

# An Analysis of Teachers' Self-reflection on Classroom Management

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**Abstract**—This research is an analysis of teachers' self-reflection on classroom management; a comparative case study of University EFL male and female teachers. The study was conducted with four novice and experienced English teachers in four different universities in Mazandaran province, Iran in winter of 2015. Data were collected through two questionnaires of all participants and the diaries of two teachers. The questionnaires administered to teachers showed teachers' awareness of self-reflection on classroom management. Both questionnaires consisted of frequency Likert scale items. The diaries provided insight into teachers' feelings, experiences, and practices concerning teachers' self-reflection on classroom management. Summative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) were used. The results revealed that Iranian University EFL teachers have high awareness of self-reflection. When the cases were compared, the female novice and experienced teachers were found to relatively differ in their self-reflection on classroom management, but not in self-reflection itself.

**Index Terms**—teachers' self-reflection, classroom management, experienced and novice teachers, EFL male and female teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Many decades have been passed so that researchers have been talking about the importance of self-reflection. The originator of thinking about reflection, John Dewey (1938) said, "We don't learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience." It's a good tip for experienced teachers to think about what they have done in the classroom and novice ones to think about what they are supposed to do. But the problem is that how and to what extent University teachers are aware of self-reflection on classroom management and how does this fact differ across experienced and novice cases?

According to Brookfield and Thiel (1999), in reflective practice, the individuals involved in an ongoing cycle of self-observation and self-evaluation in order to understand their own actions and the reactions they operate in themselves and in learners. This reflection could be on whole aspects of classroom context and teacher itself, like teacher self-reflection. That's the theoretical frameworks of this research which intends to study the importance of self-reflection on classroom management as one of the main factors in teacher development and analyzing the teacher-student interactions as one of the main challenging issues in classroom management. To this end, this study analyses the teachers' self-reflection on classroom management; a comparative case study of university EFL male and female teachers that allows the researcher to have a closer look on the details about their similarities and differences. The research will be conducted qualitatively and there is no hypothesis. The answers to these research questions are specified in the study:

1. How and to what extent Iranian University EFL teachers are aware of self-reflection?
2. How does Iranian teachers' self-reflection on classroom management differ across experienced male and female teachers?
3. How does Iranian teachers' self-reflection on classroom management differ across novice male and female teachers?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. *Reflecting Teaching and Classroom Management*

Today the roles of teachers have changed as they are not a whole power of the class but the individuals who are expected to help students learn appropriately and productively in a democratic and peaceful context. As an instructor, they are responsible for their own authority which must always be checked by responsibility. In language teaching process, especially a foreign one, except for the classroom context, the syllabus materials, and the students' level of proficiency and so on, the teachers have the main role to manipulate the classroom as much appropriate as they can.

The teachers' experiences have meaning in terms of personal, historical constructions of beliefs and values. According to Dewey (1933), the affirmative meanings that are taken from observation and action of past experiences are teaching perceptions.

In Freire ideas (1970, p 77), the teacher renders himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. But in fact he cannot think for his students, nor can he impose his thought on them. Here is when she or he should practice reflection. Many experts agree with this fact that experience alone is insufficient for being a reflective teacher. The beginner teachers also can be a good one in their job if they practice self-reflecting.

Larrivee and Cooper (2005) have distinguished between reflective and non-reflective teachers; in their point of view, non-reflective teachers respond to classroom situations without referring them to other occurrences. Their direction is reactive, ascribing acquisition of problems to learners or others. They see student and classroom positions out of their control and observing themselves as losses of situations. As a result, they are prepared to not to be questioned, affirming teaching techniques without taking look at remedies. On the other hand, reflective teachers think that they should spend much more time for considering their classroom interactions and note both the conscious as well as the unconscious outcomes of their activities. They participate in the reflective re-evaluation of everything that occurs in their classroom by regarding the student's improvement.

Dewey was one of the early theorists who spoke on the value of reflection in education. He (1933) gave a definition reflective thinking in this way:

"active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it constitutes reflective thought and include conscious effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality".

Self-reflection requires deep study of principles and opinions, manifested in the suppositions of teachers and their expectations of the students; teacher manner is stimulated by his/her opinions about students' talent and desire to learn, by presumption about the students manner and by expectations formulated on the basis of the teacher's own value system (Schön, 1987). According to Stanbury and Zimmerman (2002), to be professional is time consuming for teachers; there are some programs which can speed up the inexperienced teacher development, but most beginning ones will still require a more long period to seem as powerful experienced teachers.

Brown (2007) mentioned that teachers may act differently in the course of teaching and this lead to much more learning. Their capability to perform these efficiently will depend to a large amount on agreement with their leaners. The most important challenges for beginning teachers are classroom management, stimulus of students, treating with the individual differences among students, and evaluating student work. Meanwhile in this study, the challenges in front of beginning (and/or veteran) teachers would be the classroom management.

Classroom management is related to those procedures of teachers that make an affirmative classroom condition in which effectual teaching and learning can happen (Martin & Sugarman, p.9, 1993). In addition, Singh (2000) said "classroom management has been mentioned as one of the most common reasons for job failure newcomer teachers; these teachers are so worry about their safe position of using efficient classroom management programs. Teacher interns are involved in problematizing their everyday experiences". The communication between teacher and the students is a significant aspect in an EFL classroom context. More interactions and positive feedbacks may lead to more challenging situations for beginning teachers (or at least for non-reflective teachers).

### *B. Empirical Studies*

Koohsarian (2013) in her M.A Dissertation in TEFL conducted a case study about the role of self-monitoring in teacher's use of motivational strategies. Data was collected by means of teacher's journal writing a classroom observation scheme called MOLT (motivational orientation of language teachers), and a standard questionnaire. The results indicated that emerging in video self-observation seemed to contribute to more detailed and higher levels of self-reflection, resulting in a teacher's use of motivational strategies. The use of such strategies also entailed a higher rate of standards motivational behavior.

Jetnikoff (2011) conducted a qualitative, interpretative case study in which he took look at the reflective teaching and the individuals who had this method in their classrooms. He found that the novice teachers are ready to deal with the new techniques and syllabus needed for the classroom and school association. As a result, based on the data analysis, the novice teachers had highly amount of knowledge about their professional development and about what they want from their classroom. Occupational development was seen as an inseparable part of their developing professional personalities.

Yilmaz (2004) cites that the study done by Şentuna (2002) shows some considerable distinctions between inexperienced and experienced teachers' viewpoints which are related to their in-service training programs; in that way that the veteran teachers have already passed these courses and think that they don't need them anymore but the newcomers should attend in such courses to be familiar with the rules and topics.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Participants*

Four English language teachers helped in conducting this research; two male (novice and experienced) and two female teachers (novice and experienced). They have been chosen from different universities in north of Iran. It should be noted that they have been working as an English teacher at different levels and/or in different institutes, but here the experience in teaching at university is the matter of discussion. The participants are Ph.D. candidate of TEFL and are thirty to forty-five years old.

### B. Instruments

The researchers have used the ‘cross-sectional comparative case study’. Two questionnaires including ‘*teachers’ self-reflection questionnaire*’ and ‘*classroom management questionnaire*’ in the form of 5- point ‘Likert scale’ have been analyzed descriptively to provide more specific information. To evaluate *teachers’ perceptions of classroom management*, Turanlı’s (1999) classroom management questionnaire was used. And to assess *self-reflection questionnaire*, Wisconsin Teacher Standards for educators was used.

Another instrument was ‘diaries’ which were collected from the two female teachers. Here the focus is on participants’ narration in a classroom context. Collecting diaries were done in order to know more about the true actions, beliefs, and viewpoints of the teachers toward their self-reflection on classroom management (possible) problems.

### C. Procedure

This study analyses the teachers’ self-reflection on classroom management; the reason for choosing university educators in this study is the importance of pedagogical sensitivity of this academic level. Certainly, both students and teachers are aware of the context and of what they are doing in the class; this ensured that the research was well processing and consequently would contribute to the validity and improvement of this study.

By giving the teachers’ permission for attempting this study, the researchers sent out the copies of the two questionnaires (‘self-reflection’ and ‘classroom management’) to all the participants and received them by email from them. The researchers also received the diaries (the female teachers’ diaries about self-reflection on classroom management) attaching to their forms by an email. The questionnaires were prepared only for teachers.

### D. Data Analysis

The questionnaires have been analyzed in qualitative form and the two diaries have been analyzed qualitatively based on the ‘Summative content analysis’ (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Although this process can be used for ‘structured interviews’, the researchers applied it for ‘questionnaire’ to analyze the similarities and differences among the teachers and their awareness and attitudes toward ‘self-reflection’ and ‘classroom management’. To do so, the researchers made some codes to make distinctions among the data. They analyzed the similar answers between all the teachers (T), [(T1) vs. (T4)], and [(T2) vs. (T3)].

TABLE 1:  
THE PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMATION’ CODES

Teacher 1 (T1): the experienced male teacher
Teacher 2 (T2): the novice male teacher
Teacher 3 (T3): the novice female teacher
Teacher 4 (T4): the experienced female teacher

The ‘self-reflection questionnaire’ consisted of 50 questions and the ‘classroom management questionnaire’ consisted of 35 questions; teachers answered all of them. The range of similar responses in both questionnaires was the most important point. The questionnaires were based on the Likert scale from never to always (1: never; 2: rarely; 3: sometimes; 4: often; 5: always). In both questionnaires, the ‘always’ answer is the most positive attitude and ‘never’ is most negative attitude.

Since the questions were too many to be analyzed one by one, the researchers chose them randomly by their importance. To analyze the participants’ answers, for each questionnaire, the researcher divided some of main similar answers into two groups. As it’s shown below the first questionnaire (teacher’ self-reflection) for experienced teachers (T2 and T3) and the second questionnaire (classroom management) for the novice teachers (T1 and T4), have been analyzed descriptively. Consider the following tables:

TABLE 2:  
THE T2 AND T3 SIMILAR RESPONSES TO THE SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRE WITH THE HIGHEST POSITIVE ATTITUDE (5: ALWAYS)

Q 7	I respect the diverse talents of all learners.
Q 11	I design instruction that helps use students’ strengths as the basis for their growth and learning.
Q 18	I respect my students’ dynamic participation in the learning procedure.
Q 19	I motivate my students to become self-determining, and creative individual.
Q 29	I am a thoughtful and responsive listener.
Q 35	I create learning experiences that are based on principles of effective instruction.
Q 44	I practice self-reflection and self-assessment in my professional learning.
Q 47	I understand laws related to students’ rights and teacher responsibilities.

TABLE 3:

THE T1 AND T4 SIMILAR RESPONSES TO THE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE WITH THE HIGHEST POSITIVE ATTITUDE (5: ALWAYS)

Q 1	I speak to the students respectfully.
Q 5	I come to the class prepared for the lesson.
Q 11	I try various teaching techniques in order to attract the students to the lesson.
Q 21	I try to encourage the students to take part in class activities.
Q 23	I keep monitoring the class while I'm giving any explanation related to the lesson.

TABLE 4:

ALL THE TEACHERS' SIMILAR RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRES WITH THE HIGHEST POSITIVE ATTITUDE (5: ALWAYS)

<b>Teacher' self-reflection questionnaire:</b>	
Q 18	I respect my students' dynamic participation in the learning procedure.
Q 19	I motivate my students to become self-determining, and creative individual.
Q 22	I use some strategies to encourage affirmative relationships, collaboration, and significant learning experiments in the classroom
Q 29	I am a thoughtful and responsive listener.
Q 47	I understand laws related to students' rights and teacher responsibilities.
<b>Teacher' classroom management questionnaire:</b>	
Q 5	I come to the class prepared for the lesson.
Q 23	I keep monitoring the class while I'm giving any explanation related to the lesson.

The last three tables have shown the close teachers' (both novice vs. experienced, and male vs. female) attitudes toward self-reflection and classroom management. Therefore about the self-reflection standards, it can be said that the teachers care about these matters:

1. The students' priorities
2. The students with different characteristics and learning styles
3. The students' rights and teacher responsibilities

And in case of classroom management, the teachers have shown that they care about the following matters:

1. Classroom discipline
2. Collaborative role of teacher
3. Classroom management plan

But still there are some emptiness in saying the teachers' real feelings and thoughts around the self-reflection and classroom management issues (like their classroom context, their students conditions, the way they are facing the challenging situations, etc.), which the teachers' diaries helped in eliminating these desolations.

For this purpose the researchers wanted one of the novice teachers (T3), and one of the experienced teachers (T3) to write their diaries about self-reflection on classroom management. The researchers then used the summative content analysis for extracting the key points in their diaries. Consider the following table with all the important information given from the novice and veteran teachers' diaries:

TABLE 5:

THE TEACHERS' DIARIES KEY ATTITUDES TOWARD SELF-REFLECTION ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

<b>The novice female teacher (T3)</b>	<b>The experienced female teacher (T4)</b>
1. teaching the curriculum materials efficiently	1. believing in classroom discipline as the utmost important matter
2. establishing friendly environment in the classroom	2. saying her expectations of the students
3. changing the strategies in case of requirement	3. creating an atmosphere of friendly communication and collaboration
4. wanting the students to ask their questions	4. allowing the students to discover themselves without being embarrassed of lacking knowledge
5. dealing with a lot of tensions early in teaching	5. giving tasks to the students (in groups or pairs)
6. feeling more relax during the teaching periods little by little	

As it seems both novice and experienced teachers follow a logical rule about controlling their classroom. The attitudes mentioned in table 5, were exactly extracted from the teachers' diaries. And there were still other points that the researcher has highlighted them to gain more specific information:

- The novice female teacher (T3)

In her notes, the teacher gave the full information about her classroom context (specially the students' conditions). She said that the classroom runs in both native and second language and the students should be prepared for the class and read their translations; but they've got some problems (English language proficiency) that prevent them to ask their questions. Although she wanted to have a cooperative classroom but by considering the students' conditions, she should frequently want them to involve in class activities without fear. Actually, she did anything (giving the synonyms and/or the translations herself) to give the feedbacks from them. Then she described that she should accept to be judged by her students during the class time (she gave an example from an event in her class in which she was forced to excuse for her wrong translation to one of the young male students). The key point here is that she tried to set her disciplines and rules in the class to care about the students' rights and conditions in the classroom, using self-reflection techniques. In the experience path, for a novice University teacher, this could be an important lesson (accepting her/his mistakes and trying to remove the obstacles for the better job improvement).

- The experienced female teacher (T4)

In her point of view, the way she involves her students in the topic being discussed, reflects her beliefs and perceptions of what teaching should be like. By posing a question in the class, she can engage the students in a kind of

deep thinking process. As a reflective teacher, she thought that the positive teacher-students interactions and two-way feedbacks would be improved when a cooperative classroom has been designed. In nowhere in her diary, she didn't mention the possible and/or existing problems in classroom management. In the end, she claimed that by using self-reflection technique in ask-and-answer process, she can refresh her thoughts and knowledge for giving the right information to the learners; or she can make a trustable strong position of herself in the students' minds, too. In fact the students' improvement is important, but her prestige as an experienced University teacher (a perfect person in learners' minds) was a key factor that couldn't be ignored.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from teachers throughout the teacher's self-reflection and classroom management questionnaires showed high degrees of teachers' awareness about these two facts. The diaries collected from the female teachers verified that they believe in their answers to the questionnaires and are a kind of reflective teacher (each one due to their experience and proficiency levels). They try to manage their classroom as much better as possible by adapting several teaching techniques. The experienced teacher (T4) indirectly mentioned in her diary that she almost doesn't have any problem with classroom management and is a reflective teacher. The novice one (T3), on the other hand, seems to do everything to have such students who believe in her and accept her teaching style. She doesn't want to be an authority and then respects all students' beliefs and values (e.g. by accepting and admitting her mistakes and encouraging the active students in front of his/her classmates). Although this cross-sectional comparative case study, simply doesn't show that we can generalize our ideas to all English EFL teachers (with nearly the same as this study participants' conditions), the researcher almost reached her research questions' answers by finding the positive results from qualitative analysis of questionnaires and the diaries.

The findings of the two questionnaires showed that the male (novice and experienced) teachers have nearly the same amount of awareness of self-reflection; while the novice female teacher is in a lower level than the experienced female teacher. Moreover, there was no significant difference between experienced teachers in their attitudes toward self-reflection on classroom management. Consider the sum of all similar answers between teachers:

TABLE 6:  
THE RESULTS OF THE SIMILAR ANSWERS BETWEEN CASES IN TWO QUESTIONNAIRES

<b>Total of similar answers in teacher' self-reflection questionnaire (50 Qs)</b>				
All teachers:10	T1 and T4:29	T2 and T3:23	T1 and T2:34	T3 and T4:12
<b>Total of similar answers in teacher' classroom management questionnaire (35 Qs)</b>				
All teachers:2	T1 and T4:16	T2 and T3:10	T1 and T2:13	T3 and T4:11

In addition to the questionnaires' results, the analysis of diaries also prove the validity of the research findings in that due to the lack of experience, the novice female teacher faced some problems in classroom management (also she's still considered as a reflective teacher and has considerable awareness about self-reflection) and challenging situations according to what she described about her classes.

#### V. SUMMARY

The researchers in this comparative case study analyzed the "teacher' self-reflection on classroom management" and explored the answers for their research questions.

Firstly, the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis done on the data (questionnaires and diaries) showed the four Iranian University EFL teachers' awareness of self-reflection in that the sum of their positive (and in some cases, similar) answers were considerably high (the questionnaire were in Likert scale ranging from never to always).

Secondly, the results revealed that although the novice female teacher had a positive attitude of self-reflection but her low experience in teaching (at University) became problematic for her in classroom management (referring to the part of her diary on a challenging situation in her class). On the other hand, the novice male teacher' answers to the classroom management questionnaire showed that he had more positive viewpoints in this issue.

Thirdly, the experienced female teacher had the highest range of awareness toward 'self-reflection' and 'classroom management'; her diary on reflection issues and classroom disciplines proved this claim. Both experienced male and female teachers were so close in their questionnaires' answers and consequently in their attitudes toward 'self-reflection and classroom management standards.

#### VI. SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It could be better that the teachers' (participants) classes in this study observed to see their way of using 'classroom management'. Observation is a useful way for researchers to know more about the teacher-students interaction. Such study could be done in a different context with its own cultural characteristics to see if the teachers' thoughts and beliefs about self-reflection on classroom management, how could be formed.

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