

The Relation between Reflective Teaching and Emotional Intelligence: The Case of Iranian EFL Teachers

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Abstract: The present study aimed at investigating the relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their reflective teaching in an Iranian EFL context. Besides, it was an attempt to compare male and female Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching and their emotional intelligence. For this purpose, 100 male and female Iranian EFL language teachers participated in this study were selected based on availability sampling from language institutes in Shiraz. Their age ranged from 23 to 42 years, and they possess a B.A. or M.A. degree in TEFL, English Literature or Linguistics. The researcher asked the participants to fill two questionnaires of reflective teaching and emotional intelligence. They had no time restriction for filling out the questionnaires. The results of data analysis indicated no significant relationship between teachers' reflectivity and emotional intelligence. Besides, the findings indicated that gender had no effect on teacher's reflectivity. Gender was also observed to have no effect on emotional intelligence of EFL teachers. The findings of the present study are valuable for those who are involved in English language education as a foreign language and the educational system in general. The results are beneficial for EFL teachers, teacher educators, administrators, policy makers, textbook developers, and teacher training courses.

Keywords: EFL teachers, emotional intelligence, reflective teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been described by Salovey and Mayer [1] as, "a set of skills hypothesized to contribute to the accurate appraisal and expression of emotion in oneself and in others, the effective regulation of emotion in self and others, and the use of feelings to motivate, plan and achieve in one's life".

Hamzah [2] declared that teachers' EI in the teaching process can be seen as the skill of recognition of own feelings and the feelings toward others, the skill of managing the emotion better in ourselves and relationship with others. Besides, Goleman [3] regarded teachers with good EI as a teacher who has the skill of managing the emotions and feelings, besides being active in cooperation for gaining educational targets. He also added that who has the ability of analyzing feelings and non-verbal code are better to adapt themselves emotionally and they can easily interact.

Research agreed that EI is composed of the ability to: understand; listen to each other and feeling them and express emotions in a productive manner. It involves elements of self-awareness, empathy, management connection, managing feels, and motivation [3].

The notion of EI as a variable may not be that assessable in the educational context with visible behavioral outcomes. Therefore, it ought to be connected with other variables related to teachers or students such as reflective teaching.

Early thinkers and philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Locke and Dewey considered and debated the ideas of reflection. The concept of reflection was defined by Dewey [4] as action based on "the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it" (p. 9).

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The qualities of a good teacher were the subject of studies through previous decades but only some studies have investigated teachers' emotional variables like EI and some other variables about teachers' teaching dimensions. There is a dearth of study in the realm of connecting teachers' emotions and their reflection. Accordingly, this study tried to consider teachers' reflection in order to fill this gap. Therefore, this research attempted to uncover the relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and their reflection on teaching. More specifically, the study attempted to determine whether male and female teachers are different in emotional intelligence and teaching reflection.

The result of this research could be useful for those who are engaged in education in general and English language teaching in particular such as ministry of education, educational policymakers, EFL teachers, and EFL learners. Besides, the findings of this study could contribute researchers and educators in conducting similar studies. Besides, the outcome of the study also can inform EFL teachers about the significance of performing self-inquiry and action research in solving their educational problems.

The present study aimed at reflecting two key variables of EFL teachers recently heatedly debated, including teachers' emotional intelligence and reflection, and attaining a sound conclusion about their relationships.

Although there are some correlational studies which delve into these teachers' variables, the current study is to go one step further in probing the difference between genders. Given above, the major purpose of the current study is to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' EI and reflective teaching in an Iranian context. Besides, it is an attempt to compare male and female Iranian EFL teachers' reflective teaching and their EI.

In order to gain the aim of this study, three research questions were raised. These questions are as follows:

- Is there any relationship between reflective teaching and EI of Iranian EFL teachers?
- Is there any difference between reflective teaching of male and female Iranian EFL teachers?
- Is there any difference between EI of male and female Iranian EFL teachers?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some studies investigated reflection in ELT [5-8] and scrutinized how reflection practice could be developed among EFL teacher. Findings of Farrell's [9] research in Korea revealed that the EFL teacher group's engagement with descriptive reflection was a necessary requirement for reflection, enriching EFL

teachers' opportunities to progress professional educators. According to Gonzalez [6] research, increasing reflection in EFL focus groups in Colombia proved to be a difficult process. Findings revealed that EFL teachers have very few opportunities to continue professional development opportunities with their colleagues. Kubanyiova's results [7] indicated that even if teacher awareness of a reflective approach to teaching is promoted, engaging in reflective practice is a difficult process when EFL teachers do not have the ability to follow it or when there is a lack of reflective culture. The findings also revealed for professional development to be successful, programs should value teachers' knowledge and should be designed in accordance with the support of several institutions.

The results of Mede's [8] study indicated that as long as there is mutual understanding among colleagues, collaborative reflection can be effective on EFL teachers' teaching.

Research on reflection and teacher knowledge [10, 11] beliefs, emotions and teacher identity [12-15], online [16, 17] and video [18] reflection and peer coaching in ELT [19] also confirmed the positive influence of reflective practice on ELT.

In the USA, Curtis and Szesztay [10] conducted a study and engaged teachers in systematic and structured reflection of their teaching in 'Teacher Knowledge' seminars over a period of five years. The study findings revealed that this engagement empower teachers with a renewed enthusiasm about teaching, improve confidence and a deeper awareness of their decision making. These findings were confirmed by the Valencia *et al.*, [11] whose study findings revealed that the EFL knowledge can be created through reflection on both the technical and the humanistic aspects of EFL teaching.

Some research focused on the effect of reflection on EFL teacher beliefs, for example Cowie [13] conducted a study and emphasized the significance of engaging with the emotionality in EFL teaching, development and research while pointing the need for EFL teachers to build collegial relationships of warmth and support. With regard to reflection on emotions, findings in the Golombek and Johnson [14] study indicated that "emotions are actually a driving force in teacher development" (p.324). The findings of Hsu's [15] study about values in EFL teaching specified that reflection on issues of identity and image left the university teachers in the study with a sense of confusion as they struggled with conflicting expectations of the society, institution and oneself.

Yang's [17] studied online reflection on learning-to-teach processes which results revealed that most of teachers engaged in descriptive rather than CR. On the other hand, Lin's [16] study revealed that

asynchronous reflection played a major role in constructing teacher knowledge and professional identity and online reflection can be considered as a platform for early socialization into the teaching profession. Additionally, Yesilbursa's [18] research indicated that video reflection entailed both descriptive and dialogic reflection by the prospective EFL teachers who check their video-recorded lessons. In another research, Goker's [19] showed that peer coaching was an effective strategy for reflective learning. It also revealed that, peer coaching is part of reflective practice and an important means for instituting collaborative efforts at EFL contexts.

Emotional Intelligence has always been an important issue in learning and teaching. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on MI, a large number of which have focused on the relationship between intelligences and academic achievement, language learning, and language proficiency.

Fahim and Pishghadam [20] explored the role of LI, psychometric intelligence, and EI on the EFL learners' academic achievement. The instrument of the study were GPAs scores and the Bar-on EQ Scale to measure the students' Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III was administered to measure the students' Intelligence Quotient (IQ), and Verbal Intelligence (VI). The result of the study showed a strong link between the students' academic achievement and several dimensions of emotional intelligence. The results, on the other hand, revealed that academic achievement was not associated with IQ, but it showed a strong correlation with verbal intelligence, a subsection of IQ.

Ghaffari [21] studied the relationship between EI and speaking ability of a group of Iranian EFL learners the results of which was indicative of a high correlation between the learners' EI and their speaking ability.

Besides, Razmjoo [22] studied the extent to which MI predicted the language proficiency level of Ph.D candidates, Iran. The results indicated no correlation between language proficiency and MI or any one of its subscales. The findings, in addition, suggested that MI and its components did not significantly predict language proficiency. Finally, no significant difference between males and females with respect to the relationship between intelligence and proficiency was reported.

Mahdavy [23] studied the relationship between MI and listening performance of EFL learners on the listening subtest of IELTS and TOEFL tests. The findings of the study showed a significant correlation between LI and listening proficiency of the participants, but no relationship was found between the

other domains of MI and the participants' listening proficiency.

The relationship between pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence and their self-efficacy was examined by Gürol, Ozercan, and Yalcin [24]. Besides, the difference between pre-service teachers' on EI and self-efficacy beliefs were also explored in this research with regard of their gender. The findings showed that, there was a positive significant correlation between perceived EI and self-efficacy.

In another research Azizian and Samadi [25], probed the relationship between EI and self-efficacy of University instructor. The findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between EI and self-efficacy. The results also indicated that there was a correlation between self-awareness and self-efficacy and a correlation between self-control and self-efficacy. Additionally, a correlation was found between intimacy and self-efficacy and there was a correlation between social skills and self-efficacy.

Shakib and Barani [26] also tried to study EI; they explored the relationship between Iranian high school students' EQ level and their level of language proficiency. The findings revealed that there was a relationship between language proficiency and emotional intelligence. Moreover, the relationship between female students' EQ level and language proficiency was stronger than that of male participants.

Rahimi and Sadighi [27] investigated the impact of linguistic and emotional intelligence on the reading performance of EFL learners. They found that, the students with a high level of linguistic intelligence had a higher reading ability than the students who had lower level of linguistic intelligence. The findings revealed that there was no difference among the students with different degrees of emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the findings revealed that linguistic intelligence can be considered as a predictor of reading performance.

Ghabanchi and Alami Doost [28], conducted a study to probe whether there was a relationship between EI and literary appreciation. A number of 90 university students studying English literature were selected as participants of the study. Fifty students were female and forty were male. The Bar-On EQi [29] was utilized for obtaining the participants' EI level. Literary appreciation test was designed by Earl Foreman [30] to measure literary awareness, characterization and the sense of purpose and continuity. The results revealed that students of literature had different in their ability to appreciate literature and literary texts. This study also revealed that there is a relation between literary appreciating and EI.

Additionally, Ebrahimi Koohbanani [31] studied the relationship between spiritual intelligence (SI) and emotional intelligence with life satisfaction (LS) among talented female high school students. The findings revealed that there is no meaningful relationship between SI and LS, but there was a significant relationship between EI and LS.

The effect of emotional intelligence in English language learning was studied by Zarezadeh [32]. She tried to find out whether EI affects English language learning. The results revealed that there are significant correlations between EQ, certain and some skills, and academic success.

The relationship between EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and students' motivational attributes was probed by Roohani and Mohammadi [33]. They utilized Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory and Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The results discovered that there was a statistically significant and positive relationship between the teachers' EI and their students' motivational attributes. Moreover, Adaptability, Interpersonal, and General Mood, three competencies of teachers' EI, were found to have higher correlations with the students' motivational attributes. They asserted that, in general, the teachers' EI made a moderate contribution to the students' motivation.

Another variable which was studied in relation to emotional intelligence was gender. For instance, Thingujam and Ram [34] compared males and females in this regard and found that gender has effect on male and female performance. Ciarrochi, Chan and Bajgar [35] also found that EI was higher for females than males. Other scholars who worked on the relationship between IE and age were Charbonneau and Nicol [36]. They conducted a study in a military training camp and found higher EI scores for girls, although the results were not statistically significant. In another study, Nasar [37] conducted a study to observe EI levels of undergraduate male and female college students with the age range of 17-20 years. They concluded that, adolescent girls compared to the boys had higher EI.

Hunt and Evans [38] also found that males have higher EI than females. Besides, Gowdhaman and Murugan [39] conducted a study on teacher trainees and found that gender had a significant effect on EI scores. In Iran, Safaree and Tarlani [40] have indicated positive correspondences between the teacher's personality traits and their teaching reflection practices. Extrovert teachers, for instance, were found to draw on the affective elements in their teaching practices.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the study were 100 Iranian EFL language teachers selected from language institutes in Shiraz based on availability sampling. These teachers were selected from different language institutes in the city of Shiraz, Iran. The reason for selecting this group was that the researcher was working as an EFL teacher in that context for more than 10 years and had acquaintance with the majority of the teachers included in the sample.

The sample included 48 male and 52 female EFL teachers. Their level of education differed from Associate of Arts (AA) to M.A. (26 teachers) had AA, 34 teachers had Bachelor of Arts (BA), and 40 of teachers had M.A.

It should be added that, the participants were all within the 23-42 age group, and they had a degree in TEFL, translation, English literature or linguistics major. They teach English as a foreign language to the learners of different levels of proficiency. They were selected based on availability sampling.

Instrumentation

Two questionnaires were utilized in this study to gather the required data, including:

The Bar-On (1997) Emotional Intelligences test [29]

Bar-On's EI test is a self-report questionnaire. It was designed by Bar-On in 1997 in order to measure teachers' socially and emotionally intelligent behavior. The early version of this questionnaire had 133 questions, but in later edition it reduced to 117 questions. As some questions were found irrelevant to Iranian context, Samouei [41] developed a modified and translated version of the questionnaire encompassing 90 items. According to its wide use in the Iran, this 90-question version of the questionnaire was employed as the means of obtaining data in the present study. The items are based on 5-point scale ranging from 'very seldom' or 'not true of me' to 'very often' or 'true of me'.

Reflective Teaching Questionnaire

This study used the teacher reflectivity questionnaire which was developed and validated by Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand [42]. This questionnaire had 29 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=never to 5=always. Its reliability and validity had been assessed several times with different datasets. It should be added that this questionnaire covered Akbari, Behzadpour and Dadvand's [42] five reflectivities including affective, cognitive, metacognitive, practical and critical. The questionnaire reliability with the sample of the present study was equal to .87 using Cronbach's Alpha reliability. The construct validity of this questionnaire has been

evaluated by factor analysis including both exploratory and confirmatory analyses by the constructors.

Data Collection Procedures

A pilot study was conducted to help the researcher about the clarity of the items. For this aim, the questionnaire was administered to 10 EFL teachers.

The researcher asked the participants to read the questionnaires thoroughly and give the required answer; to decrease the probable misunderstandings, the participants could request for the necessary explanations. It should be added that the participants were asked to complete the demographic data section in which they had to provide some information about their age, gender, major of the study, years of teaching English experience, and their context of teaching.

Data Analysis Procedures

The study adopted qualitative analysis for analyzing the data. quantitative method includes descriptive and inferential statistics analysis.

Quantitative method was used in order to inspect the relationship between the variables study. First, for each of the variables of the study namely Teacher Reflectivity and Emotional Intelligence, descriptive statistics including mean, median, standard deviation, minimum and maximum were presented. Then, to test the hypotheses of the study, inferential statistics were used.

Pearson product-moment correlation was run to reveal whether the teacher’s EI were correlated with their reflective teaching. Furthermore, two independent sample t-tests were run to compare these variables between teachers of different gender groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis values for the Emotional intelligence and reflective teaching for both male and female groups. The related results are summarized in Table-1.

Table-1: Descriptive statistics of reflective teaching and emotional intelligence

| Gender | variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|--------|------------------------|----|-------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | | | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Male | Reflective teaching | 48 | 3.19 | 1.19357 | -.076 | .241 | -1.189 | .478 |
| | Emotional intelligence | 48 | 2.704 | .82767 | .942 | .241 | .679 | .478 |
| Female | Reflective teaching | 52 | 3.147 | 1.20600 | -.191 | .337 | -1.012 | .662 |
| | Emotional intelligence | 52 | 2.66 | .76745 | .680 | .337 | .765 | .662 |

The descriptive statistics results as shown in the above table indicates that the number of male group was equal to 48 and the female group was including 52 participants.

The mean score of reflective teaching for male participants was 3.19 and the standard deviation was equal to 1.19. The female participants mean score in reflective teaching was equal to 3.14 and the standard deviation was equal to 1.2.

Furthermore, according to the results of the above table, the mean score of emotional intelligence

for male teachers was 2.7 with the standard deviation of .82 while the emotional intelligence mean score for female teachers was 2.66 with the standard deviation of .76.

Relationship between reflective teaching and emotional intelligence

The relationship between EFL teachers’ emotional intelligence and reflective teaching was examined using Pearson product - moment correlation coefficient. The result is reported in Table-2.

Table-2: Correlations between reflective teaching and emotional intelligence

| | | <i>reflective teaching</i> | <i>emotional intelligence</i> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>reflective teaching</i> | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .172 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .087 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

Based on the obtained results of the above table, values of correlation between emotional intelligence and reflective teaching for EFL teachers was $r=.172$ which was not significant ($sig=.087$). It means that emotional intelligence is not related to reflective teaching for the EFL teachers. To sum up, it

can be said that emotional intelligence is not related to reflective teaching among EFL teachers

Comparing Reflective Teaching

As mentioned in previous chapters, one of the aims of this study was to compare male and female

teachers' reflective teaching. To this aim, an independent samples t-tests was utilized to scrutinize whether there was a statistically significant difference

between the male and female participants' mean scores of reflective teaching. The related results are presented in the following table.

Table-3: Independent Samples Test of male and female reflective teaching

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|---|------|------------------------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .134 | .715 | .359 | 98 | .721 | .08600 | .23977 | -.38982 | .56182 | |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .359 | 97.986 | .721 | .08600 | .23977 | -.38982 | .56182 | |

Observation of the table above shows that the values of comparing male and female EFL teachers' reflective teaching was $t(98) = .359$ and sig (2-tailed) = .721. Therefore, it can be concluded that, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' reflective teaching.

Comparing Emotional Intelligence

One of the purposes of the present research was to compare the emotional intelligence of male and female EFL teachers. In order to determine if there are any significant differences in the emotional intelligence between the male and female EFL teachers, an independent samples t-tests was conducted which results are reported in the following table.

Table-4: Independent Samples Test of male and female reflective teaching

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|---|------|------------------------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Equal variances assumed | .963 | .329 | .530 | 98 | .598 | .0880 | .16614 | -.2417 | .41770 | |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .530 | 95.942 | .598 | .0880 | .16614 | -.2417 | .41778 | |

The independent test result reveals that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female EFL teachers with regard to their emotional intelligence ($t(98) = .53$, sig (2-tailed) = .59).

The second research question was "Is there any difference between reflective teaching of male and female Iranian EFL teachers?" based on the obtained results, there was no significant difference in reflective teaching of male and female teacher.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The first research question was "Is there any relationship between reflective teaching and EI of Iranian EFL teachers?" the results of correlation study indicated that there was no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' emotional intelligence and their reflective teaching.

The last research question was "Is there any difference between EI of male and female Iranian EFL teachers?" As the result reported there is no significant differences between Iranian male and female EFL teachers' emotional intelligence.

Reflective teaching has an important role in decision making and problem solving process; therefore, it was the focus of teachers and researchers in

the realm of language teaching. According to Milrood [43] it is the process of reflecting the environment critically or non-judgmentally for the aim of decision-making. Teachers reflect on their actions and their learners' learning, how effective their instructional decisions are, approaches to teaching, developing practice and cognitive awareness of their reflective performance.

On the other hand, it has been confirmed that teacher actions can be seen from their emotional intelligence in the teaching performance [2]. It can be claimed that the teacher with good emotional intelligence is the teacher with the skill of managing the feelings and emotions, besides being more active in cooperation for achieving educational targets. Research indicated that people who can able to analyze feelings and non-verbal code are better in adapting themselves emotionally, being popular, able to interact easily, and being more sensitive [3].

According to the importance of these two factors for teaching, the present study focused on the relationship between teachers' reflection and their emotional intelligence. Besides, the effect of gender on these variables was studied. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship between these two variables. Furthermore, it was found that, gender has no effect on none of these variables.

In other words, although both emotional intelligence and teacher reflection means in males were slightly higher than that in the females group, but it was not statistically significant. This finding is in line with the finding reported by Valli [44], Boud and Walker [45] and Sarsar [46].

Based on the findings and conclusions of the current research, the following points for further research are suggested. In this thesis, the relationship between Teacher Reflectivity and Emotional Intelligence was studied. Other researchers can add other variables as well. It seems necessary to replicate the present research. It could be replicated by sampling another group of EFL teachers or using teachers from other provinces. This study scrutinizes the difference between male and female teachers. Other researches may compare some other demographic features. The present study was just done in context of private language institutes. To generalize the findings on EFL teachers more participants of other contexts are needed more numbers of EFL learners are needed.

The findings of the current study are valuable for those who are involved in teaching and learning English language as a foreign language and the educational system in general. The preceding discussion of the findings and conclusions of the study suggests the following implications for EFL learners and teachers in Iran.

The findings of this study can be both theoretically and practically significant and beneficial for education authorities, managers of schools, teachers and students. The obtained results are beneficial for EFL teachers, teacher educators, administrators, policy makers, textbook developers, and teacher training courses (TTC).

These findings of this study and other studies working on emotional intelligence of teachers, motivate education authorities in schools to consider the emotional intelligence as an effective factor for teachers and learners' success in their academic career.

In addition, school managers also benefit from the results of this study to consider them in empowering teachers' with more successful teaching methods to raise both English teachers and learners' success both in public and private sectors.

Besides, the results support theories, techniques and models related to Teacher Reflectivity. The findings here declare the significance of these variables in educational settings. The obtained results have pedagogical implications too. They can be utilized by teachers, curriculum planners, syllabi designers, authors of academic books and those who are involved in teaching and learning. The results also reveal that the two instruments could also be utilized in Iranian context to collect data from teachers.

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