evaluation. Several different procedures are available during the recollection phase, including written descriptions of an event, a video or audio recording of an event, or the use of check lists or coding systems to capture details of the event (Aronson, 2017).

**Stage 3:** Review and response to the event Following a focus on objective description of the event, the participant returns to the event and reviews it. The event is now processed at a deeper level, and questions are asked about the experience (Aronson, 2017).

### 1.3.1. Peer Observation

Peer observation can provide opportunities for teachers to view each other's teaching in order to expose them to different teaching styles and to provide opportunities for critical reflection on their own teaching. In a peer observation project initiated in our own department, the following guidelines were developed.

**1. Each participant would both observe and be observed:** Teachers would work in pairs and take turns observing each other's classes (Mubuke & et al, 2020).

**2. Pre-observation orientation session:** Prior to each observation, the two teachers would meet to discuss the nature of the class to be observed, the kind of material being taught, the teachers' approach to teaching, the kinds of students in the class, typical patterns of interaction and class participation, and any problems that might be expected. The teacher being observed would also assign the observer a goal for the observation and a task to accomplish. The task would involve collecting information about some aspect of the lesson, but would not include any evaluation of the lesson. Observation procedures or instruments to be used would be agreed upon during this session and a schedule for the observations arranged.

**3. The observation:** The observer would then visit his or her partner's class and complete the observation using the procedures that both partners had agreed on (Mubuke & et al, 2020).

**4. Post-observation:** The two teachers would meet as soon as possible after the lesson. The observer would report on the information that had been collected and discuss it with the teacher (Richards and Lockhart, 1991).

### 1.3.2. Written accounts of experiences

Another useful way of engaging in the reflective process is through the use of written accounts of experiences. Personal accounts of experiences through writing are common in other disciplines (Powell 1985) and their potential is increasingly being recognized in teacher education. A number of different approaches can be used.

### 1.3.3. Self-Reports

Self-reporting involves completing an inventory or check list in which the teacher indicates which teaching practices were used within a lesson or within a specified time period and how often they were employed (Pak, 1985). The inventory may be completed individually or in group sessions. The accuracy of self-reports is found to increase when teachers focus on the teaching of specific skills in a particular classroom context and when the self-report instrument is carefully constructed to reflect a wide range of potential teaching practices and behaviours (Richards, 1990).

### 1.3.4. Autobiographies

Abbs (1974, cited in Powell 1985) discusses the use of autobiographies in teacher preparation. These consist of small groups of around 12 student teachers who meet for an hour each week for at least 10 weeks. During this period of time each student works at creating a written account of his or her educational experience and the weekly meetings are used to enable each person to read a passage from his or her autobiography so that it can be supported, commented upon by peers and the teacher (43). Powell (1985) described the use of reaction-sheets – sheets student teachers complete after a learning activity has been completed – in which they are encouraged “to stand back from what they had been doing and think about what it meant for their own learning and what it entailed for their work as teachers of others” (p.46).

### 1.3.5. Journal Writing

A procedure which is becoming more widely acknowledged as a valuable tool for developing critical reflection is the journal or diary. The goal of journal writing is, (Vachon & Leblance, 2016).

1. To provide a record of the significant learning experiences that have taken place
2. To help the participant come into touch and keep in touch with the self-development process that is taking place for them
3. To provide the participants with an opportunity to express, in a personal and dynamic way, their self-development
4. To foster a creative interaction:
  - Between the participant and the self-development process that is taking place
  - Between the participant and other participants who are also in the process of self-development
  - Between the participant and the facilitator whose role it is to foster such development (Powell, 1985, Bailey, 1990)

### 1.3.6. Collaborative Diary Keeping

A group of teachers may also collaborate in journal writing. A group of my colleagues recently explored the value of collaborative diary-keeping as a way of developing a critically reflective view of their teaching (Brock, Ju and Wong, 1991).

As a result, by considering all different methods for reflective teaching, Iranian EFL teachers' attitude toward teaching changes and the more they consider reflective practices during their classes, the more they they'll satisfy with this process and also their attitude starts changing as well.

## 1.4. EFL Iranian Teachers' Attitude

Teaching is a very personal activity, and it is not surprising that individual teachers bring to teaching very different beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes effective teaching. The majority of the English teachers have admitted the importance of language learning for employability, skills development, travel, enjoyment, cultural understanding, and communication. Nevertheless, in the process of English language teaching, English language teachers are supposed to come to the classroom based on their perceptions of their students, school administration, curriculum and the society. Accordingly, these perceptions are responsible for their attitudes. Because teachers' attitudes have a great impact whether it's positive or negative on the teaching process, then, it is important to know what teachers adopt when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language. Moreover, foreign language teachers embrace different attitudes toward that language, English, which their attitudes may influence language learners by pushing them to behave in certain manners towards the language itself. Therefore, both positive and negative English language teachers' attitudes determine the success or the failure of this language teaching and learning. (Hays & gay, 2017).

This study is aimed to investigate the efficacy of reflective practices on Iranian EFL teachers' attitude due to inform them from the importance of reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is one of the key skills of learning and teaching and the characteristics of the identity of the considered professions (Richard and Lehart, 1991; Sean 23, 1991). Today the concept of reflective thinking that includes discussion and critical thinking, it is more and more proposed for the development of teachers' professions (Darling Hamon and Rathman, 2015).

Listening to the words of the teachers themselves can help in this matter to theorize in the field of feedback thinking. Apart from this, since thinking requires feedback from the teacher rather than the views and express his beliefs in practical implementation (Richard and Lehart, 1991). Thus, there has been provided some semi-instructed interviews from Iranian EFL teachers to figure out their attitude toward reflective teaching.

## 2. Research Hypothesis

Reflective teaching has a highly positive effect on EFL Iranian teachers' attitude toward teaching because it helps them to apply some changes in their approaches whenever they go to their classes and they try to plan their lessons.

## 3. Research Questions

What effect does reflective education have on the attitude of English language teachers?

## 4. Research Methodology

The current research used the grounded theory method to collect data. Since reflective teaching is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, it needs a conceptual framework that includes a series of related and interconnected issues. Therefore, the foundational data method can provide unique insight in reflective teaching research.

### 4.1. Participants

10 Iranian EFL teachers have been recruited randomly from different schools and English language departments to take part in an online semi-structured interview for answering a set of questions in 20-30 minutes. For interviewing, some teachers were selected who were informed enough about this subject matter. In addition, before the interview they were asked whether or not they are willing to answer the questions.



## 4.2. Instruments

The set of questions include 12 essay-type questions that has been used for gathering data. The survey is brought in appendix part as well.

## 4.3. Data Collection

In order to collect data, an online invitation message was sent on different platforms (the invitation is brought in the appendix part) and all the Iranian EFL teachers were asked to take part in an online interview. All the participants were given 30 minutes to share their answers and all the information was note-taken without mentioning the real name of the interviewees. All and all, the information was recorded also was categorized and coded by means of grounded theory.

The language used during the interviews was English and Persian, plus the interviewees were allowed to answer the questions in whether their native language or English. In addition, all the questions were asked in English.

## 4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis allows researchers to interpret the authenticity and truth of data subjectively, but with a scientific method. The objectivity of the results is guaranteed by the existence of a systematic coding process. Qualitative content analysis goes beyond the words or objective content of texts and examines themes or patterns that are overt or hidden as overt content.

Phenomenologists assume that knowledge is obtained through the interaction between researchers and participants, that there are different methods for data analysis in different schools of phenomenology, such as Cheor Chi, Claizi, and Van Kam, in this study, Claizi's method was used for data analysis (classification of data). Is. This method includes seven steps: 1: Reading all the descriptions provided by the participant in the study in order to get a feeling of familiarity with them. 2: extracting important sentences. 3: Formulating meanings. 4: Creating the main theme or topics. 5: Combining the results in the form of a comprehensive description of the research subject. 6: Formulating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study. 7: Final validation of the findings, which are described in detail below.

1: All participants' explanations were read carefully. For this purpose, all the interviews were recorded and written down.

2: At this stage, phrases or sentences that were directly related to the desired phenomenon were extracted from the interviews, for this purpose, important sentences were underlined. These extracted sentences are called ambiguous sentences.

3: In this part, the meaning of each important sentence is extracted and noted in the margin of the interview text. These are known as regularized meanings or codes.

4: The previous case was repeated for each interview and the extracted meanings are organized and formulated as clusters of topics. a) This cluster of topics was referred to the primary protocols to check and verify their validity. b) Contradictions between or within the clusters: At this stage, it is possible to see discrepancies within or between the clusters, some subjects may not be clustered with other cases; Or completely unrelated to other cases. In these cases, by referring to the primary protocols and studying more interviews, the roots of those meanings are understood and the necessary decision is made to categorize them.

5: In this step, a comprehensive description of the cluster results is prepared.

6: An explicit and clear statement of the basic structure of the phenomenon under study, finally by formulating a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study, a general picture of the inherent structure of the phenomenon is presented.

## 5. Result of Research Questions

By examining interviews and extracting codes from teachers' lived experiences, 3 main categories have been extracted, which are: (And we answer the main question)

**Table 1. Main categories**

Categories
Changing the style of teaching teachers
Increasing the quality of teachers' teaching
Reducing teachers' teaching errors

### Changing the style of teaching teachers

Row	Subcategories	Some sentences of the interviewers
1	Correct training	In this way, as a teacher, I can better understand my mistakes in teaching
2	Increase learning	This analysis of the teaching method increases learning

### Increasing the quality of teachers' teaching

Row	Subcategories	Some sentences of the interviewers
1	Quality education	The quality of my teaching has increased a lot
2	Use of technology	This method has strengthened the information technology department in the school

### Reducing teachers' teaching errors

Row	Subcategories	Some sentences of the interviewers
1	error reduction	This method has reduced possible errors every time I review my method
2	Correct expression of concepts	Concepts are conveyed correctly and completely

## 6. Discussion

Reflective teaching is a process in which the teacher thinks about what he has done: How did I act? This process starts with reviewing what has been done (by reviewing your virtual teaching video). What is taught in the virtual classroom and the actions and reactions, interactions, and anything that needs to be changed and improved are analyzed.

What is reflective teaching and how can it make both teachers and students enjoy learning in effective and attractive virtual teaching and transform everyone's emotional and mental atmosphere into peace and relaxation.

These days, virtual education has faced challenges, and thoughtful and interested teachers are looking for solutions to solve some of the challenges that are within their scope of action. In fact, they ask themselves, what can I do? Not that others should do this and that; Because they are not in my possession

Reflective teaching is a strategy that helps students initiate change, enjoy it, and share it with their students. Reflective teaching is a process in which the teacher thinks about what he has done: How did I act? This process starts with reviewing what has been done (by reviewing your virtual teaching video). What is taught in the virtual classroom and the actions and reactions, interactions, and everything that needs to be changed and improved are analyzed.



## 7. Conclusion

This research has continued its way based on the results of "Effect of Education on the Attitude of English Teachers" which was conducted with a qualitative method and a number of 10 teachers using a purposeful sampling method and with an in-depth semi-structured interview to investigate their experiences in reflective teaching. and finally, after conducting and reviewing and analyzing the interviews, the following three categories became the first. 1) changing the teaching style of teachers, 2) increasing the quality of teachers' teaching, 3) reducing teachers' teaching errors, were categorized.

Creative teaching means searching and finding problems and thinking of ways to solve them creatively; Fixing mistakes, increasing the quality of teaching, an activity that helps the teacher to review and self-reflect, to recognize issues and find ideas, and the teacher learns to learn first and then to teach. Thinking about what makes me perform well is important and grounded in the reality of the classroom.

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