Current Pedagogical Challenges in Iranian EFL Teachers' Views: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Searching for the real voices in regard to pedagogical challenges Iranian EFL teachers may struggle against seems to be an unexplored issue, which is the purpose of this qualitative grounded study. To achieve generalizable findings, based on the tenets of grounded theory, data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire with 187 Iranian EFL teachers from 15 cities who were asked to fill it out. Four core categories naming context, learner, material, and teacher were the emerging themes after the codification and categorization of the pool of data using MAXQDA version 12. The results were discussed in the context of EFL teaching and some pedagogical implications were also proposed.

Keywords: Pedagogical challenges, EFL teachers, Qualitative study.

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), in expanding circle, is of vital importance. In Iran, teaching a language began in 1851 (Tabatabaei & Pourakbari, 2012). Nowadays, learning a language is considered an advantage, whether academically or socially. Consequently, TEFL necessitates Ministry of Education to pay close attention to this field of education. Advent of trends, strategies, methods, and approaches in this territory is an evidence for depicting attempts to expand the significant role English teaching and learning plays.

In other words, academics try to introduce certain hints to pave the path for enriching TEFL. However, there are many obstacles in the way of achieving successful TEFL programs which calls for adaptive teaching. Consequently, it is necessary for teachers to have a profound pedagogical knowledge and to include reflective practices (Vaughn & Parsons, 2013). Different areas are engaged in creating a situation within which teaching process may not have expected and accepted results. As well, within each educational context there are some concerning issues. Consequently, studying these challenging issues from EFL teachers' viewpoints will be beneficiary before trying to abolish them.

Attending to teachers' voices as a major element of educational triangle is of significance (Phipps & Borg, 2009). In other words, reflective nature of teachers' vision leads to development in teaching practices (Parsons, Vaughn, Malloy, & Pierczynski, 2017). Emphasizing the role of teachers' beliefs, Pajares (1992) stated that "beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior" (p. 311). And the agent of change toward completion is supposed to be the teacher (Nunan, 1987). Engagement in planned contemplation about individual experiences offers teachers significant chances to highlight prominent practices and consequences and accordingly provides intellectual modification in both their beliefs and practices (Barnett, 1991; Thompson & Thompson, 1996).

Then, eliminating the negative effects of nexus of problematic factors in teaching English will depend on diagnostic recognizing of these issues. In other words, the first step toward addressing these concerning issues is identifying them. Therefore, one experience-bound way of doing so is to elicit EFL teachers' voices. Although there had been studies indicating major issues separately in language teaching in Iran, a qualitative study with a large population is still lacking to be done particularly in relation to public schools of Ministry of Education. This study aims to figure out what challenging problems in-service English instructors face in public section which affects EFL teachers' career. Then, the present study addresses two research questions:

1-   What are the major problematic issues in Iranian EFL teachers' views?

2-   What required attempts could be made to enrich EFL instruction in the context Iran?

2. Literature review

Recently, many East Asian educational systems call for having an efficient society in terms of proper communicating in English (Littlewood, 2007), such as Chinese educational system (Liao, 2004). Likewise,

Iranian Ministry of Education attempts to fulfill this requirement. Many of a time, it is argued that support will be provided to ensure the success of pedagogy; however, this kind of support in many cases is theoretical-based rather than practical. It is believed that theory and practice should be bound together in English language teaching.

Teaching and learning English is one of crucial components of every educational society in this age. According to Larson-Freeman and Freeman (2008), most of users of English, either as a second language or foreign language, communicate increasingly with those who are learning English as a second or foreign language. Recently, a growing requirement for teaching and learning English has been detected in Iran (Khomeyjani Farahani & Talebi, 2012). Then, in any pedagogical system, there should be especial position for English courses as well as teachers' lookouts. Asserting the necessity of focusing on language development courses, Cots and Arnó (2005) stated that it needs teachers and students to articulate their viewpoints of language and application of metalinguistic concepts. Thus, successful TEFL programs call for precise developmental processes to be considered.

As far as TEFL is so universal, the many factors are engaged to ensure an ideal situation of achieving the best results. Many subject matters such as purposeful teacher education, appropriate materials development, and proper educational management are compromised in TEFL enhancement processes. Then, regarding the importance of teachers' real voices in enrichment of language pedagogy, there is call for the presence and maintenance of an intrusive TESOL environment to come to clear understanding of teachers' as well as learner's needs and beliefs in order to purposefully import from and export for constructive ideas (Canagarajah, 2012). Emphasizing explicitly the role of community of practice and implicitly the role of teachers' beliefs in communicative language teaching, Littlewood (2007) argues that it is better for teachers to have their own voice in their local area. In this way, more appropriate results from establishing a particular methodology will be achieved.

In the body of literature, the significance of considering teachers' beliefs in relation to different areas of language pedagogy has been mentioned. Pajares (1992) found a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, classroom practices, and subsequent teaching behaviors. As well, Lamb (1995) conducted a research projects in Indonesia on the effectiveness of teacher training programs as the sources of gathering valuable beliefs. More specifically, these evaluative propositions could have impact on teaching particular skills as Borg's (1998) conduction of a case study of EFL teachers' beliefs about knowledge of grammar.

In another study, Johnson (2006) asserted significant role of teacher cognition in broad area of language teaching and in particular in relation to teacher education. In the same line, Phipps and Borg (2009) noted the value of attendance to teachers' beliefs and their fruitfulness in language teaching and learning. Furthermore, Borg (2011) claimed for positive practical effects of designed teacher education programs based on teachers' perceptions. However, there should be noted that there may be gap between established beliefs and ideal practices as many factors are engaged. Phipps and Borg (2009) stated "how contextual factors such as classroom management concerns and student expectations can cause tensions between teachers' beliefs and their practices" (p. 385).

In a recent study, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) asserted that teachers' actions and learner's learning chances could be strongly formed by teachers' beliefs. Moreover, belief-based teachers' practices are influenced by teacher education. Henceforth, teacher education deserves prominence in TEFL programs. Besides, teachers' beliefs could be a rich source of ideas to empower EFL teaching. That is why Freeman (2002) believed that perception of the experiences is central purpose of teacher education. Then, practical implications could be drawn. As an example, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) who studied learner autonomy, stated the use of perception of teachers' beliefs in planning and holding teacher professional development workshops.

Stressing the role of teacher education, Miller and Aldred (2000) scrutinized teachers' understanding of communicative language teaching (CLT). They figured out that incongruity between theoretical background and teaching practice derives from teachers' personal education as students in teacher-based classrooms. Similarly, Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood, and Son (2005) in a qualitative research found teachers' shared knowledge of CLT principles concurrent with the diversity of implementation of CLT among teachers.

Bartels (2005) properly noted the significance of applied linguistics (AL, respectively) courses for teacher education. According to Bartels, when designing AL courses for language teacher education programs, due to complex nature of knowledge use, it is not adequate to present just training in AL and wish them do their best. If novice teachers want to achieve noteworthy experiences, a shift toward a more complicated view of language teachers' knowledge, knowledge attainment, and knowledge use will be invaluable. Consequently, as suggested

by Bartels (2005), this is necessary to consider kinds of required knowledge and needed experiences for teachers as well as a profounder comprehension of activities, materials, and course designs to have an effective teachers' knowledge growth.

Occurrence of any kind of problem in any points of educational continuum will cause main issues in subsequent organizations of language teaching and learning. Therefore, each element related to English teaching should be academically considered, whether it belongs to localization issues, teacher education courses, or materials development. For instance, Bax (2003) mentions the significance of contextual factors in relation to particular students, country, and culture and calls for an instruction according to specific context. He furthered with the primacy of context to any other educational decisions because "… the context, and support from institute lecturers and the school during the teaching practice might have influenced the teacher thinking process" (So & Watkins, 2005; p. 538) and that each context will determine its own proper methodology requirements.

According to Freeman and Richards (1993), a good teacher examines classroom state, considers a variety of available alternatives for that particular situation, and then selects the most efficient option. Notably, an eclectic approach in the case of varied classroom is preferred. Even, in teaching skills and subskills separately, an eclectic approach could be followed as Schmitt and McCarthy (1997) claimed that establishing an eclectic approach is needed for teaching vocabulary.

Another critical outlook toward arriving to a better EFL milieu is supposed to be teachers' engagement to research. Therefore, Borg (2009) reported being research-engaged as a kind of support for teachers in making context-based decisions. This professional development aids teachers to take steps academically and practically one by one and modify their instruction to achieve the best results. So and Watkins (2005) in their longitudinal non-Western study found out pre-service teachers' tendency toward constructivism (i.e. learner-centered approach) in early stages of their teaching career. However, as the teachers passed early stages and progressed, they get less coherent in terms of their thinking.

Discussing pedagogical difficulties, Raimes (2002) mentioned imposed constrictions upon teachers such as predetermined curriculum, preordered materials, and assigned proficiency tests. Raimes referred to some practices to eliminate limitations of writing courses and asserted that teachers could politically change the impediments through, for example, committee establishing, proposal making, and especially pilot study running. In another study, Renandya and Jacobs's (2002) scrutinized extensive reading and reported that with regard to lack of time and pressure from educational communities to cover the predetermined objectives, teachers found it hard to do extensive reading practically.

The existence of different sources of problems is discussed in the body of literature. Examining regional differences in ELT in china, Hu (2003) mentioned three categories of harmful factors which make ELT unsuccessful. At the first class, "infrastructural resources" (p. 302) naming instructional facilities, educational materials, and professional competence were included. These factors were affected by the races of politics and economy. Second, sociocultural issues such as governing culture as well as the value of target language were raised. At last, practical aspects of pedagogy, including challenges of curriculum, syllabuses, and methodologies were discussed.

In a fairly recent qualitative study, Kim (2014) elicited Colombian university instructors' beliefs about communicative language teaching. From the participants' viewpoints, the most troublesome issues were time shortage and populated large classes. Furthermore, unmotivated students were seen as impediments to successful implementation of CLT. It seems that one of the reason for lack of motivation among students was ignorance in terms of locally developed materials.

Taken all together, a grounded research study with a large sample targeted on problematic issues of EFL teachers in Iranian context is still lacking. Then, the present paper seeks to fulfill this gap to cast the light upon all engaged organizations from stake holders to teachers by depicting what are troublesome in the way of successful TEFL.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

In this study, 200 EFL teachers, selected conveniently, participated. However, data from 187 participants could be useful to analyzed because of their completed survey forms. These EFL teachers (of ages 25-52) were from 15 various cities of Iran. All of them (87 males, 100 females) were in-service English teachers of Iranian Ministry of Education, instructing at least in public schools of their own area. The majority of them had at least B.A. in TEFL. Many of them were experienced EFL teachers, in terms of the years of their teaching practice at both

public schools and private English language institutions. Participants' characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants

Gender		Major			Academic degree				Years of experience		
Male	Female	TEFL	English literature	English translation studies	B.A.	M.A.	PhD	others	1-10	11-20	21-30
									72	70	45
87	100	158	2	27	113	64	8	2	Mean= 13.94		

The rationale behind this typical large sampling was achieving a pool of data to further the generalizability and arriving at saturation point properly as Clark and Creswell (2011) suggest that arriving at saturation point could be fulfilled through homogeneous, typical, or criterion sampling. This consideration is expected to enhance the value of collected data.

3.2 Data collection

In the current study an open-ended questionnaire, including two sections, was used. The first part is of affiliation, containing items asking about age, gender, academic degree, teaching experience, and city of participants. The second part has one question about the problems they have faced during their teaching profession.

The participants were asked to feel free in responding as their confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. Notably, they were suggested to answer the question like keeping a journal because the mentioned items will be representatives of true situations within which they are and real issues with which they are faced. To achieve fairly valid data, no deadline for returning the survey forms was considered. Participants were supposed to submit their filled questionnaire forms when they felt they have written down troublesome matters of their career as EFL teachers.

The current study follows a grounded nature which is a theory that encompasses ongoing proportional investigation of the data which leads to a theory to reveal the inherent social practices of a particular contexts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, the process of reaching to a saturation was continued till further information is achieved anymore (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.3 Data Analysis

The present study follows a qualitative design as it is primarily focused to consider pedagogical issues with which Iranian EFL teachers encounter. To achieve this aim, the completed questionnaires, either electronic or paper forms, were collected. Before doing coding process with MAXDA version 12, all papers were transformed to electronic version. Then, Persian handwritten forms were exactly transcribed in word document files for further phases of data analysis. As well, the English written survey forms were typed in word to have all the computerized versions prepared.

Then, all the 187 filled survey forms were attributed to each participant and then were imported to the aforementioned software to analyze qualitative-based research data. The rationale behind using MAXQDA for data analysis was first to prohibit any kind of prejudgment in coding process and second to be capable to deal with large amount of transcribed data in categorization procedure.

For coding process, at first, broad terms based on theories of language learning were preferred. For example, when a teacher participant mentioned that "*predetermined books are old-fashioned and they would not meet learners needs*", the term "materials" was attributed to this quote as the related code. Whenever similar remarks were found in participants' surveys, the same term was preferred as the core category. Then, for detailed analysis, each coded segment was reviewed to be tagged with a subcategory as well as its containing detailed properties. For example, for the mentioned coded segment, the subcategory could be improper books and properties would be a) inappropriate materials in terms of content, design, and meeting learners' needs, b) lack of piloting the chosen materials, and c) existence of static traditional texts in high school books. The process of coding continued till no other property could be elicited. Notably, demanding process of coding had occurred with the help and consults of local community members, experienced teachers, and knowledgeable academics.

4. Results and discussion

The emergence of four main categories was the result of coding. Each of these core categories including context, material, learner, and teacher also engaged subcategories which will submit more detailed explanation of the nature of their main classifications. Looking at the frequencies of main categories occurrence as troublesome issues revealed that contextual matters were the primary concern of EFL teachers in Iran. The second source concerned learner-based problems. Then, material's role and teachers' position were mentioned mostly by teacher participants to be concerning for successful EFL programs. Every category will be discussed as follows.

4.1 Context

Context was the very first emerged main category after data analysis. It was not surprising for this matter because it has a long history in the existing literature of TEFL as an important factor in education. As an instance, Bax (2003) averred that first element, even before methodological decisions, that should be considered is the context in the arena of English language teaching. Given the fact that the educational setting seems to play a noteworthy role (Holliday, 1994), there is still need for studies in non-Western context (So & Watkins, 2005).

In particular, regarding context, five subcategories were also found naming society, school milieu, family environment, Ministry of Education, and policy state. In Table 2, detailed information is shown with the inclusion of both frequencies of each element, provided in parentheses, and properties for those subdivisions. Then, the most frequent emerged codes will be followed by inclusion of notable quotes from participants and a comprehensive related discussion based on the existing literature.

Table 2. Subcategories, properties, and their frequencies referring to context

Subcategories	Properties
Ministry of Education (188)	No unique or proper methodology (35)
	Lack of facilities for comprehensive instruction (33)
	Lack of attendance to all four skills (29)
	Traditional assessment in spite of changed teaching approach (20)
	Unorganized educational system (19)
	Lack of academic and purposeful teacher education courses (19)
	Incongruity between education and career of many teachers (9)
	Lack of academic research inside the context of ministry (7)
	No attention to practicality (7)
	Low level of attendance to the concept of locality (5)
	Low level of teacher appreciation (4)
	Lack of supervision on the streaming procedures (1)
Policy state (101)	Devotion of few amount of time, i.e. shortage of time (73)
	Lack of attendance of policy makers to English language (15)
	No register to determine the ideal targets for the Ministry (4)
	Prohibiting traces of policy (4)
	No cooperation between policy makers, teachers, and authors (4)
	Sudden change of books and methods (1)
School milieu (30)	Highly populated classes, especially in public schools (16)
	Lack of parent-teacher contribution (7)
	No attention to school libraries (3)
	Academic advisors' irresponsibility in terms of goal clarifying (2)
	Uninteresting physical conditions of schools (1)
	Low level of students' appreciation (1)
Family environment (10)	Parents' deficiency of English knowledge (6)
	Parents' ignorance of educational issues of their children (4)
Society (7)	Deteriorating cultural problems of the present generation (7)

As Table 2 shows, major themes related to context were divided into five subsections. Considering the number of all coded segments (= 732) and context related codes (= 336), this is concluded that from teachers' viewpoints, 45.90 % of existing problems are rooted from context. In other words, context is seen as the primary element of existing challenge. This number is really significant that summons attention by and for all engaged components of context, from family environment to school milieu.

Surprisingly, regarding context, Ministry of Education was mainly mentioned to be the most challenging source while this part of educational system takes the main burden of curriculum planning. It implies that this ministry needs revision on its predetermined principals in relation to English language teaching. Educational gaps deriving from governing educational system need to be fulfilled. In other words, managers of educational system as the scholastic core of organization of any society manage to find the existing flaws and try to accomplish them step by step. Referring to this issue, one of the teacher participants put it:

"Regarding Ministry of Education, professional English teacher education courses are lacking. Hence, there will be no agreement upon unique methodology for instruction" (participant 13)

In terms of Miller & Aldred (2000), mismatch between theoretical and practical aspects of classroom practices (respectively it was CLT in their study) derives from courses teachers have had. As a result, teachers with various educational backgrounds will present the same trend in hugely different manners. Although, it is believed that an eclectic method to deal with various classrooms would be the best option (Bax, 2003). As suggested by Table 1, assigned curricula is considered a constraint to the teachers. This is what Raimes (2002) claimed and further noted that holding teachers' committees will be beneficial to address the instructive issues.

"Due to lack of facilities and supplementary materials, students, as just receivers, tolerate the present mechanical instruction" (participant 3)

This interviewee's statement concurs with Hu's (2003) declaration that lack of facilities in schools, especially in rural areas, prohibits supportive innovation and does not lead in good teaching. Hu asserted that instruction facilities as well as available teaching equipment are among sources of infrastructural difference between different areas.

"Unfortunately, because of university entrance exam and demands of reading and grammar, communicative skills are just ignored at the cost of receptive skills" (participant 40)

Ignorance of communicative competence because of some limitations is opposed to principles of communicative language teaching which is the most recent trend in teaching English in the context of Iran. It seems that lack of principles in assessment makes teaching and testing practices divergent. So, it implies that serious decisions are up to being made by Ministry of Education to make assessment objectives and teaching goals convergent.

The next obstacle in the path of teachers was policy makers' attitude toward planning for English language. In the following, some quotes from the participants will be provided to clarify the fact why this element was mentioned frequently by teacher participants.

"The problem of time shortage prohibits teachers from successful and comprehensive instruction of all four skills" (participant 111)

"Traces of policy makers' attitude toward English and lack of needed amount attendance to this course results in devotion of improper amount of time, which ends with book-based instruction" (participant 9)

Given the fact that language development courses need high levels of concentration in terms of content, design, and applicability, Cots and Arnó (2005) mentioned the importance of language courses through which main body of knowledge is offered. As well, preference of a particular model of what and how to teach is represented through determined curriculum.

"Whether this is due to achieving more financial benefits, weakness of management, or absence of facilities, populated classes are problematic and energy consuming" (participant 100)

Large student proportion may cause lack of operative metacognitive and socio-affective strategies (as in the study of Hu, 2003) and that populated classes would be harmful for a fruitful language teaching and respectively language learning. That is in line with Kim's (2014) study of Colombian EFL teachers who mentioned large class size as an impediment. Another mentioned challenge in Kim' research was the matter of time shortage as one of the most challenging factors. This is reinforced by the participants of the present study.

"Having just two sessions a week is not a suitable amount of time at all. Learners do not have sufficient time of practice. Teachers had to instruct materials in order to just cover the assigned schedule" (participant 87)

"The very last problem that I have faced is parents lack of cognition in terms of educational process and their low level of information in terms of English language" (participant 54)

This interviewee affirmed that family as a society within which the students are growing, of course, will have impact on learning process students experience. So, as this excerpt suggest, parents need to be aware of the fact that their children are affected by their level of cognition, in this case English.

"A major source of challenge, is cultural clashes. It needs clarifying the role and significance of learning English, at least as a foreign language in Iran" (participant 134)

Considering the role of society, Riegelhaupt and Carrasco (2005) asserted the importance of teachers' perception of the sociolinguistic facets of language use in their community of practice and schools.

Taking all together, the significant role of teacher education (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Lamb, 1995; Miller & Aldred, 2000) is emphasized which should be implemented in any pedagogical system as an undeniable part. It is believed that student teaching practices could provide teachers with a chance to establish a practical classroom-based framework for their theoretical knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2014). However, the participants of this study mentioned the absence of professional teacher education courses as another impediment.

4.2 Learner

The second major source of problematic issues in language pedagogy was found to derive from learners. In the existing data corpora, 22.67% of problem code occurrence belonged to learner-related issues (n= 166). As depicted in Table 3, on the part of learners, autonomy was raised as the most prominent issue; about 71% of codes regarding learner was related to autonomy. This implies the necessity of practice in relation to this concept to make the pedagogy more fruitful.

Table 3. Subcategories, properties, and their frequencies referring to learner

Subcategories	Properties
Autonomy (90)	Lack of motivating for learning on the side of learners (40)
	Lack of practice or opportunity to apply learning (17)
	Psycholinguistics issues with which learners enface (12)
	Low level of students' self-motivation (5)
	Learners' feeling of stressfulness in terms of speaking (5)
	Lack of social interaction with teachers (4)
	Lack of awareness about how to study and learn (4)
	Lack of creativity in the process of learning (3)
Knowledge (49)	False belief of attendance to marks, not learning (16)
	Different level of language proficiency (16)
	Low level of English language knowledge (10)
	No clear goal of education (7)
Society (27)	Cultural issues in terms of appropriate behaviors (13)
	Financial issues students struggle with (12)
	Destructive addiction to mobile messenger applications (2)

Following, some prominent excerpts from the collected corpus of coded data are presented. Each one then shows the major mentioned traces of trouble in relation to language learners which Iranian EFL teachers felt during their pedagogical career.

"Due to exiting cultural problems, students are tended to waste their time using massager applications excessively. Then, they become irresponsible for their learning. It means no autonomy and no clear-cut goal" (participant 25)

"Learners' lack of clear definition what is ideal of educational society as well as hard economic condition lead them to use their time in a non-academic way, for example wasting time in improper social networks" (participant 24)

"From the point of view of learners, register of learning, unfortunately, is just marks" (participant 164)

Having autonomous language learners has always been a concern of teachers. Many scholars have conducted research on different areas of autonomy in language teaching. However, lack of autonomy is mentioned to be a troublesome challenge to many EFL teachers in Iran. This statement corresponds to Kim's (2014) affirmation that learners' lack of motivation was a serious problem for Colombian university teachers. Notably, the nature of Kim's study was the same as the present paper; both applied qualitative investigations.

"Due to cultural differences, different social classes, and various economical situations, students' level of language proficiency is not relatively equal. This is a real challenge for teachers" (participant 16)

This statement corresponds with Hu's (2003) findings about lack of desirable English learning milieu to progress communicative ability in students which results in different English proficiency levels as an inhibiting factor.

Taken together, there is still room to work on learner autonomy to make learners aware of learning processes, to encourage them to be responsible for their own learning, and to have self-motivated students, as this concept was considered the most troublesome area in words of teacher participants.

4.3 Materials

The other main recognized category was materials as it was mentioned by the majority of the participants to be an important factor in determining the success of language learning curriculum. Within the corpus, 153 times related codes to materials have been mentioned. In other words, this issue compromises 20.90% of the mentioned challenging matters from teacher participants' view. Table 4 shows related raised properties in detail.

Table 4. Subcategories, properties, and their frequencies referring to materials

Subcategories	Properties
Inappropriate materials (86)	Improper books in terms of content, design, and needs (58)
	Ever changing books in Ministry of Education (11)
	Lack of attendance to piloting selected materials (10)
	Uselessness in terms of traditional texts (7)
Ministry of Education (40)	Standing on the position of being book-based (26)
	No attention to student's interest in educational planning (5)
	No attention to recent student's needs in their curriculum (5)
	Lack of supervision on books; no feedback adoption (3)
	No use of creative young teachers in publication process (1)
Limit chain (27)	Lack of suitable supplementary material (17)
	No published workbook, compatible with course books (6)
	No particular teacher's guide for the course books (3)
	Lack of visual-aided material (1)

The majority of respondents considered books improper, both in term of content and design. To present it quantitatively, about 56% of coded segment in the area of materials revealed teacher negative point of view as they objected limitation of the existent improper materials. Materials development is a complex process, taking into account many elements such as needs analysis, fundamental organization, proper content, and interesting design. While, it seems that these processes are still lacking in English materials in Iranian schools.

"In high schools, being limited to unorganized books in terms of content and communicative approach, diminishes self-confidence and creativity among students" (participant 35)

"The present book-based curriculum is itself the core of many problems as well as criticism because of many weak points of these improper materials" (participant 182)

"One reason for being book-based is that teachers are not provided with suitable supplementary material especially for the purpose of communicative instruction of productive skills; listening and speaking" (participant 20)

Ball and Feiman-Nemser (1988) noted the problems inexperienced teachers have in using and also adapting textbook. Although in the present paper teachers were not novice in their career, they had many problems in using and adapting the assigned materials. Then, in the body of literature it has been suggested that materials development and materials design calls to be accurately studied and to be implemented in teacher education programs in full (Richards, 1993; Tomlinson, 2003).

4.4 Teacher

Finally, teachers' contribution with educational matters deserves investigating to eliminate existing problematic traces to assure the prosperity of curriculum. Teacher-bounded codes occurred 77 times which turns out to be 10.51% of the mentioned problems. Amongst the aforementioned four main categories, teacher-related issues were mentioned the least. In addition, as table 5 suggests, the concerning issue in terms of respondents is emergence of teacher burn-out.

Table 5. Subcategories, properties, and their frequencies referring to teacher

Subcategories	Properties
Teacher burn-out (47)	Lack of motivation and autonomy amongst teachers (25)
	Still condition of teachers' knowledge and instruction (22)
Ministry of Education (17)	Burden of responsibility on just teachers' shoulders (11)
	No attention to the need for experienced teachers (6)
Society (13)	Economic condition teachers come across (13)

"Current unfavorable facilitative and educational situations make teachers burnt-out and this causes lack of motivation neither in their own learning nor in their own motivating teaching" (participant 76)

"Lack of familiarity of the majority of in-service EFL teachers with new trends and methods of language teaching and their resistance toward change is a huge problem" (participant 160)

This excerpt refers to a fundamental problem calling for an immediate solution. Expressing the functional duality in language development, Berry (1990) believes that teachers' enhancing proficiency knowledge explicitly and scaffolding teaching models implicitly have impact to have favorable change in their instructional practices.

In addition, two other prominent challenges regarding teachers are heavy schedule and their unfavorable economic situation. The following extracts will provide the voice of the majority of teacher participants related to two aforementioned troubles.

"Due to unorganized discipline in Ministry of Education in relation to English course, teachers weekly schedule is filled and they are really busy. This excludes their focus" (participant 41)

Heavy schedule normally prohibits teachers to do their best, either in terms of the in-class activities or education practices outside the classroom. This is in line with Renandya and Jacobs's (2002) claim that lack of proper amount of time and preplanned objectives does not allow teachers to apply extensive reading.

"Many existing economic problems in teachers personal and educational lives leave negative effects on the quality of their instruction" (participant 10)

Taken all together, due to attributed importance of enhancing the level of teachers' motivation and knowledge, Manouchehrim (2002) declared that contributive interaction is beneficiary to expand the professional knowledge of teachers. To achieve this aim and to incline understanding toward practice, the value of interactive feedback is undeniable. In addition, Lo (2005) argued that teachers' willingness to engage with language-related issues as well as self-awareness of the restrictions of their own knowledge are two characteristics of teacher language awareness. Self-awareness will result in self-improvements and henceforth will expand teachers' worldview. Equipped with these characteristics, motivated teachers could identify their learners' problems as a result. Moreover, knowledge of applied linguistics, as Bartels (2005) suggests, could have a positive impact on language teachers.

5. Conclusion and implications

Attendance to EFL teachers voice is a useful means in diagnosing challenging issues and therefore attempting to eliminate their sources. This paper aimed to figure out what are EFL teachers pedagogical problems in Iran. The results showed four themes of context, learner, material, and teacher. Among these four core categories, the crucial role of context is primarily demanding for future revisions. Ministry of education, and other Educational authorities respectively, are apt to clarify the role of in-service teachers in terms of the methodology which is supposed to be implemented. To achieve this aim, the role of teacher education courses is of significance. In other words, it implies that general training courses cannot satisfy the needs of successful English teaching and it demands for further academically professional English teaching courses, in line with learners' needs.

Another way of addressing this issue could be determining a supervisor teacher and having regular observations. In each local area, the selected teacher, whether in terms of experience of academic background, could have organized observation based on principles of successful EFL. Then, the results of observation sessions could be implemented in teacher education courses as Freeman (2002) notes that teacher education requires organizing new contributions between new and experienced teachers. Moreover, less-experienced teachers could benefit from recognizing their weak points and attempting to revise their practices.

Lack of motivation on the part of learners was another critical challenge. When teachers are faced with less autonomous learner it may cause teacher burn out. Thus, serious steps need to be taken by authorities from the

very beginning up to the very last periods of students' education. Then, eliciting feedback from students, in each grade of education, could be a useful tool as well as investigating teachers' beliefs on motivational issues in language learning.

Third demanding area was of existing materials. Due to complicated nature of materials development, this delicate process necessitates for more accurate supervision, proper organization, and precise decisions. When the majority of teachers considered the materials they are teaching to be impractical and improper, it implies that there is a serious gap in one part of educational triangle that should be fulfilled with professional communications to decide upon current issues.

Finally, some troublesome matters derive from teachers' position. Addressing teacher-oriented problems could be achieved by enhancing the level of autonomy, enlarging the level of literacy in general and English knowledge in particular, and providing a better economic condition for teachers. Then, the first two issues are fulfilled by teachers themselves and the latter is achieved by authority stands. It seems that when teachers are free from any financial problem or heavy schedule, they would sufficiently focus on their career and do their best.

In addition, the role of eliciting feedback and reflection is notably substantial. However, Richards and Farrell (2005) mentioned that although a large amount of learning about teaching could be achieved through individual evaluation and critical reflection, many things such as the knowledge of subject-matter, curriculum, and materials could not. Then, by examining recent trends in language teaching, enhancing the level of knowledge, and critical inspecting of schools' organization and language programs management, teachers would go beyond self-reflection and step forward to professional development.

All in all, as suggested by Ellis (1993), an operative means of teaching development would be collaboration. Thus, to achieve a successful English pedagogy, there should be converging reunion of educational authorities, syllabus designers, material developers, teachers, and learners. Future research may target each one of mentioned categories in particular and investigate it in detail to provide practical resolutions.

Acknowledgement

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