The Impact of Motivation Strategies on EFL Teachers' Motivation and Reflective Teaching in Iran

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of using motivation strategies on EFL teachers' motivation and reflective teaching. In order to do this, 30 Iranian female EFL teachers who were the researcher's colleagues and expressed their willingness to participate in this study were selected. The group filled out a reflective teaching questionnaire by Akbari, Behzadpour, and Dadvand (2010) and motivation strategies questionnairre by Chastain (1988) as the pretest at the outset of the study and subsequently sat for a workshop where the researcher introduced motivation strategies and techniques to them. Following the end of the workshop, the teachers went back to their routine teaching program for 15 sessions and the researcher administered the reflectivity questionnaire and motivation strategies questionnaire as the posttest to the 30 teachers after those 15 sessions. In order to test the null hypotheses, that is to check any significant difference in the degree of the reflective teaching and motivation of the group prior to and after the treatment, a paired samples t-test was conducted in this research. The results revealed that there was a significant difference between the participants' scores on the motivation pretest and posttest; favoring the posttest. Also,there was a significant difference between the participants' scores on the reflective teaching pretest and posttest, favoring the posttest. Therefore, the results showed that motivation strategies significantly affect the teachers' motivation and reflective teaching.

Key words: motivation, reflective teaching, EFL teacher

Introduction

Teachers have always been the center of attention in the classroom, but their concerns and needs have not always been addressed in the same way (Mousavi, 2007). Nowadays, EFL/ESL teachers, along with teachers in other fields, have heavier responsibilities than before, and studies show that teaching is one of the most stressful jobs in comparison to other occupations (Adams, 2001). Unfortunately, there is little attention to the issue of teachers' motivation in educational psychology. There are several publications discussing the nature of the motivation for teaching with their focus on related issues: such as teacher job satisfaction, stress and burnout (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Zhang & Sapp, 2008).Dörnyei and Ushioda

(2011) emphasized that there is a good opportunity for students to be motivated in the teaching and learning process when teachers are motivated as well. This implies that teacher motivation is a significant factor that contributes to the student motivation and achievement in the target language concerned. According to Oldham and Hackman (2010), motivation has the role to develop and intensify the desire of every member of the organization to work effectively and efficiently. Armstrong and Murlis (2004) stated that teacher motivation is inadequate for instance; meagre salary compared to other institutions workers, no accommodation for teachers and they have to struggle for accommodation after completing school, and sometimes have to commute long distances to work. These and other factors are causing absenteeism, lackadaisical attitude and dissatisfaction among the teachers. Moreover, Reflective teaching was first raised by Dewey (1933), who believed that

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"teachers are not just passive curriculum implementers, but they can also play an active role in curriculum design and educational reform". In the study done by Thomas and Dykes (2011), reflective practicing includes requirements for teachers to not only regularly monitor progress but also to analyze progress monitoring data, reflect on each student's progress and modify teaching practices based on each student's response to instruction.

In the study conducted by Davidson (2005), on role of teachers in providing good quality education in primary schools through motivation, it was suggested that some initiatives to increase the teacher's level of motivation will improve the education system. The end users of the results of the present study would be teachers and material developers. The former may adapt their teaching approaches in a way that leads to better and more reflection by teachers. What teachers can actually do to increase their students' learning and develop their creativity is still in need of more focus in second/foreign language education research. Needless to point out that reflection on actual practices inside the classrooms is a key to teachers' creativity and professional development. The latter can provide learners with appropriate approaches and techniques in the classrooms. As the result of the existing problem explained above, in this study, the researchers decided to explore the impact of motivation strategies on EFL teachers' motivation and reflective teaching in Iran.

Background

Many scholars have tried to define motivation since it is a well-studied field which has roots in many academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education, political science, and economics. According to Mondy (2008), motivation is generally defined as the psychological forces that determine the direction of a person's level of effort, as well as a person's persistence in the face of obstacles. Bratton, Callinan, Forshaw and Sawchuk (2007) defined it as a cognitive decision making process that influences the persistence and direction of goal directed behavior. Work motivation can also be defined as "the psychological forces within a person that determines the direction of that person's behavior in an organization" (George & Jones, 2008)p

According to Brophy (2010) and Dornyei (2001b), the term motivation is used quite broadly in the field of education, because motivation is considered to be one of the most influential factors in learning and academic achievement. Dornyei (2001a) stated that "motivational strategies refer to those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve

some systematic and enduring positive effects". In addition, Guilloteaux and Dornyei defined motivational strategies as "instructional interventions applied by the teacher to elicit and stimulate students' motivation" (2008). Dornyei further contended that "they are techniques that promote the individual's goal-related behavior" (2001b).

On the other hand, reflective action is the dynamic, continuous and in-depth consideration of any belief or any form of expertise and knowledge by drawing on the grounds that reinforce it. Ma and Ren (2011) proposed that reflective teaching can be seen as a process that can facilitate teaching, learning and understanding and which plays a key role in the professional development a teacher. The importance of reflective teaching is well elaborated by many scholars. Reflective teaching has the helps make teachers more initiative and responsible in following the practical rationality by the means of examining teaching and learning activities, taking more intelligent actions and forming a deeper understanding of teaching, which eventually help their professional knowledge and ability. To move along the literature, the following research questions were raised:

Q1: Does using motivation strategies have a statistically significant impact on EFL teachers' motivation?

Q2: Does using motivation strategies have a statistically significant impact on EFL teachers' reflective teaching?

Method

Participants

The participants of this study included 30 Iranian female EFL teachers of Shahid Nadim high school located in Tabriz, who were the researcher's colleagues and expressed their willingness to participate in this study. In this research, the age range of the participants was between 20 to over 50 years old, years of experience of them was between 2 to 20 years old. Their academic degree was bachelor's degree, graduate student, master's degree and postgraduate students and their field of study was English and related courses, humanities, science and medical sciences.

Instruments

Teacher reflectivity questionnaire: The teacher reflectivity questionnaire developed by Akbari, Behzadpour, and Dadvand (2010) was used in this study. The questionnaire includes 29 items on a five-point Likert format ranging from 1 = never to 5 = always. The instrument was used as a pretest and posttest.

Motivation strategies questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed based on Chastain's model (1988) to familiarize the teachers with motivation strategies. This items consisted of four types of motivational strategies (Conceptual, Organized, Spontaneous and Interactive) called "achievement motivation strategies", and involved sixteen motivational strategies.

Design of the Procedure

To achieve the purpose of study, the reflective teaching and motivation questionnaires were administered to the 30 teachers to have a clear assessment of where they stood regarding the constructs at the outset of the study.

Following the above administration, the participants had a workshop for about 3 hours on the Shahid Nadim high school located in Tabriz and the four types of motivational strategies (conceptual, organized, spontaneous and interactive) called "achievement motivation strategies" were introduced to them. This

was followed by a discussion among the participants. Following the end of the workshop, the teachers went back to their routine teaching program for 15 sessions and the researcher administered the reflective teaching questionnaire and motivation questionnaire as the posttest to the 30 teachers after the 15 sessions.

Findings

In this study the data was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social sciences (SPSS). The inferential statistics used to investigate the null hypotheses of this study was a paired samples *t*-test, run between the pretest and posttest scores of groups to investigate the impact of motivation strategies on EFL teachers' motivation and reflective teaching.

The motivation strategies questionnaire was administered to the group of teachers once at the outset prior to the treatment. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics showing that the mean and standard deviation turned out to be 44.83 and 3.74 respectively.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of the motivation strategies Questionnaire Pretest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	std. deviation
Teachers	30	39	53	44.83	3.74	-.064	.427
Valid N (Likewise)	30						

Also, the reflective teaching questionnaire was administered to the group of teachers once at the outset prior to the treatment. Table 3 below includes the descriptive statistics of this administration. As is clear

from the table, the mean and standard deviation of the scores of the group of teachers on the pretest stood at 77.80 and 9.43, respectively.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of the Reflective Teaching Questionnaire Pretest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	std. deviation
Teachers	30	65	125	77.8000	9.43	-.543	.427
Valid N (Likewise)	30						

Moreover, the same questionnaire of reflective teaching was administered to the group of teachers at

the end of the treatment. Table 3 below includes the descriptive statistics of this administration

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics of the Reflective Teaching Questionnaire Posttest

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	std. deviation
Teachers	30	70	129	84.6000	9.06	.378	.427
Valid N (Likewise)	30						

In order to analyze the first research question investigating the impact of motivation strategies on teachers' motivation, the teachers' mean scores on motivation pre and posttest were submitted to a paired sample t-tests after normality analysis.

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics of teachers' scores on motivation tests

	Motivation1	Motivation2
Valid	30	30
jklN Missing	0	0
Mean	44.83	49.56
Std. Deviation	3.74	3.77
Variance	14.0	14.2
Minimum	39	43
Maximum	53.00	56.00

As it is shown in Table 4, the mean score of the teachers on achievement motivation strategies test one (pretest) is 44.8 and the standard deviation is 3.74 while the mean score of the participants on the achievement motivation strategies test (posttest) is 49.5 and the standard deviation is 3.77. Therefore, there is a change in the mean scores and the teachers had a higher score in the posttest. In order to see, whether the mean scores on the two test are statistically different or not the mean scores were submitted a paired samples-t-test. Results are shown in the following table.

Table 5.

T-test for teachers' scores on motivation tests (pre-test and post-test)

	Paired Differences		T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std.Deviation			
Motivation2-Motivation1	4.73333	3.15062	8.22	29	.001

As it is shown in the above table, there is a significant difference between the participants' scores on the motivation test one (pretest) and motivation test two [mean difference=4.73, t= 8.22, df=29, p=0.001<0.05], favoring the posttest. Therefore, the null hypothesis is safely rejected and it can be argued that motivation strategies significantly affect the teachers' motivation

Moreover, the mean scores of the participants' scores on reflective tests one (pretest) and reflective test two (posttest) were submitted to descriptive statistics and paired samples-t-tests. The findings are presented in the following tables.

Table 6
Descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test reflective teaching tests

		Pre-test Reflective	Post-test Reflective
N	Valid	30	30
	Missing	0	0
Mean		77.8000	84.6000
Std.Error of Mean		1.72233	1.65509
Median		75.0000	83.0000
Mode		70.00	90.00
Std.Deviation		9.43362	9.06528
Variance		88.993	82.179
Skewness		.543	.378
Standard Error of Skewness		.427	.427
Range		33.00	35.00

As it is shown in table 6, there is a change in the mean scores and the teachers had a higher score in the posttest. In order to see whether the mean scores on the two test are statistically different or not the mean scores were submitted a paired samples-t-test. Results are shown in the following table.

Table 7
Paired sample-t-tests for comparing teachers' pretest and post-test scores on reflective teaching tests

	Paired Differences		T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	**Std.Deviation**			
Reflective1-Reflective2	6.8	12.485	2.98	29	.006

As it is shown in the above table, there is a significant difference between the participants' scores on the reflective test one (pretest) and reflective tests two (posttest) [mean difference=6.8, t= 12.48, df=29, p=0.001<0.05], favoring the posttest. Therefore, the null hypothesis is safely rejected and it can be argued that motivation strategies significantly affect the teachers' reflective teaching.

Discussion and Conclusion

Regarding the first research question, the results showed that teaching motivation strategies to the teachers significantly contributed to the teachers' motivation level. The researcher was thus able to reject the first null hypothesis of the study and the result showed that motivation strategies had statistically significant impact on EFL teachers' motivation. There are some studies in support of this claim. Mustafa and Othman (2010) examined the perceptions of high school teachers about the effects of motivation on their performance at work. They found that there is a positive relationship between motivation and working performance of teachers. Likewise, Kazerouni and Sadighi (2014), worked about the Iranian female EFL

teachers' motivation and job satisfaction level at public schools and private language institutes in Shiraz. The results showed that both groups of teachers were satisfied with various aspects of their job. They showed dissatisfaction with physical structure of their school, benefits, working hours, government and professional association work, and school administration. They felt burned out and emotionally drained from their work. They entered the teaching profession because of intrinsic and altruistic reasons.

Also, about the second null hypothesis, the results showed that teaching motivation strategies had a significant impact on EFL teachers' reflective teaching. So, the researcher was able to reject the second null hypothesis of the study too, and the result showed that motivation strategies had statistically significant impact on EFL teachers' reflective teaching. Nosratinia and Moradi (2017) worked on the EFL teachers' reflective teaching, use of motivational strategies, and their sense of efficacy. Analyzing the data through running the non-parametric Spearman's rank order coefficient of correlation indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between reflective teaching and use of motivational

strategies, reflective teaching and sense of efficacy, and between use of motivational strategies and sense of efficacy. Furthermore, running a multiple regression analysis revealed that reflective teaching could more significantly predict the self-efficacy among EFL teachers. In the same study, Jadidi and Keshavarz (2013) worked on the impact of Iranian EFL teachers' reflection on their incorporation of strategy- based instruction. The results from Pearson product moment correlation revealed a high, positive correlation between teachers' reflection and their views regarding the incorporation of language learning strategies in instruction. The findings of the current study is in line with the general consensus in the field that practicing teachers should be equipped with reflective skills to be able to deal with contextual instructional challenges. In this research, the researcher postulation is that through raising the teachers' awareness of the concepts of conceptual, organized, spontaneous and interactive achievement strategies, teachers' reflectivity increase. Therefore, due to the significance of reflective teaching and its impact on teachers' teaching effectiveness and learners' achievements, educators are strongly recommended to raise the awareness of the teachers of motivation strategies.

The results of the present study can possibly be justified on the grounds that the null hypotheses were safely rejected and it can be argued that motivation strategies significantly affected the teachers' motivation and reflective teaching.

The findings of this study, along with those of previous studies, can help a diversity of professions concerned with language teaching and learning. Among all, teachers, learners, syllabus designers and material developers can be named. Familiarity with motivation strategies and properly exploiting them could be beneficial in all teaching domains. Therefore, teachers could become aware that familiarity with motivation strategies and their use may help them become more reflective. Understanding these strategies can help foster teachers' inferential abilities and enhance their deep understanding of teaching. Therefore, EFL teachers are encouraged to get familiar with psychological concepts particularly motivation techniques which may have an effect on their level of reflectivity. This may assist teachers in developing a more solid framework based on which they can make more informed decisions concerning the teaching-learning process. In fact, teachers as reflective practitioners are advised to explore the different dimensions of their practice and cognition to get more in-depth views concerning the profession. Indubitably, it is not only teachers who play the significant role in

the learning process; syllabus designers and textbook writers have a lot to say in this regard too.

The findings of the present study may help material developers and syllabus designers in considering the role of motivation strategies in learning a foreign language. Different materials could be provided for teachers as well as learners in which the usefulness of motivation strategies is highlighted. In doing so, materials developers are encouraged to include content in course materials so that teachers and learners get familiar with the concept of motivation in an efficient and effective way through different materials. This, in the long run, is likely to help EFL teachers become more reflective practitioners as a result of which more learning will take place on the side of learners. EFL learners should know themselves as accurately as possible; i.e. their negative and positive points, drawbacks, needs, personal and social features, and so on. Improving psychological factors like motivation as one of the main factors can influence learning process. So they have to find different ways to increase their motivation to benefit more from teacher's techniques.

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