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Collaborative Reflective Learning through Guided peer-videoing: A Case Study of in-service EFL Teachers

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Abstract

Over a year, the study examined five in-service EFL teachers in a private English Institute in an Iranian EFL context. They engaged in a continuing professional development program launched by their supervisor using reflective video-mediated practices and journal writing. The participant teachers, chosen based on their educational background and experiences, engaged in a series of discussions guided by their supervisor for about 20 sessions over four consecutive semesters. The data for the study was collected through observation of their video-mediated teaching practices, audio-recorded focal group discussions, audio-recorded interviews, and their reflective journals on a Telegram group. The findings indicated that the participants developed more critical reflection towards their teaching practices, reconceptualized their views of teaching concepts and practices, and reshaped their professional identity continuously on a sustainable basis. As a longitudinal case study, the findings have significant implications for private EFL school administrators, providing valuable insights to reconsider their continuing professional development strategies. Consequently, it has valuable implications for training in-service EFL teachers at private EFL institutes.

Keywords:
Collegial discussions, In-service EFL teachers, Peer-videoing, Reflective discussions, Video-mediated focal discussion

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Introduction

Reflective approaches in teacher education have drawn the attention of many researchers and thinkers over the last decades (Akbarzadeh Farkhani, 2023; Farrell, 2015, 2021; Loughran, 2002; Molani et al., 2021). In the field of teaching English as a foreign language, several studies have examined the reflective practices of pre-service teachers (Altalhab et al., 2021; Jantori, 2020; Yong-jik & Davis, 2017) and in-service EFL teachers (Adams, 2009; Cholifah et al., 2020; Cirocki & Widodo, 2019; Hung & Thuy, 2021).

Studies have highlighted the supportive role of video-mediated reflective practices on content-area teachers, and most of them have focused on native speakers of English who teach mathematics or sciences (Borko et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2005). However, there is a paucity of research on how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use videos to mediate their reflection on their teaching practices and conceptualizations in 'guided collegial discussions' where a mentor or a supervisor prompt to discuss pedagogical issues and guide collegial discussions through asking intriguing questions (Kourieos, 2016). Using videos to mediate the reflective practices of EFL in-service teachers for professional development could be seen as a gap of research in the extant literature on an EFL context, especially at private EFL institutes, particularly in Iran.

Collaborative learning through video-stimulated recall can lead to knowledge construction and acquisition of collaborative skills (Järvelä et al., 2016), resulting in continuing professional development (McArdle & Coutts, 2010). This engagement also allows teachers to reveal challenges and failures in teaching (MacDonald, 2011). In addition, reflective journal writing, as a valuable practice to facilitate reflections and a data collection source on individual learning experiences of EFL teachers (Hashemi & Mirzaei, 2015), has been used in previous studies on the reflective practices of EFL learners (Balderas & Cuamatzi, 2018; Hajimohammadi & Mukundan, 2011). Previous studies show that it can enhance EFL learners' critical thinking (Ebadi & Rahimi, 2018) and boost metacognitive skills (Zhang, 2016; Zhenget et al., 2018).

Also, integrating guided collegial discussions into teaching programs for professional development has recently become more significant (e.g., Kourieos, 2016; Rieger et al., 2013). Mentors or supervisors can prompt 'self-analysis in reflective conversations' (Kourieos, 2016, p. 68) and guide their collegial discussions by incorporating prompting questions to raise their awareness of the underlying reasons behind their teaching practices.

The ineffective top-down professional development programs have always been grounds for complaints from EFL teachers in Iran (Namaghi,2009; Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Unlike infrequent short-term in-service programs, undergraduate or graduate programs in most EFL contexts are mainly about transmitting information. The need to

reconsider these programs and incorporate more reflective practice opportunities can be deeply felt (Namaghi, 2009). This program, which the institute supervisor launched, tried to sustain and encourage a more reflective approach to teaching English and provide guided collegial discussions.

Using collaborative learning through video-mediated focus group discussions and reflective journal writing as reflective sources, this study examined how self-recorded videos of in-service EFL teachers and their journal writing in a Telegram group could help them continuously develop professionally over four semesters. From this viewpoint, the significance of the present study lies in the fact that it tried to actuate the role of the supervisor or mentor's comments and questions as the inciting cause of reflective thinking, sustain their reflective practices over a long period, and investigate the influence of such reflective practices on their continuing professional development and even their professional identity. The present study tries to find answers to these two research questions:

- How and to what extent can guided video-mediated collegial discussions help in-service EFL teachers reflect on their teaching practices and conceptualizations?
- In what ways can guided video-mediated collegial discussions help in-service EFL teachers develop professionally?

Literature review

Video recording in educational settings dates back to the early 1970s. Fuller and Manning (1973) saw video playback as self-confrontation and a tool for reconceptualization. Its use for professional development has steadily increased in recent decades (Major & Watson, 2018). Using video recordings of teaching practices for intriguing collegial discussions and reflection has drawn the attention of researchers in various educational areas ranging from primary education to graduate programs at universities and through various modes including video clubs (van Es & Sherin, 2009), stimulated-recall interviews (Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014), media annotation tool (MAT) (Colastante, 2011), peer-videoing (Harford & MacRuairc, 2008), video-analysis technologies (Rich & Hannafin, 2008a) among others.

In an undergraduate physical education program, Colastante (2011) investigated the integration of a media annotation tool into the students' learning. The students annotated their videos of teaching practices and also received feedback from their peers within the same MAT tool. The findings demonstrated that the participant's critical reflection improved significantly.

In a qualitative study, Cherrington and Loveridge (2014) used group stimulated-recall interviews as a source of data collection to enhance teachers' reflection by using video recordings. Kindergarten teachers in several New Zealand Centers discussed

episodes of their teachings. The study's findings indicated the usefulness of video-mediated reflective practices in improving their collective knowledge and acquiring new insights about their understanding of children, program routines, and, most importantly, attaining critical reflection on their teaching practices.

Similarly, Bayat (2010) used video recording and dialogue journals to investigate productive reflection and promote collegial and reflective discussions among early childhood education preservice teachers. The results demonstrated that the participants' conceptualization of teaching practices changed, resulting in productive reflection.

Harford and MacRuairc (2008) used peer videos to promote reflection. The participants were student teachers from various disciplines and were asked to engage in structured video analysis. The findings showed that the video analysis enhanced critical dialogue and highlighted the importance of scaffolding reflective practices.

Based on a critical framework, Nelson (2008) explored the hidden assumptions of several preservice teachers and the unintentional meanings the participants could have conveyed to students through analyzing guided video reflective practices. The findings suggested that the participants were encouraged to reflect on their behaviors and teaching assumptions.

Grant and Kline (2010) investigated the impact of video-mediated lesson analysis on elementary teachers' thinking in planning for teaching mathematics lessons. The teachers improved their questioning ability, supported student interactions, and probed their thinking. Likewise, Harlin (2014) examined changes in the teaching habits of several student teachers after they watched the video recordings of their teaching practices. The findings indicated that the participants favored establishing relationships with students and furthering students' interactions in their classes.

Using video-analysis technologies has also helped teachers learn the preliminaries of teaching assessment. In a study by Rich and Hannafin (2008a), student teachers analyzed their teaching practices through a video analysis tool. The analysis was accompanied by feedback from 'cooperating teachers. Initially, the use of analysis helped them reflect on their practices. Finally, they only resorted to their self-assessment and assistance from the cooperating teachers as a source of feedback in their classes. The results showed that external scaffolding and learning the basics of self-assessment can help develop professionally. Similarly, Stockero (2008) investigated the effect of videos as an instructional tool on a group of preservice teachers in a mathematics methods course. The findings from this quasi-experiment study showed that preservice teachers who used the videos benefitted more than their peers in terms of reflective thinking.

Harford and MacRuairc (2008) employed peer-videoing to explore a collaborative model of shared learning among twenty preservice teachers. The study's findings underscored the potential of peer-videoing to stimulate collegial discussions in

a community of pre-service teachers and to bolster scaffolded reflective practices. The results suggested that peer-videoing in a collaborative, reflective community effectively cultivated a culture of genuine critical reflection.

Noticing the skills of preservice teachers and their improvement through video-mediated reflective practices has also drawn the attention of educational researchers. Napper-Owen & McCallister (2005) examined the videotapes of eight preservice elementary teachers immediately after their teaching experiences. The findings highlighted the influence of their professors' guidance on improving their noticing skills while reflecting on teachers' behaviors. Likewise, Star and Strickland (2008) indicated that preservice teachers of mathematics in pre-and post-test design research that focused on improving their observation skills could enhance their noticing skills relevant to the classroom setting and interactions.

Van Es and Sherin (2009) used 'video clubs' where school mathematics teachers viewed and discussed their teaching practices. The study used this professional development model to examine its influence on teachers' thinking and practice. The teacher's engagement in the study finally provided more space for students' mathematical thinking and even probed their students' understanding of mathematical concepts and learning. The study highlighted the importance of collegial discussions in increasing teachers' attention and raising awareness.

Kourieos (2016), in a case study, investigated how pre-service EFL teachers engaged in video-mediated reflection and collegial discussion and analysis of microteaching videos at a private university in Cyprus. The results highlighted the importance of peer discussions and mentor guidance (Lai & Calandra, 2010). The participants' awareness of teaching practices and concepts increased considerably after the study. Likewise, Karakaş and Yükselir (2021) found that pre-service teachers' noticing skills improved through their collegial discussions after watching and analyzing video-mediated microteaching practices. The discussions helped them develop a critical stance towards their teaching practices and concepts. Eröz-Tuğa (2013) examined the use of video-watching and analysis of pre-service ELT teachers in a practicum in Turkey. After discussing and analyzing the videos with their mentors and peers, they were asked to write reflective reports on their microteaching practices. The findings indicated that the participants developed more critical insights towards their practices, classroom interactions, and even their use of body language and English language.

As for novice EFL teachers, video-mediated self-observation is seen as an institutional initiative at a national level in Peru. Mercado and Baecher (2014) studied 247 EFL teachers in Peru. Their video-mediated discussions relied on self-observation, part of their professional development program for teaching the English language. Mentor supervisors provided them with checklists for their self-observations as a way

of self-assessment. The findings showed that their awareness of their practices increased, and they became more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses.

Crichton, Edmett, and Mann (2019) examined the role of mentors in an intensive course for EFL teachers in a Thai setting. Over ten weeks, several experienced teachers visited the participants' schools, met them in person, and provided them with online feedback. The mentors and the participants held video club sessions through a video platform. The findings showed that the in-service teachers did not understand what reflection entails and highlighted the necessity for scaffolding provided by experienced teachers.

Method

Research design

A qualitative case study design was adopted. Through a case study, a more detailed description of the phenomenon is achievable, and it can be very enlightening and build up a very detailed, in-depth understanding. As Ritchie and Lewis (2003) note, case studies are used "where no single perspective can provide a full account or explanation of the research issue, and where understanding needs to be holistic, comprehensive and contextualized" (p.52). For ethical considerations, the study's objectives were fully explained to the participants, and they were assured that the findings would be confidential. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity and preserve their individuality when their quotes appear in print. Written permissions were obtained to record their videos, voices, and interviews.

The setting

This study was conducted at a private English institute for boys in Sanandaj, Kurdistan Province, in an Iranian EFL context during four quarters of an academic year. The students at the institute were mainly high school students. Based on the statistics provided by the principal, most were from middle-class, educated families and spent three sessions a week learning English, mainly in the afternoons, two or three hours after their morning school shift was finished.

Participants

The participants were five male in-service EFL teachers. They ranged between 22 and 37 years old and had different educational backgrounds and teaching experiences. They had attended the TTC course held by the institute, and all had a university degree in TEFL. Purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2007) was carried out, and the researcher tried to deliberately select participants with a broader range of age and experience. Also, the

sampling was convenient as the researcher, a supervisor in the institute, had acquaintanceships with them and was easily accessible to the researcher.

The participating teachers were briefed on the purpose and significance of the research, and they were asked to sign a consent form. The demographic information of the participants is demonstrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Demographic information of the participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Major	Years of Service
Aram	Male	22	TEFL	1
Nader	Male	37	TEFL	10
Siamak	Male	30	TEFL	7
Bahram	Male	31	TEFL	6
Ramyar	Male	30	TEFL	5

Data collection

Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews with the participants, reflective journal writings, and field observations were used to triangulate the data and gain a deeper insight into the participants' practices over the study. Video-mediated group discussions were the primary source of data collection. As Dörnyei (2007) suggests, focus group discussions are 'the collective experience of group brainstorming, that is, participants thinking together, inspiring and challenging each other, and reacting to emerging issues and points' (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 144).

Each semester lasted about six weeks, including the final examinations, so video-mediated group discussions were conducted for five sessions each semester. The focal group discussions, which were video-mediated, were audio-recorded for about 20 sessions over four semesters. Considering the one-week gap between semesters, the study took about seven months.

As the participants worked in the same institute, they videoed each other for half an hour each session, especially when their classes were in full swing, once a week, and then passed the memory card to their supervisor. Without an external observer in their classes, as suggested by Harford and MacRuaire (2008), the 'perceived power dimension,' which might have affected the participants, was reduced. As the whole study centered around peer-scaffolding and peer-oriented discussions and assessment, peer-videoing could also remove external power sources within the research.

The focus group discussions started in the second week of the first semester after the videos from the first week were handed to the supervisor. About four videos were handed over each week, and the supervisor tried to cover them in the subsequent group discussion session. The participants watched the videos and then answered the questions posed by the researcher. The researcher tried to intrigue their emotions, feelings, and understanding of their colleagues' teaching practices by asking questions previously made by the researcher and specific to each video.

Semi-structured interviews were also another vital source of data collection. As Driver (1995) suggests, the semi-structured interview is a flexible technique appropriate for small-scale research. As semi-structured interviews deal with broad and general topics and avoid pre-empting issues (Arksey & Knight, 1999), they can be suitable for qualitative case studies where the researcher tries to gain deep insight into issues under research. The first interview with the participants was carried out during the first week of the study. The interview questions mainly pivoted around participants' beliefs toward various issues of teaching and learning English and mainly focused on their teaching experiences regarding those issues in natural settings. The second, third, and fourth interviews were held at the end of each semester over the breaks between semesters. All in all, five audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were done and were transcribed. Member checking of the interviews (Carlson, 2010) was carried out, and the participants clarified the ambiguities in the verbatim transcriptions of their answers.

Journal writing as a research tool could provide the researcher with rich, authentic data about in-service EFL teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices. Researchers can gain insights into teachers' teaching beliefs, challenges, successes, and professional development by analyzing teachers' reflective entries. Reflective journal writings of the participants on a Telegram group started in the first week of the study. The researcher was one of the admins of the groups and was intrigued by their continuous experiences of their teaching practices by posing questions on their pedagogical challenges and solutions over the semester. The researcher copy-pasted their answers over the four semesters in Word and tried to develop themes emerging from their comments and answers. The themes from these reflective journal writings were more realistic than those that emerged from other sources of data collection in the study.

Continuous member checking (Birt et al., 2016; Carlson, 2010) was done through the data collection procedure. The participants were provided verbatim transcriptions of their discussions and interviews and asked to confirm their accuracy. Triangulation was used to increase the validity and reliability of the research findings (Creswell, 2007; Loh, 2013) to gain data from various sources: daily journal writing in a Telegram group, video-mediated group discussions, field notes, and interviews. Also, to reduce researcher bias and increase the reliability of the study, another academic was asked to review the emerging codes from the data so that possible potential bias could be avoided.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to provide a detailed account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is considered a flexible method as it can be employed to identify, organize, and analyze themes (Simons et al., 2008). The researcher used a constant comparative method (Jones et al., 2006) to analyze the obtained data. The themes that emerged from

different data sources were constantly codified, and the researcher compared the data obtained throughout the study.

The transcribed data was coded in two consecutive phases: open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The first phase of "open coding involves 'breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (p. 61). In conceptualizing data, the participants' utterances reflecting the same concept were grouped as a concept. Then, the close connection between the concepts resulted in their classification into different categories. As categories emerged, they were continuously compared with other categories throughout the whole process of data analysis (Strauss et al., 1990).

Data was reduced by deleting data without connection with the subjects at issue. After the transcription of all qualitative data, the transcripts were coded. Subsequently, themes emerged after examining the segments. The themes were analyzed and given codes. These same codes were traced in the rest of the data, and simultaneously, new themes were coded and added to the previous ones. Meanwhile, connections were made between the emerging themes to develop categories.

The data was classified based on the pre-determined themes from the theoretical framework and emergent codes. However, other categories appeared as the data suggested themes beyond the theoretical framework. First, all the data were manually transcribed. Some themes and categories were achieved from the notes while the transcripts were written. The verbatim data was classified into meaningful segments. Eventually, a list of all themes forming categories was prepared.

Since NVivo 12.1 does not have a built-in feature specifically for calculating inter-coder reliability, a pilot test with a small subset of data to assess inter-coder reliability was carried out. The pilot test results were used to refine coding guidelines and address issues before coding the entire dataset. Then, blind coding was implemented, where coders independently coded data without knowing each other's codes. Afterward, the coded data were compared and discussed to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Disc discrepancies were promptly addressed throughout the coding process to maintain consistency in coding practices by periodically comparing coded data.

Findings

Through the data analysis of the discussions, interviews, journal writing, and observations of the participant teachers, several significant themes were identified, which will be discussed in the following parts:

Attaining critical reflection

As reported by one of the participants, the critical reflection he achieved had a dramatic influence on his mindset about learners and learning:

I focus more on learning styles and individual differences. I have a notebook in which I write about my learners. I try various teaching activities in my class to cover most learning styles. Nowadays, I don't go to a class without thinking about the lessons, my learners, and the activities involved in teaching that lesson. [Bahram, final interview, July 2023]

This is the first time I think I can criticize myself, my behavior, and my reaction to students. It was very shocking at first. Your image of yourself shakes, and you see yourself as an external person you can criticize.

[Ramyar, focus group discussions, February 2023]

Watching videos of their teaching allowed preservice teachers to reflect on their instructional practices, identify areas of strength and weakness, and set goals for improvement. For Aram, who had only one year of teaching experience in the institute, the video-mediated reflective sessions were illuminating:

These videos are much better than the lessons I had at the university. I learned many things, especially from the discussions and from my colleagues. I wish it could continue forever. Now, I know what real teaching is about. I care about lesson planning more. I didn't take it seriously before. Before I teach anything, I first think about how to teach. Also, I know how to manage my time better.

[Aram, second interview, April 2023]

By watching themselves teach on the videos, the teachers could develop a better understanding of their teaching style, communication skills, classroom management techniques, and instructional strategies, as further evidenced by Nader in his second interview:

What I learned from the videos was very useful. I changed a lot. I try to have a better relationship with my students and make it easier for them. I use more examples, and I use the whiteboard more often. I give them more time to speak. Before this course, I talked a lot. Now, I listen more.

[Nader, second interview, April 2023]

I found out I had many problems with my teaching. I learned a lot. At the same time, they learned from me, too. I am good at working on their pronunciation. I mean, I work hard on my students' pronunciation and intonation. This is one of the things my colleagues also paid attention to.

[Aram, final interview, July 2023]

Before I do anything, I try to plan it. Previously, I didn't care about lesson planning. I thought it was only in the teaching books, and it was of no use. First, I think about what I will do tomorrow and even search the internet on my phone to find something useful about it and even find some interesting way of presenting it to make students interested and excited.

[Ramyar, second interview, April 2023]

Watching videos of their teaching allowed the teachers to reflect on their instructional practices, identify strengths and weaknesses, and set improvement goals. Video-mediated sessions facilitated peer feedback among preservice teachers, allowed them to learn from each other's teaching strategies, and provided constructive criticism, as claimed by Siamak in his final interview:

First, I wouldn't say I liked it when they talked about my teaching. I tried to defy them, and it was very challenging. But, I have changed my mind. Their feedback on my teaching was necessary. I thought deeply about what they said. They were right. I am a different person. I accept criticism.

[Bahram, second interview, April 2023]

Improvement of Noticing Skills

The consciousness-raising towards the realities of learning and teaching a foreign language and even the contextual factors in the educational settings continuously increased both in their focus group discussions and also in their answers to the following interview questions:

I noticed they liked it when I shifted the conversation to football, driving cars, and even girls. That's how it works. You should find something to intrigue the conversation. Sticking to the textbook can be boring. You should find a link to their interests and return to the book.

[Siamak, focus group discussions, April 2023]

As the participants stated, they could analyze their videos frequently, focus on the same situation, and see it from a different angle. It was a chance for them to receive feedback from the mentor and their peers:

When you repeat a situation several times and focus better, things draw your attention, including your body gestures and tone of voice. Then, you can criticize yourself. This has many lessons.

[Ramyar, Second Interview, April 2023]

The feedback I received from my peers and Mr. […] (the mentor) was very eye-opening for me at first. I should confess that I didn't notice myself. Some things about

my teaching strategies, my behavior, and the like were bittersweet. But, I learned that I am not ideal. I made some mistakes. I confess.

[Bahram, Group Discussions, February 2023]

However, the participants highlighted the importance of mentor and peer feedback and its influence on their noticing skills more than their watching of videos:

If you watch the videos alone and then try to criticize yourself, it might be possible because you have the chance to watch them again and again, but you may not pay attention to some things that others do.

[Aram, Second Interview, April 2023]

The feedback from Mr. […] (the mentor) was full of points, which had many lessons for me. However, I think his comments did not hurt me. The way he explained them and criticized them was not offensive at all. He talked about them in a way that was like analyzing a teaching situation, not criticizing somebody.

[Nader, Second Interview, April 2023]

The participants also reported that the feedback and comments raised their consciousness toward their practices and those of their peers:

I now notice things I didn't care about before, and it's very interesting. I have become more sensitive and pay attention to things that were not important to me before.

[Nader, Second Interview, April 2023]

However, the participants were more focused on their teaching behaviors:

I didn't use the whiteboard at all. When I compared myself to others, it was very noticeable.

[Aram, Second Interview, April 2023]

I learned I should change my tone of voice. It was very monotonous. You get very bored. [laughing]. Now, it's more exaggerated. [laughing]. But more emphatic. I like it better now. It needs more work.

[Nader, Second Interview, April 2023]

At the end of the study, the participants were more concerned about learners' learning preferences and individual differences:

They learn better in small groups. They don't like it when your activities target the whole class, but they function better in small groups.

[Aram, Third Interview, June 2023]

Guess what. They just highlighted the expressions in the reading texts and tried to use the same expressions when they answered the reading questions. They learn from each other so quickly. At first, no one had a highlighter pen. Now, everybody has.

[Nader, Third Interview, June 2023]

Changes in teaching practices

Most participants reported changes in their teaching strategies, especially after a few sessions of collegial discussions and critical reflections on their practices. The scaffolded video-mediated reflective practices were also attributable to the change in their mindset about supporting classroom interaction. It seemed that the guided collegial discussions in the research focus groups acted as a role model for them, as elaborated by the participants. The participants unanimously reported their skills.

I give my students more time to talk. I think it happened because of my own change. I am more willing to hear about their ideas, and I talk less. Instead, I ask more and more questions. They like it, and sometimes, they get control and ask questions.

[Nader, second interview, April 2023]

I changed the arrangement of my own class. I wanted my students to form two or three semi-circles of five students each and then discuss the questions after reading the passages. It's beneficial. They take the discussion more seriously this way. They even think it's like a competition.

[Ramyar, second interview, April 2023]

Allocating more time-to-student interaction, as reported by all participants, became prevalent in their classes. The participant teachers also claimed they were more effective in questioning in their classes:

I recently found out that asking good questions is very important. Their answers should be followed, and the next questions should be asked until everybody is interacting. Everybody should be engaged. Good questions and follow-up can do it. You can't ask questions and then let them go. You should also be engaged.

[Aram, second interview, April 2023]

Every teacher must learn how to start a conversation among his students. The spark is important—it's like a flash of light. Then, the conversation gets warmer and warmer. Then, you ask more questions, and the conversation gets hot.

[Siamak, second interview, April 2023]

Intriguing conversation among student by asking appropriate questions and supporting interaction by asking follow-up questions was seen as a suitable strategy to prompt and maintain interaction among their students. The participant teachers tried to follow the same model that was initiated by the researcher in the study to promote collegial discussions:

I liked the way we discussed teaching issues in our discussion sessions, and I tried to make my students do the same. Now, whenever we want to discuss something, I encourage them to form several small groups in the form of circles and then discuss it. Then, I move between the groups and make sure they do it. I sometimes engage in their conversations and listen to them. Sometimes, I reserve a chair in each group and move between groups.

[Ramyar, second interview, April 2023]

The change in their practices was observed in their videos and their own reports of their classrooms based on their journal writings posted on their Telegram group, which showed their tendencies towards more student-centered activities in small groups.

Developing self-efficacy

As one of the participants said, a higher level of self-efficacy through the focus group meetings helped him to increase confidence, performance, and a greater sense of personal satisfaction:

Honestly, I feel more confident about what I do in my classes. I know more about the challenges in the context, and I know they also happen to my colleagues. If you doubt what you do, it appears in your behavior.

[Nader, second interview, April 2023]

Two of the participants who had felt low levels of self-efficacy, which they claimed resulted in their feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and a lack of motivation before the program, said their feelings faded considerably and felt more confident after the collegial discussions:

I check their feedback all the time. If it's Okay, then I feel more relaxed and try to continue. You should pay attention to the signals you receive. At first, I didn't have enough confidence. Things have changed now.

[Aram, second interview, April 2023]

What I learned during the sessions was important. I learned that we all have our own faults, and we must be more confident and try our best. However, I also learned how to teach with more confidence and not be deterred by students' misbehavior or lack of motivation.

[Nader, third interview, April 2023]

The participants highlighted the effect of their peer's feedback on their beliefs in their abilities:

Believe it or not, I will never forget the lessons I got from my colleagues. The important thing is that they don't want to hurt you. They want to be constructive and help you improve. I will never forget how Ramyar helped me use my tone of voice to draw students' attention. He is so funny.

[Aram, second interview, April 2023]

Reconceptualizing professional identity

Their engagement in the collegial discussions let them voice their identity and feel a sense of community. Signs of transition could be traced in their discussions. Moreover, their perceptions of their professional roles and sense of inclusion were changed

positively, and they even transitioned to more expert positions. They experienced a more professional self-image in their discussions of pedagogical solutions.

As experienced teachers, we should ……

[Bahram, Group Discussions, May 2023]

It's our profession, and I believe we must….

[Nader, Group Discussions, April 2023]

As a well-known English teacher in this city, you should be aware of the new books on the market.

[Aram, Group Discussions, May 2023]

A shift in their images of teachers appeared in their discussions over the group discussions, which seemed enhanced by the boost in their self-efficacy:

As you get more experienced as a teacher, you……

[Bahram, Group Discussions, May 2023]

New teachers try to role model the old ones. Some teachers ask me about my strategy, such as teaching a structure like a causative sentence.

[Ramyar, Group Discussions, May 2023]

Being part of a learning community of in-service EFL teachers improved their mentalities towards their self-perceptions of themselves as professionals:

As teachers working at private institutes, changing how students learn is easier. I mean, making decisions is more flexible. You can change your teaching strategies to have more effective teaching. At public schools, it's not so easy to change your teaching method, I mean.

[Bahram, Group Discussions, May 2023]

The first thing is that students and even parents trust you. They see you as a professional who knows how to teach English.

[Aram, Group Discussions, May 2023]

Moreover, even as practitioners who could change their students and their learning process positively:

This is my job, and I should try to teach them how to learn English. I try to figure out the best way for my students to learn vocabulary or grammar and how to use it for communication.

[Ramyar, Group Discussions, May 2023]

Yeah, for example, I taught them how to use English subtitles to learn more vocabulary. As an English teacher, I must teach them valuable strategies for learning English.

[Aram, Third Interview, June 2023]

Discussion

The following themes have been extracted from the audio scripts of interviews with the participants, their focus group discussions, and their journal writings. The observations of their video recordings have also corroborated the themes:

Change in teaching practices and conceptualizations

The participants reported a significant change in their conceptualization of effective teaching. Critical reflection on their practices and even the way they reconceptualized their beliefs also raised their consciousness toward their own potentials and drawbacks. Previous studies on video-mediated reflective practices also reported attaining critical reflection through video-mediated focus-group discussions (Bayat, 2010; Cherrington & Loveridge, 2014; Colasante, 2011; Harford & MacRuairc, 2008; Nelson, 2008).

The noticing skills of participants improved as they reiterated. Their focus and attention shifted towards learners and even their learning. They noticed the amount of learners' interaction, class engagement, and motivation to participate more actively in class activities. The findings align with Tripp and Rich's (2012a) study, in which the participants' consciousness was more inclined towards their students' learning than other issues. The study also showed that changing angles and viewpoints can be very instructive. It highlighted the importance of collaborative and constructive feedback, which are also similar to the findings reviewed by various literature reviews on the influence of video recording on the consciousness-raising and noticing skills of teachers (Gaudin and Chalies (2015); Hixon & So, 2009; Marsh & Mitchell, 2014; Wang & Hartley, 2003). However, the noticing skills of participants were more limited to their teaching behaviors over the first discussion sessions. They were less focused on the learning styles of learners and their differences. The mentor's intriguing questions prompted the shift toward their learners' learning styles and preferences. Previous studies did not highlight this vital influence of the mentor's guiding effect on shifting attention toward learners.

The immediate and tangible influence of focus-group discussions on the participants' classes could be perceived in the amount of student interaction. Students' interactions significantly increased in their classes, and all teachers favored prompting their students to talk. Such a tendency towards more interaction is in line with the previous studies in which scaffolded reflective practices of teachers resulted in their support of further interaction in their classes (Grant & Kline, 2010; Harlin, 2014; Rich & Hannafin, 2008a; Stockero, 2008).

Scaffolding and mentoring

As reported by the participants, collegial discussion and peer scaffolding mainly affected the changes in their teaching beliefs. The findings are corroborated by previous studies on the reflective practices of EFL teachers (Eröz-Tuğa, 2013; Karakaş & Yükselir, 2021). Apart from in-person feedback on their comments, the intriguing questions posed by the mentor in this study acted as a prompt for thinking critically. This finding highlights the significance of asking eliciting questions, which can intrigue teachers to think more critically about their teaching and the learning process of their

learners. The findings corroborate the results from previous studies on the importance of mentoring in video-mediated reflective practices of EFL teachers (Crichton et al., 2019). A nexus of self-assessment checklist, online feedback, in-person feedback, and intriguing questions can also help teachers think more critically about their teaching practices and conceptualizations.

Improving self-efficacy

The participants' belief in their ability to successfully perform teaching tasks or achieve a specific goal over some time improved significantly. As an essential component of motivation, the feeling of improving self-efficacy was observed in the participants' effort and persistence in pursuing their teaching goals. The findings are similar to previous studies on student teachers' self-efficacy. Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2017) indicated that collegial discussions enhanced teachers' self-efficacy and resulted in smoother professional development. Ciampa and Gallagher (2018) also highlighted the influence of peer feedback and its role in improving self-efficacy. In a less threatening and distressing environment, contrary to other teacher-centered practices that are common in traditional educational systems, the participant teachers showed more tendency to participate in discussions to share their teaching beliefs and teaching experiences. A relaxed atmosphere, as reported by the participants, lowered their anxiety and affective filter in a collaborative learning community, which finally helped them improve their self-efficacy and establish trust with their peers and mentors. The first things to be noticed about the group discussions were the reciprocal interactions and dynamic cooperative learning in a warmer and relatively informal atmosphere. The participant teachers also expressed more satisfaction with the way their learning practices were carried out. They established trust over time by sharing more personal experiences and sentimental attitudes toward their teaching experiences and contexts.

Reshaping professional identity

The interviews with the participants demonstrated that teachers' professional identity construction was influenced more by their experiences and prior beliefs concerning teaching and learning a foreign language than by accumulating pedagogical and theoretical knowledge in pre-service teacher education courses or through traditional professional development programs. Teachers' professional identity is formed by engaging in various social and cultural discourses. Danielewicz (2001) supports this argument by confirming the interconnection between the elements of a discourse and shaping identity. As the participant teachers were educated in the traditional Iranian education system, they were significantly affected by the dominant teaching methods, which are test-tailored, teacher-oriented, and focused on the grammar-translation

method. The participants acknowledged how their prior learning experiences affected how they saw their professional selves. Collegial discussions reshaped the consideration of their professional identity. As Davis and Krajcik (2005) suggest, "identity is in constant production and exists at the point of intersection between the individual and other determining structures and institutions" (p. 162). The way the participants assumed their professional identities, as Tsui (2007) also confirms, was influenced by their prior teaching experiences and the sociocultural setting where their professional identity was formed. As corroborated by previous studies on the professional identity of teachers (e.g., Varghese et al., 2005), notions like self-perception and professional identity are likely to be dynamic and subject to modification over time due to contextual factors.

At the start of the present study, most participant teachers were willing to stay in the margin and not participate in the discussions. Later, they shaped an identity of participation (Wenger, 1998) and gained legitimacy for peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) by asserting a fuller membership in their discourse community as the participants socialized into the academic community culture by asserting their community membership. The participants reported reconsidering their role and transitioning to a more expert position. They said they experienced a new self-image and assumed new prospective practices in the community. The prior language learning and teaching experience provided the in-service participant teachers with an appropriate space to assume their pedagogical selves. Through dialogical interaction, which led to more reflection on their pedagogical beliefs, they could voice their professional more academically.

Conclusion

The mere focus of the TEFL program on education courses should be re-considered in TEFL graduate programs. Other elements, including more teaching opportunities followed by guided supervision and more reflection in real settings throughout the program, can help teachers form the habit of reflection as a life-long learning and teaching habit. Limiting practical knowledge to practicums in one session may not achieve this result, especially when they are limited to microteaching mini-lessons in a non-real context.

Guided collegial discussions helped in-service teachers focus on specific points and figure out solutions for pedagogical challenges—similarly, our group. The researcher who acted as a facilitator of the collegial discussions guided the discussions systematically throughout the video-mediated sessions by posing prefabricated and even spontaneous questions on the teaching videos to raise the awareness of the participants and draw their attention to every aspect of their teaching practices, which included the learners, the curriculum, their lesson plan and even their strategies to teach specific linguistic content.

Follow-up programs can be beneficial if in-service teachers are encouraged to participate in reflection sessions. A quality teacher education program should assist teachers in forming the habit of reflection to make sustained development possible. Sustained collegial discussions can raise practicing teachers' awareness of the realities in their pedagogical settings and even rekindle their passion for teaching. By encouraging teachers to form informal focus groups guided by qualified teacher educators, education departments are likely to develop solutions to pedagogical problems in their settings.

Since there is no guarantee that in-service teachers translate their theoretical knowledge into their practices (Karakaş & Yükselir, 2021), a reflective model, as suggested by Henderson (2001), should be adopted in teacher education programs to encourage more reflection along with the curriculum. As the study suggested, the teacher education program should include promoting reflective skills. Such reflective skills can equip the future in-service program to reflect more comprehensively on their teachings and those of others as supervisors and evaluators.

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