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Iranian EFL teachers' reflection levels: The role of gender, experience, and qualifications

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The present study aimed to investigate the status of reflective teaching practice among Iranian EFL teachers scrutinizing the variables of qualification, years of experience, and gender. One hundred English teachers completed an online questionnaire measuring the four levels of reflective teaching, i.e., pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical, and critical reflection. The results of the multivariate ANOVA showed that Iranian English teachers mainly reflected at the pedagogical level in their classrooms. Critical, surface, and pre-reflection constituted the next levels they reflected on their practice. A significant relationship was found between teachers' qualifications and years of experience and the pedagogical and critical reflection levels. In addition, females outperformed males in terms of critical reflection. The results call for more attention to fostering critical thinking skills among Iranian EFL teachers.

Key words: reflective teaching; levels of reflection; critical thinking skills; Iranian educational context; English teachers

Introduction

Teaching is a demanding multi-faceted profession which places considerable demands on teachers for efficiency while at the same time meeting high standards. One aspect of teachers' work that continually receives attention in educational research is the way teachers think about their practice. John Dewey called such thinking about experience reflection and gave special importance to developing teachers who are reflective practitioners.

In the early part of the 20th century, John Dewey differentiated between reflective and routine human actions. He suggested that impulse, tradition, and authority direct routine action but reflective behaviour requires "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 conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). Dewey argued that reflective teaching provides an opportunity for teachers to perform in a conscious and deliberative manner rather than in routine and automatic ways. Schön (1983, 1987) extended the definition by relating reflection to action and claiming that teachers could achieve professional development through continuous reflection on their practice. He proposed the following two modes of reflection:

1. Reflection-on-action takes place after an action thus requiring teachers to think back, evaluate, and reflect on what has happened during the lesson.
2. Reflection-in-action happens when practitioners look at their actions in the moment, examine the values and assumptions underlying their practice, and consider its future consequences.

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It is suggested that reflective teaching helps teachers to act in a deliberate and purposeful manner (Farrell, 1998) by requiring them to take the time to notice, reflect on and evaluate what they do (Qing, 2009) and this may help teachers become more effective in their teaching. Schön's original attempts to operationally define and categorize reflection in different levels prompted scholars to propose various hierarchies of reflective thinking (e.g., Brookfield, 1995; Farrell, 2004; Valli, 1997). In all these hierarchies, the lower levels are usually concerned with technical aspects of teaching, and as the levels go up, the broader contextual and social issues are taken into consideration (Sanal-Erginel, 2006). One of the important hierarchies is the framework developed by Van Manen (1977) who identified three hierarchical levels of reflective thinking. They are called technical, contextual, and dialectical levels of reflection.

The first level of reflection deals with the methodological issues and theoretical aspects of teaching. Teachers reflecting at the technical level need to "learn to apply a variety of techniques to the curriculum and to the teaching-learning process, so that a predetermined set of objectives can be realized most efficiently and most effectively" (Van Manen, 1977, p. 210). The context of school and classroom and the educational goals are not considered to be problematic at this level (Zeichner & Liston, 1987). The second mode of reflection deals with analysis and elaboration of the underlying assumptions and intentions of classroom practices as well as consequences of actions employed. Van Manen's (1977) third and highest level of reflectivity, critical reflection, involves questioning of moral and ethical issues which directly or indirectly act upon teaching practices. Here, the scholars try to move beyond a concern with the effective delivery of lessons and bound reflection with social and political dimensions of teaching.

Importance of the Study

The beliefs, values, and assumptions of most people are constrained by their educational and social backgrounds. Reflective strategies assist teachers to actively analyse their beliefs and practices, and develop meta-cognitive abilities (Moon, 2004), and monitor the decisions they make about what and how to teach. Such developments will be beneficial to themselves and to their students. It seems likely that the level of teachers' reflection will impact on the kinds of changes they make in their performance. The study reported here is an initial step in ascertaining the varying levels of reflection among Iranian EFL teachers and the factors which influence those levels.

Literature Review

The literature on reflective practice is largely theoretical and speculative discussing the different frameworks and levels of reflection. There are few empirical studies that focus on the employment of reflection by teachers and how the different variables moderate the outcomes.

Lee (2005) assessed the level of reflective thinking possessed by three pre-service teachers in a Korean College. Three major sources of data guided the study: interviews, observations, and written documents such as survey questionnaires and journal entries. After an initial focus-group interview, individual interviews were conducted with each participant. A grounded theory approach was adopted to analyse the data. The analysis of pre-service teachers' journals showed that they reflected at all three levels identified in Van Manen's framework. Also the frequency of reflecting at the second level increased as teachers began their teaching practice. Moreover, their reflection level was

influenced by the condition under which reflection occurred. In another study, Liou (2001) provided a description of pre-service teachers' reflective practices by examining teachers' practice teaching reports over a six-week period. Twenty student teachers participated in a TEFL practice teaching course which aimed at preparing them to teach English at high schools. Conceptual analysis of teachers' written reports showed that their reflection mainly focused on theories and approaches of teaching, classroom management, and evaluating teaching. Although teachers reflected at both descriptive and critical levels, there were twice as many instances of critical reflection in their reports as descriptive reflections. Also a study by Minott (2008) showed that teachers mostly used reflection in- and on-action and few instances of deliberative reflection and very few cases of critical reflection. Wunder (2003) also found that most of the pre-service teachers' reflections in his study focused on Van Manen's (1977) first level and there were few instances of practical and critical reflection levels.

Some studies have investigated the influence of independent variables on teachers' reflection. In a study at an English Preparatory School in a Turkish university with the participation of 60 teachers with varying levels of qualifications and a wide range of teaching experience, Odeh, Kurt, and Atamtürk (2010) examined whether gender, length of experience, and level of education made a significant difference in the levels of teacher's reflection and whether the teachers were aware of and employed reflective practices. The results show that teachers employed reflection-in-action strategies far more frequently than reflection-on-action. However, gender, experience, and level of education did not play a significant role in teachers' reflection.

A study by Rezaeyan and Nikoopour (2013) looked at the relationship between the degree of reflectivity and the teaching experience of 30 EFL teachers in three language schools in Iran. The study showed no significant correlation between the teachers' degree of reflectivity and their years of teaching experience, which suggests that young teachers with few teaching years could be as reflective as their experienced peers. Rashidi and Javidanmehr (2012) investigated the status of reflection and the impact on it of gender, educational background and academic qualifications among 190 English teachers in Iranian English language schools. The results indicated that reflective teaching was practiced in this context but it was not influenced by teaching experience and qualifications. However, a significant effect was found for gender, that is, female teachers outperformed their male counterparts in terms of reflection. Poyraz and Usta (2013) also found more evidence of reflectivity by female teachers.

There have been no studies about the levels of Iranian English teachers' reflection on their practice and how the variables of gender, qualifications, and years of experience moderate this process. It is the goal of the study reported here to fill this gap in the literature by addressing the following questions:

1. At which level do Iranian EFL teachers reflect on their practice in the classroom?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' years of experience, gender, and qualifications and their level of reflection?

Correspondingly, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

1. There is no significant difference between Iranian English teachers in terms of the levels of reflection.
2. There is no significant relationship between Iranian teachers' years of experience, gender, and qualifications and their level of reflection.

Method

Participants

Initially 140 Iranian English teachers were invited to participate in the study. They received an explanatory email and a link to an online survey. Within a period of 6 weeks 108 teachers responded but of these, 8 questionnaires were invalidated through total or partially missing responses. Thus, the participants of this study were 100 English teachers teaching at different language institutes in Iran. They consisted of sixty females and forty males. Fifteen held BA degrees, sixty-six MA degrees, and nineteen had PhD degrees. Their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 22 years.

Instruments

A questionnaire including 53 items on a five-point likert scale was used to measure the levels at which teachers reflected on their practice. It was developed and validated by Larrivee (2008) to assess teachers' level of reflective practice. It assessed four levels: pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection, and critical reflection. The surface, pedagogical, and critical reflection levels correspond to the technical, contextual, and dialectical reflection levels in Van Manen's (1977) hierarchy. The additional pre-reflection level which describes teachers who perform on an automatic basis was added because reflective practitioners are usually compared with non-reflective practitioners. Table 1 summarises characteristics of the four reflection levels measured by the questionnaire.

Table 1. Different levels of reflection (based on Larrivee, 2008)

Level of Reflection	Characteristics
Pre-reflective	Teachers respond to classroom situations in automatic ways, take things for granted without questioning, and do not modify their teaching style in relation to students' feedback.
Surface	Teachers focus on methods and strategies used to achieve predetermined goals.
Pedagogical	Teachers consider the theories underlying teaching methods, the instructional goals, and the relationship between theory and practice. They attempt to develop connections between their espoused theory (what they believe they do) and their theory in use (what they do in the actual practice).
Critical	Teachers examine ethical and social implications and significance of the classroom actions.

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through Cronbach's alpha and was in the acceptable range (0.70). The factor analysis showed that pre-reflection and surface reflection levels measured one construct and highly correlated with each other while pedagogical and critical reflection levels loaded on another construct.

Procedure

Multivariate analysis of ANOVA (MANOVA) was conducted on the questionnaire data to compare the subjects' means on pre-reflection, surface, pedagogical, and critical levels and the factors that affect their use of levels of reflection. The multivariate ANOVA technique requires the normality of the data which was checked using two methods; skewness and kurtosis ratios and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than +/-1.96 and therefore in the acceptable range (Table 2). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test were also non-significant ($p > .05$) (Table 3).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
Reflection	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Pre-	100	.443	.241	1.84	.610	.478	1.28
Surface	100	-.144	.241	-0.60	.301	.478	0.63
Pedagogical	100	-.063	.241	-0.26	-.339	.478	-0.71
Critical	100	.219	.241	0.91	.330	.478	0.69

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-	.975	100	.058
Surface	.978	100	.085
Pedagogical	.980	100	.125
Critical	.981	100	.161

Findings

Levels of reflection among Iranian EFL teachers

A comparison of the four levels of reflection (Table 4) shows teachers mean scores in descending order for pedagogical reflection, critical reflection, surface reflection and pre-reflection. A multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare those means (Table 5) and based on the results ($F (3, 97) = 166.70$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta 2 = .83$ representing a large effect size), it can be concluded that there were significant differences between the teachers' means on the four measures of reflection. Thus the first null-hypothesis that there is no significant difference between Iranian English teachers in terms of their levels of reflection is rejected.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for reflection levels

Reflection	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-	23.808	.303	23.206	24.410
Surface	26.636	.409	25.824	27.447
Pedagogical	37.833	.428	36.984	38.681
Critical	34.819	.538	33.751	35.886

Table 5. Multivariate tests for reflection levels

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pillai's Trace	.838	166.708	3	97	.000	.838
Wilks' Lambda	.162	166.708	3	97	.000	.838
Hotelling's Trace	5.156	166.708	3	97	.000	.838
Roy's Largest Root	5.156	166.708	3	97	.000	.838

Pair-wise comparisons between the four reflection means showed that Iranian EFL teachers practiced surface reflection (M = 26.63) in their classes more than pre-reflection. They also employed pedagogical and critical reflection more than surface and pre-reflection levels. However, they practiced pedagogical reflection more than critical reflection in their classrooms. The results indicate that Iranian English teachers mainly operate at the level of pedagogical reflection in their classrooms. This is followed by critical, surface, and pre-reflection reflection levels.

Teachers' level of experience, academic degree, and gender and their reflection levels

A multivariate analysis of ANOVA (MANOVA) was used to look for significant relationships between gender, degree, and teaching experience with pre-reflection, pedagogical, surface, and critical levels of the questionnaire. Before discussing the results, it should be mentioned that the teachers were divided into three groups of high (n = 33), mid (n = 27) and low (n = 40) experience based on the mean of 8.39 plus and minus half a standard deviation of 4.59.

Table 6 shows the SPSS output reporting three-way multivariate ANOVA results for understanding the relationship between variables of academic degree, gender, and experience levels and their interaction with the four measures of reflection. Moreover, the comparisons are followed by post-hoc Scheffe's test for the degree and experience levels because they had more than two levels. The results will be discussed under three topics relating reflection to qualifications, years of experience and gender respectively.

Table 6. Tests of between-subjects effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Degree	Pre-Reflection	32.443	2	16.222	1.944	.150	.045
	Surface	43.251	2	21.625	1.329	.270	.031
	Pedagogical	105.849	2	52.925	5.341	.007	.114
	Critical	379.705	2	189.852	9.585	.000	.188
Experience Level	Pre-Reflection	61.312	2	30.656	3.675	.030	.081
	Surface	40.234	2	20.117	1.236	.296	.029
	Pedagogical	348.822	2	174.411	17.603	.000	.298
	Critical	308.441	2	154.221	7.786	.001	.158
Gender	Pre-Reflection	6.990	1	6.990	.838	.363	.010
	Surface	22.011	1	22.011	1.353	.248	.016
	Pedagogical	43.822	1	43.822	4.423	.038	.051
	Critical	.179	1	.179	.009	.925	.000
Error	Pre-Reflection	692.429	83	8.343			
	Surface	1350.758	83	16.274			
	Pedagogical	822.385	83	9.908			
	Critical	1644.042	83	19.808			
Total	Pre-Reflection	57593.84	100				
	Surface	72602.32	100				
	Pedagogical	144941.90	100				
	Critical	124098.93	100				

Reflection and qualifications

There is no significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and the level of pre-reflection (Table 6; $F (2, 83) = 1.94$, $p > .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .045$ representing a weak effect size). Table 7 indicates the means and standard deviations for the four reflection levels as far as the variable of qualification is concerned.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics: Levels of reflection by degree

Dependent Variable	Degree	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-Reflection	BA	22.695	.789	21.125	24.265
	MA	23.592	.391	22.813	24.371
	Ph.D.	24.731	.783	23.174	26.287
Surface	BA	25.261	1.102	23.069	27.454
	MA	26.578	.547	25.490	27.665
	Ph.D.	27.487	1.093	25.313	29.661
Pedagogical	BA	36.220	.860	34.509	37.930
	MA	37.588	.427	36.739	38.436
	Ph.D.	40.451	.853	38.755	42.147
Critical	BA	34.305	1.216	31.886	36.724
	MA	33.427	.603	32.227	34.626
	Ph.D.	39.308	1.206	36.910	41.707

Since the F (2, 83) = 1.32, p > .05 (Partial η2 = .031 representing a weak effect size), it can be concluded that there is no relationship between subjects' qualification and surface reflection level. However, as it is clear from Table 6, there is a significant relationship between qualification and level of pedagogical reflection (F (2, 83) = 5.34, p > .05, Partial η2 = .11 representing a moderate to large effect size).

The results of the post-hoc comparison test (Table 8) indicate that PhD teachers (M = 40.45) significantly had a higher level of pedagogical reflection than the BA (M = 36.22, MD = 5.29, p < .05, 95 % CI [2.58, 8]) and MA (M = 37.58) groups (MD = 3.61, p < .05, 95 % CI [1.57, 5.65]). Moreover, there was no significant difference between MA (M = 37.58) and BA (M = 36.22) teachers' means on pedagogical reflection (MD = 1.68, p > .05, 95 % CI [-.57, 3.92]).

Table 8. Post-hoc Scheffe's multiple comparisons: Pedagogical reflection by degree

Dependent Variable	(I) Degree	(J) Degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pedagogical	Ph.D.	BA	5.29*	1.087	.000	2.58	8.00
		MA	3.61*	.820	.000	1.57	5.65
	MA	BA	1.68	.900	.183	-.57	3.92

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As far as the critical reflection level is concerned, there is a significant relationship between qualification and critical reflection (F (2, 83) = 9.58, p > .05, Partial η2 = .18 representing a large effect size). The post-hoc comparison test (Table 9) shows that the PhD teachers (M = 39.30) significantly had a higher level of critical reflection than the BA (M = 34.30) group (MD = 5.94, p < .05, 95 % CI [2.11, 9.78 and the MA (M = 33.42) group (MD = 6.27, p < .05, 95 % CI [3.38, 9.16]). However, there is not any significant difference between BA (M =34.30) and MA (M = 33.42) teachers' means on critical reflection (MD = .33, p > .05, 95 % CI [-2.85, 3.50]).

Table 9. Post-hoc Scheffe's multiple comparisons: Critical reflection by degree

Dependent Variable	(I) Degree	(J) Degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Critical	Ph.D.	BA	5.94*	1.537	.001	2.11	9.78
		MA	6.27*	1.159	.000	3.38	9.16
	BA	MA	.33	1.273	.968	-2.85	3.50

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Reflection and years of teaching experience

As the second row of Table 6 shows, there is a significant relationship between teaching experience and the level of pre-reflection ($F (2, 83) = 3.67$, $p < .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .081$ representing a moderate effect size). Table 10 represents the descriptive statistics for teachers with high, mid, and low levels of experience on four levels of reflection.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics: Levels of reflection by teaching experience

Dependent Variable	EXPLevel	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-Reflection	Low	24.934	.569	23.803	26.065
	Mid	23.364	.777	21.819	24.909
	High	22.725	.625	21.482	23.969
Surface	Low	27.326	.794	25.746	28.906
	Mid	26.437	1.085	24.279	28.596
	High	25.623	.873	23.887	27.359
Pedagogical	Low	35.295	.620	34.062	36.527
	Mid	38.491	.847	36.807	40.175
	High	41.323	.681	39.969	42.678
Critical	Low	34.259	.876	32.516	36.002
	Mid	34.106	1.197	31.725	36.487
	High	39.549	.963	37.633	41.464

Post-hoc Scheffe's test (Table 11) indicates that teachers with low experience level ($M = 24.93$) significantly had a higher level of pre-reflection than the highly experienced teachers ($M = 22.72$) group ($MD = 2.20$, $p < .05$, 95 % CI [.50, 3.89]). The wide confidence interval suggests the results be interpreted cautiously. In addition, there is no significant difference between low ($M = 24.93$) and mid ($M = 23.36$) experienced teachers' means ($MD = 1.53$, $p > .05$, 95 % CI [-.26, 3.32]) as well as between mid ($M = 23.36$) and high ($M = 22.72$) experienced teachers' means on pre-reflection level ($MD = .66$, $p > .05$, 95 % CI [-1.20, 2.53]).

Table 11. Post-hoc Scheffe's multiple comparisons: pre-reflection by teaching experience

Dependent Variable	(I) Degree	(J) Degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-Reflection	Low	Mid	1.53	.719	.110	-.26	3.32
		High	2.20*	.679	.007	.50	3.89
	Mid	High	.66	.750	.677	-1.20	2.53

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

No significant relationship was found between teaching experience and the level of surface reflection ($F (2, 83) = 1.23$, $p > .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .029$ representing a weak effect size). But there is a significant relationship between teaching experience and the level of

pedagogical reflection (F (2, 83) = 17.60, p < .05, Partial η2 = .29 representing a large effect size).

The post-hoc comparison test shows that teachers with a high experience level significantly had a higher level of pedagogical reflection than the low and mid experienced teachers. Mid experienced teachers also had a significantly higher level of pedagogical reflection than the low experienced ones (Table 12).

Table 12. Post-hoc Scheffe's multiple comparisons: Pedagogical reflection by teaching experience

Dependent Variable	(I) Degree	(J) Degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pedagogical Reflection	High	Low	6.38*	.740	.000	4.53	8.22
		Mid	3.23*	.817	.001	1.19	5.27
	Low	Mid	3.15*	.784	.001	1.20	5.10

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

A significant difference (Table 6) was found between teaching experience and the level of critical reflection (F (2, 83) = 7.78, p < .05, Partial η2 = .15 representing a large effect size). Also the results of post-hoc Scheffe's test (Table 13) show that teachers with a high experience level (M = 39.54) significantly had a higher level of critical reflection than the low (M = 34.25, MD = 5.57, p < .05, 95 % CI [2.96, 8.18]) and mid experienced teachers (M = 34.10) (MD = 5.70, p < .05, 95 % CI [2.82, 8.58]).

Table 13. Post-hoc Scheffe's multiple comparisons: Critical reflection by teaching experience

Dependent Variable	(I) Degree	(J) Degree	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Critical Reflection	High	Low	5.57*	1.047	.000	2.96	8.18
		Mid	5.70*	1.155	.000	2.82	8.58
	Low	Mid	.13	1.109	.993	-2.63	2.90

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

However, there is no significant difference between mid-experienced (M = 34.10) and low experienced (M = 34.25) teachers' means on critical reflection (MD = .13, p > .05, 95 % CI [-2.63, 2.90]).

Reflection and gender

There is not any significant relationship between gender and level of pre-reflection (Table 6; F (1, 83) = .83, p > .05, Partial η2 = .010 representing a weak effect size). Table 14 displays the descriptive statistics for the variable of gender.

Table 14. Descriptive statistics: Levels of reflection by gender

Dependent Variable	Gender	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-Reflection	Male	23.907	.565	22.784	25.030
	Female	23.531	.520	22.497	24.565
Surface	Male	26.915	.789	25.346	28.484
	Female	26.057	.726	24.612	27.501
Pedagogical	Male	37.489	.615	36.265	38.713
	Female	38.991	.567	37.864	40.118
Critical	Male	36.029	.870	34.298	37.760
	Female	35.459	.801	33.866	37.053

No significant relationship was found between gender and level of surface reflection ($F (1, 83) = 1.35$, $p > .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .016$ representing a weak effect size). But there is a significant relationship between gender and level of pedagogical reflection ($F (1, 83) = 4.42$, $p < .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .051$ representing a weak effect size). Moreover, the results show that there is no significant relationship between gender and level of critical reflection ($F (1, 83) = .009$, $p > .05$, Partial $\eta 2 = .000$).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study sought to understand the levels at which Iranian EFL teachers reflect on their practice as well as the potential roles of gender, qualification, and years of experience in the process. The results reveal that Iranian English teachers mainly operate at the level of pedagogical reflection in their classrooms. This is followed by critical reflection which deals with the social and contextual dimensions of teaching practice. Then surface reflection. The lowest level of reflection identified is pre-reflection which describes teachers who react automatically to students and classroom situations, without consideration of alternative responses. The study shows that although Iranian English teachers operate at the four levels of reflective practice described in Larrivee's (2008) questionnaire, they mostly employ pedagogical and critical reflections in their teaching. The findings confirm those of previous studies which suggest that teachers operate at all levels of reflection (Lee, 2005; Minott, 2008; Wunder, 2003).

This study also shows that teachers' academic qualifications did not influence their use of pre- and surface level strategies. But a significant relationship was found between teachers' qualifications and the use of pedagogical and critical reflection levels. That is, the higher the level of the teachers' degree, the more they reflected critically and pedagogically on their practice. It is important to note that this finding is not consistent with that of Rezaeyan and Nikoopour (2013) who found no difference in this area.

Similarly this study found that participants with more years of teaching experience had significantly higher levels of critical and pedagogical reflection than teachers with low- and mid-levels of experience. The teachers with low experience in particular mostly operated at the pre-reflection level. Thus, there is a direct relationship between teachers' years of experience and the level at which they reflect on their practice. In other words, as teachers gain more teaching experience, they tend to operate more at the pedagogical and critical levels and less on pre- and surface reflection levels. The relationship between teachers' gender and levels of reflection indicate that females

outperform males in terms of pedagogical reflection and thus confirm the findings of previous studies that female teachers are more reflective than their male counterparts (Poyraz & Usta, 2013; Rashidi & Javidanmehr, 2012). However, there was no significant difference between males and females at the other three levels of reflection.

To sum up, the results of this study show that while Iranian EFL teachers employ all levels of reflective teaching in their practice, they mostly operate at the level of pedagogical reflection. This means they recognize the need to move beyond the achievement of predetermined goals and consider the connections between their believed theories and their theories-in-use. In addition, teachers' qualifications and their teaching experience contribute to achieving higher levels of pedagogical and critical reflection. The results also show that female English teachers are more sensitive to the educational principles underlying their practice.

These findings have implications for teacher education programmes in Iran. They point to the need to foster critical thinking skills in teachers and to raise their social and political awareness about various aspects of the Iranian educational context. Practitioners should move beyond a concern with theoretical principles and actions and consider the influence of the broader context on their practice. Universities and institutes of higher education also need to develop reflective practices in their undergraduate students. Reflection demands flexibility, conscious analysis, and an active concern for contextual issues. The finding that experience plays a significant role in teachers' use of pedagogical and critical reflections suggests that simply training teachers about reflective teaching skills and expecting them to apply the process in their classrooms may not be enough. Opportunities must be provided for them to be actively engaged with reflection in their actual practice. Further research is needed to investigate the role of teacher educators in the development of reflective ability in teachers, ways of engaging teachers in reflection, and the congruence between teachers' beliefs and their actual performance.

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Appendix: Reflective Teaching Questionnaire

The purpose of this instrument is to assess the level of reflection engaged in by the Iranian EFL teachers in their practice. It can provide a more concrete process for assessing how a practicing teacher is developing as a reflective practitioner. Your honest responses to the questionnaire items are highly appreciated. Thank you very much for the time you are devoting to our research project.

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Years of teaching experience:_____

Gender:_____

Highest degree or certificate: _____

E-mail Address:_____

For each indicator, please select the rating that best represents the current state of your practice.
Key: O (often), U (usually), S (sometimes), R (rarely), or N (never).

LEVEL 1: Pre-reflection	**O**	**U**	**S**	**R**	**N**
1. I perform in a survival mode, reacting automatically without consideration of alternative responses.					
2. I function based on pre-set standards of operation without adapting or restructuring based on students' responses.					
3. I do not support beliefs and assertions with evidence from experience, theory or research.					
4. I am willing to take things for granted without questioning.					
5. I am preoccupied with classroom management, control and student compliance.					
6. I ignore the interdependence between teacher and students actions.					
7. I view student and classroom circumstances as beyond my control.					
8. I dismiss students' perspectives without due consideration.					
9. I see no need for thoughtfully connecting teaching actions with student learning or behaviour.					
10. I discuss problems simplistically or unidimensionally.					
11. I do not see beyond immediate demands of a teaching episode.					
12. I attribute ownership of problems to students or others.					
13. I fail to consider differing needs of learners.					
14. I see myself as a victim of circumstances.					
LEVEL 2: Surface Reflection	**O**	**U**	**S**	**R**	**N**
15. My analysis of teaching practices is limited to technical questions about teaching techniques.					
16. I modify teaching strategies without challenging underlying assumptions about teaching and learning.					
17. I do not connect specific methods to underlying theory.					

18. I support beliefs only with evidence from experience.					
19. I provide limited accommodations for students' different learning styles.					
20. I react to student responses differentially but fail to recognize the patterns.					
21. I adjust teaching practices only to current situation without developing a long-term plan.					
22. I implement solutions to problems that focus only on short-term results.					
23. I make adjustments based on past experience.					
24. I question the utility of specific teaching practices but not general policies or practices.					
25. I provide some differentiated instruction to address students' individual differences.					
26. I tend to follow orders rather be innovative because I do not want to get in trouble.					
LEVEL 3: Pedagogical Reflection	**O**	**U**	**S**	**R**	**N**
27. I analyze relationship between teaching practices and student learning.					
28. I strive to enhance learning for all students.					
29. I seek ways to connect new concepts to students' prior knowledge.					
30. I have genuine curiosity about the effectiveness of teaching practices, leading to experimentation and risk-taking.					
31. I engage in constructive criticism of one's own teaching.					
32. I adjust methods and strategies based on students' relative performance.					
33. I analyze the impact of task structures, such as cooperative learning groups, partner, peer or other groupings, on students' learning.					
34. I have commitment to continuous learning and improved practice.					
35. I identify alternative ways of representing ideas and concepts to students.					
36. I recognize the complexity of classroom dynamics.					
37. I acknowledge what students bring to the learning process.					
38. I consider students' perspectives in decision making.					
39. I see teaching practices as remaining open to further investigation.					
LEVEL 4: Critical Reflection	**O**	**U**	**S**	**R**	**N**
40. I view practice within the broader sociological, cultural, historical, and political contexts.					
41. I consider the ethical ramifications of classroom policies and practices.					
42. I address issues of equity and social justice that arise in and outside of the classroom.					
43. I challenge status quo norms and practices, especially with respect to power and control.					

44. I observe myself in the process of teaching.					
45. I am aware of incongruence between beliefs and actions and takes action to rectify.					
46. I acknowledge the social and political consequences of my teaching.					
47. I am an active inquirer, both critiquing current conclusions and generating new hypotheses.					
48. I challenge assumptions about students and expectations for students.					
49. I suspend judgments to consider all options.					
50. I recognize assumptions and premises underlying beliefs.					
51. I call commonly-held beliefs into question.					
52. I acknowledge that teaching practices and policies can either contribute to, or hinder, the realization of a more just and humane society.					
53. I encourage socially responsible actions in the students.					