The Call to Teacher Aegis: Investigating the Relationship Between Iranian EFL Teachers' Engagement in Reflective Practices and Their Immunity

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Abstract

It is utterly proclaimed that the effectiveness of teachers in their professional roles is deeply intertwined with psycho-emotional constructs such as reflective practice and immunity. Given the notable significance and scarcity of research on the correlation between reflective practices and immunity among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, this study investigated whether Iranian EFL teachers' reflective practice exhibited a significant association with their immunity. To accomplish this objective, the convenience sampling method was employed to select a group of 204 EFL teachers (78 males and 126 females) from private language institutions across various provinces in Iran. Data were collected through surveys and subsequent interviews conducted with the participating teachers. The correlational analysis revealed significant positive relationships between teachers' immunity and all reflection subscales, except for critical reflection. The multiple regression analysis further confirmed that metacognitive and cognitive reflection strongly predict EFL teachers' immunity. Interviews emphasized the contribution of specific subcomponents of reflective practice to teachers' immunity. These findings emphasized the significance of merging reflective approaches and bolstering immunity within teacher growth schedules. Furthermore, they provided new opportunities to implement positive psychology criteria in foreign language teacher education.

Keywords: EFL teachers, reflective practice, language teacher immunity, Positive Psychology principles

Introduction

With the spearheading shift from method-based pedagogy toward the practicality principle of the post-method condition, the relationship between theorizers and practitioners was reinforced by enabling teachers who were proficient to implement their theoretical knowledge in practical settings and also utilized tangible experiences to inform their theoretical perception (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). This advancement foregrounds the evolving nature of teaching as highlighted by Macalister (2018). In line with this perspective, Schon and DeSanctis' (1986) concept of critical reflective practice provides a robust mechanism for teachers who Freeman (1998) characterizes as not blank containers to be stuffed with theoretical skills but rather carry personal values and theories to teacher education programs, to critically examine the beliefs that underpin one's actions (Parsons & Stephenson, 2005; Watts & Lawson, 2009). Reflective practice is defined as

> a cognitive process accompanied by a set of attitudes in which teachers systematically collect data about their practice and, while engaging in dialogue with others, use the data to make informed decisions about their practice both inside and outside the classroom. (Farrell, 2015, p. 123)

Thus, voluminous research has accentuated the distinctive demand for teachers to be engaged in reflective practice (Burhan-Horasanlı & Ortaçtepe, 2016; Mann, 2005) to get dynamic and assured in their teaching (Farrell, 2019) resulting in immense awareness about their classrooms (Ferraro, 2000). Inspired by the important role of reflective practice in teacher education and the prominence of critical reflection as an "act of professional artistry" (Shon, 1996, p. 120), reflective teachers arrive at new perceptions about their performance and avoid routine teaching practice (Farrell, 2016a). Furthermore, Farrell (2016b) demonstrated that novice English as a second language teachers' participation in group reflection facilitated a better understanding of the challenges they faced during their initial teaching semester, thereby enabling them to navigate their teaching experiences more effectively. Castro and Bauml (2009) posit that reflective practice can serve as an effective strategy for new teachers to overcome challenges and cultivate perseverance, empowering them to not only succeed in their vocation but also to prosper and transcend in the face of challenges. According to Braun and Crumpler (2004), reflective practice is a worthwhile implement for teachers to leverage their life experiences as valuable sources of knowledge, assisting them in anticipating and managing classroom difficulties.

In consideration of cautious and persistent studies (Hiver & Dornyei, 2017), the concept of teacher immunity has obtained notable interest within the realm of second language acquisition and it is analogous to diverse teachers' characteristics involving teacher identity (Jafari, & Razmjoo, 2022) and teacher reflection (Ashraafi et al., 2020; Teo et al., 2022). Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) highlight that teacher immunity plays a central role in connecting personal concerns with broader contextual factors, thereby addressing significant issues within the language teaching profession. Various related expressions have also been presented alongside immunity including coping, simply defined as procedures utilized to impede stressors, and resilience, which is the ability to revive from offensive experiences (Parker & Martin, 2009).

Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) state that teacher immunity comprises manifold aspects, including the incentive to educate, mental thriving, and adaptability on one part of the spectrum, and teaching strain, exhaustion, and erosion on the other. Prior research has been equipped with expansive evidence regarding the correlation between teacher resilience and teacher performance demonstrating that teachers' coping strategies decreased emotional collapse, dissatisfaction, and burnout. In a study conducted by Namaziandost et al. (2023), a noteworthy association was observed between the emotion regulation of teachers and their immunity. One possible elucidation for the observed results is that EFL instructors who demonstrated a high degree of emotional resilience were better equipped to handle and cope with stressors in their work environment. It gives the impression that broadening some form of immunity is indispensable for language teachers to survive. It is worth mentioning that immunity affects almost all aspects of teachers' careers (Hiver et al., 2015).

Leafing through the related studies on the momentous impact of reflective practice, restricted knowledge is available on how it interacts with another psychological construct, namely teacher immunity. Furthermore, there is a dearth of thorough research on the potential correlation between reflective practice and the immunity of teachers of English as a Foreign Language from Iran. Owing to the paucity of practical evidence, this study serves as an initial endeavor to bridge this lacuna by examining the link between Iranian EFL teachers' reflective practice and immunity, as well as examining the links between various subscales of reflective practice—practical, cognitive, affective, and metacognitive reflection—and immunity among Iranian EFL teachers. This study aims to shed light on the beneficial influence of engaging in reflective practice among EFL teachers, with a specific focus on investigating the extent to which teachers' commitment to reflective practice can intensify their immunity conceptualized as a robust armoring mechanism that emerges in response to significant challenges and pressures encountered within professional contexts (Hiver, 2017).

Literature Review

Reflective Teaching

Reflective teaching has a rich historical background, dating back to the groundbreaking work of philosophers such as Descartes (Fendler, 2003) and subsequently developed by John Dewey, widely regarded as a trailblazer in teacher education (Griffiths, 2000). Dewey placed great emphasis on the values of broad-mindedness, accountability, and sincerity within reflective teaching. This approach encompasses the critical analysis of one's teaching practices, to enhance student learning outcomes and promote ongoing development and growth as an educator (Farrell, 2015). The concept of reflection has been subject to varying definitions, resulting in imprecise interpretations (Farrell, 1999, 2001, 2006). According to Gebhard's (2005) interpretation, reflection involves a deliberate and prolonged examination of one's beliefs or practices. Akbari (2007) argues that teachers inherently reflect on their practices, maintaining that cognitive processing is an unavoidable aspect of their interactions with students and fulfillment of duties. Brown and Ryan (2003) propose that the notion of practical reflection applies to action

research, a method wherein teachers conduct small-scale, classroom-based investigations. This approach proves beneficial in addressing classroom challenges and refining teaching practices (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). Farrell (2006) has outlined several key approaches to reflective teaching: technical rationality, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-for-action. While reflection-in-action primarily involves cognitive processes, reflection-on-action involves both cognitive and metacognitive reasoning (Borg, 2003). Reflection-for-action aims to enhance practice by considering future actions. It demands that teachers anticipate what may happen during a lesson and engage in introspection about previous experiences (Farrell, 2014).

Reflective Teaching in ELT

Numerous studies in the educational domain suggest that reflecting on teaching practices is highly advantageous for teachers. This perspective asserts that when teachers engage in reflective thinking, they become more critical in their approach to teaching, ultimately leading to improved instructional strategies and outcomes (Artzt & Armour-Thomas, 2001; Mayes, 2001). In line with Carrington and Selva (2010), reflective practice empowers teachers to employ successful teaching approaches tailored to the diverse requirements of their students. This finding is consistent with Zhao's (2021) suggestion that implementing strategies to manage emotions empowers EFL teachers to regulate their emotions effectively, thus preventing any adverse impact on the classroom environment during challenging situations. According to Lynch (2000), reflective analyses are frequently described as a means of uncovering overlooked choices and revealing hidden alternatives. According to a study conducted by Degago (2007), writing journals can be highly beneficial in enhancing one's reflection skills. Similarly, Lee's (2007) research revealed that English teachers undergoing pre-service training demonstrated the ability to analyze issues from various perspectives, which resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of the topics under consideration.

In teacher education, journal writing is often recommended to facilitate reflective practice among student teachers. Regularly reflecting on teaching and learning issues in journals provides a valuable opportunity for teacher-learners to connect theoretical knowledge with practical experience. According to Yost et al. (2000), this reflective approach can enhance the development of professional skills while also promoting metacognitive abilities. Tillman (2003) proposed that novice teachers who practiced dialogic journaling demonstrated improved handling of teaching laboriousness.

Teacher Immunity

According to MacIntyre et al. (2019), language teachers across the globe commonly face high levels of stress due to their demanding workloads, time constraints, and challenges in managing multiple roles and responsibilities. Hiver (2017) introduced the concept of LTI, which denotes a strong protective shield that emerges in reaction to formidable obstacles. This mechanism fortifies one's ability to withstand adversity and optimize educational effectiveness. According to Hiver and Dörnyei (2017),

teachers are often quoted as the "architects of society" because they bear the responsibility of training future generations and shaping their potential. In addition to imparting academic skills, teachers must also play a vital role in educating students psychologically, as noted by Skinner and Beers (2016). Consequently, psychology is indispensable in framing the landscape of education.

Teachers build immunity to unexpected challenges in the classroom through a self-organized and adaptive response similar to how the immune system responds to pathogens. This adaptation process occurs spontaneously through repeated exposure to difficult situations, leading to a self-organized and adaptive response. Therefore, educators must cultivate a robust immunity to effectively tackle the various obstacles that arise in the realm of education and warrant the continued functioning and prosperity of the educational system.

According to Canbay and Sönmez (2023), teacher immunity is a complex construct that encompasses several concepts, requiring potent mental resilience, handling distress, and perpetuating a positive outlook toward teaching. Hiver et al. (2015) portrayed a framework for teacher immunity encircling constructs such as perseverance, burnout, self-confidence attitudes, flexibility, and classroom emotion to define teacher immunity. Hiver and Dörnyei (2017) suggest that language teacher immunity has a binary effect with both advantageous and destructive consequences. Overemphasis on productive teacher immunity can encourage teachers to be open-minded about new opportunities for change. However, maladaptive immunity can prevent teachers from adopting innovative instructional practices and classroom management strategies, potentially leading to exhaustion (Rahimpour et al., 2020).

Antecedents of Teacher Immunity

As stated by Hiver (2017), factors that may be linked to a teacher's immunity include their level of autonomy, engagement, and emotional state. Moreover, Hiver (2016) suggests that emotionally stable teachers may possess more effective forms of immunity. Rahmati et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative investigation into the immunity growth in Iranian EFL teachers. The study revealed that various factors, such as lack of self-confidence and low salary among teachers, students' apathy, time constraints, and high expectancy from parents, were regarded as leading disruptions that triggered teachers' resilience.

There was a strong correlation found between autonomy, emotions, engagement, and language teacher immunity as explained by Noughabi et al. (2020). It was investigated that teacher independence emerged as the most powerful predictor in explaining the level of immunity experienced by in-service EFL teachers. Li (2021) highlighted the potential connections between language teachers' mindfulness and their immunity and psychological well-being. The idea is that by practicing mindfulness, language teachers may be able to reduce stress and boost their immune systems, leading to better overall health and prosperity. Noughabi et al. (2022) discovered that EFL teachers who displayed higher levels of dedication and perseverance were more likely to possess immunity. Teachers with high levels of grit persevere in their work and view instructional practices as enjoyable, despite various professional conflicts (Sudina et al., 2021). Dewaele et al. (2019) state that the level

of work engagement among teachers has a significant influence on their overall well-being. Furthermore, Hiver (2017) found that the commitment and engagement of language teachers are closely linked to their immune systems. In other words, language teachers who are more committed and engaged in their work may have a stronger immune system.

Teachers' Reflective Practices and Immunity

There has not been much research in mainstream or ELT teacher education literature on how reflective practices and immunity are related. Even the few studies that do exist have only looked at a small part of these concepts. Numerous studies, including those conducted by Cirocki and Farrell (2017, 2019), as well as Farrell (2016, 2018, 2019), have identified reflective practice as a key solution to promoting longevity in the teaching profession. The study conducted by Ayoobiyan and Rashidi (2021) suggests that teachers' capacity to engage in reflective practice on their pedagogical approaches can be seen as a reliable indicator of their resilience. Specifically, the metacognitive subscale was discovered to be firmly correlated with resilience, suggesting that teachers' awareness and understanding of their teaching philosophy may play an essential role in their ability to withstand challenges and setbacks. In a study guided by Rahmati et al. (2019), EFL teachers who were reflective in their profession were able to effectively manage their emotions, which in turn had a positive impact on their immune systems. Namaziandost et al. (2023) investigated that the reason for the observed results could be that reflective thinking enables EFL teachers to gain valuable insights into their workplace, which in turn allows them to develop a profound understanding of the processes that shape their immunity. This finding was highlighted by Hiver and Dörnyei (2017). New teachers can use reflective practice as a strategy to overcome challenges and adversities. This finding is supported by Sharplin et al. (2011), who found that all teachers in their study utilized reflective practices to examine problems and identify suitable solutions. Shirazizadeh and Moradkhani (2018) demonstrated that teachers who can engage in reflective practices tend to experience lower levels of burnout compared with those who do not. Reflective practice is positively associated with resilience, with metacognitive and practical reflection serving as main predictors, highlighting the enhanced ability of reflective teachers to effectively cope with educational challenges (Shirazizadeh et al., 2019). The evaluation of metacognitive reflection, which involves teachers' comprehension of their teaching philosophy and self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses, underlines reflection as an active process. This entails deliberate exploration of experiences, questioning assumptions, and gaining new perspectives to promote a deeper self-awareness (Rogers, 2001).

EFL teachers who engage in reflective practice demonstrate a better ability to regulate their emotions and strengthen immunity (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). This finding is in line with Hiver et al. (2015) indicating that RT can facilitate two types of immunity processes, namely self-organization, and emergence. The notion of language teacher immunity is rooted in complexity theory, specifically self-organization. According to this theory, self-organization is an adaptive process wherein a system's internal function changes in response to external factors to ensure

survival (Rahmati et al., 2019). As stated by Hiver and Dörnyei (2017), reflecting on teaching processes may have enabled EFL teachers to move more quickly via the four stages of motivational teacher immunity, which are initiation, engagement, re-alignment, and equilibrium. When reflective teachers experienced disruptions in their passionate state due to disturbances, they were able to easily transition to the coupling stage, where they could make the necessary adjustments to reorganize the system's elements and effectively negate these disruptions. Subsequently, they could progress to the re-arrangement stage, where their emotional system could return to equilibrium through a symbiotic relationship with explicit response options. Finally, they could reach the stabilization stage, in which their psychological system had developed into a protective shield, defending them against any future disturbance (Hiver et al., 2015). Thus, it can be claimed that reflective EFL teachers may have developed greater immunity to workplace tensions and disturbances. Although it is commonly accepted that reflective teaching can provide a range of benefits for second language teachers, there is limited empirical research on the potential correlation between reflective practice and immunity among EFL teachers in Iran's context. Given this lack of knowledge, it is essential to conduct more robust investigations to obtain a clearer perception of the relationship between reflective practices, and immunity among EFL teachers. This study aims to bridge this lacuna by defining two variables and using a mixed-method design to explore and clarify their relationship. To align with the stated objective, the following research questions were posed:

1. Is there any significant relationship between EFL teachers' engagement in reflective practices and their immunity?

2. If so, how do EFL teachers' reflective practices contribute to their immunity?

Method

Participants

A total of 204 Iranian EFL teachers (78 males and 126 females) instructing, general English classes in private language institutions in various provinces across Iran, including Tehran, Isfahan, and Kermanshah, were enrolled in the current study (see Table 1). They were teaching students with a range of skill levels, from beginner to advanced. Regarding the principles of communicative competence (Zhang & Rahimi, 2014), these language academies make an effort to train students to communicate both in oral and written mode. The participants' teaching experience differed from 2 years to 15 years, and their age range was between 20 and 43 years. All the teachers affirmed that they had taken part in teacher education courses before embarking on their teaching occupation. Convenience sampling was utilized to select participants due to the logistical challenges associated with recruiting 204 teachers across multiple cities. This method, supported by Dornyei (2007) as effective under resource constraints, facilitated efficient data collection from various educational settings. To extenuate the limitations of convenience sampling, rigorous data validation techniques were employed. These included detailed interviews and the use of mixed methods, promoting the validity of the research findings. Teachers were informed that their participation in the interviews would be voluntary. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any period with no consequences.

The researchers also assured the teachers that their participation would be anonymous and voluntary. Concerning their academic degree, 66% of the participating teachers held MA degrees, 21% BA degrees, and the remaining 13% were Ph.D. holders.

Table 1

Participants' Information

Total EFL Teachers	Gender	Teaching Experience	Age Range	Academic Degrees
204	78 males, 126 females	2 to 15 years	20 to 43 years	66% MA, 21% BA, 13% PhD

Materials and Instruments

The researchers utilized two essential instruments to investigate EFL teachers' reflective practices and immunity. The first instrument, the Teachers' Immunity Scale developed by Hiver (2017) compromises 42 items across 7 scales. Each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree. The scale embraces Teaching self-efficacy and estimates teachers' perceived self-efficacy by employing 7 items. Resilience comprised 6 items that illustrated teachers' capability to firmly deal with stressors and afflictions in their lives and professions. Coping is concerned with teachers' management of aggravation in real time. This scale involved 6 items. Burnout as a result of job protracted stressors was measured by way of 5 items. How teachers perceived teaching was rated by Attitudes toward teaching comprising 5 items. Openness to change, a 6-item scale, and gauged teachers' tendency towards accepting innovation and variation in their teaching Classroom affectivity which measured teachers' emotional states in their teaching encompasses 7 items. In our study, the reliability estimates for the Teachers' Immunity Scale demonstrated acceptable consistency ($r = .87$). Consistent with our findings, previous studies by Hiver (2017) and Noughabi et al. (2020) also reported high levels of reliability for the TIS.

The second instrument, the English language teacher reflection inventory, developed by Akbari et al. (2010), embraces 29 items that measure educators' reflection practices across five distinct areas. The first dimension, practical reflection, comprises six items that concentrate on sharing teaching challenges with colleagues, monitoring peers' classes, receiving feedback on their teaching, and retaining reflective journals to heighten their instructional practices. Secondly, the cognitive reflection subscale (six items), relates to teachers' intentional endeavors to participate in professional growth, such as perusing scholarly periodicals. The third subscale,

affective reflection including three items, encompasses teachers' endeavors to understand students' backgrounds and call forth their opinions about different teaching tasks. The fourth subscale is a metacognitive reflection (seven items) and entails three subjects, namely, teachers' personal beliefs about teaching, their assessment of their accomplishment, and analysis of their manner. The fifth subscale, critical reflection includes seven items that focus on teachers' perception of the cultural elements and how these facets manipulate the teaching space. The inventory employs a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "never" to (5) "always".

Semi-Structured and Focus Group Interviews

To address the second research question, individual semi-structured and focus group interviews were conducted with the chosen participants. The interview embodies open-ended questions (see Appendix) with the identities of the interviewed teachers kept confidential and their statements reported using pseudonyms. The semi-structured interview protocols also provide opportunities for both the researcher and the participants to shape their experiences with the reflective idea, which Kerrigan (2014) advocates to reinforce the validity of the results.

Procedure

A mixed-method explanatory design was employed for data collection and analysis. Initially, 230 questionnaires were distributed via email attachments, resulting in 210 completed responses. Six incomplete questionnaires were subsequently excluded from the final data analysis. The first research question was addressed using the Teachers' Immunity Scale (TIS) developed by Hiver (2017) and the English Language Teacher Reflection Inventory designed by Akbari et al. (2010). For the second research question, individual semi-structured and focus group interviews were conducted with selected participants. Subsequently, participants attended focus group interviews approximately one week later. These interviews were conducted in Persian to facilitate mutual understanding and were audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

With the aim of data collection and analysis, a mixed-methods explanatory design was pursued. In the beginning, 230 questionnaires were distributed by e-mail attachments. Data recruited from the questionnaires were analyzed utilizing SPSS 21. To certify the reliability of the data and assess the normality of the distribution, Cronbach's alpha and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (KS test) were utilized. Subsequently, the correlation between teachers' reflective practices and their immunity was examined using Pearson product-moment correlations as the focus of the first research question. In addition, the researchers investigated the predictive power of various dimensions of reflection in determining the level of immunity among EFL teachers. To achieve this, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Subsequently, eight teachers with reflection inventory scores beyond the mean were chosen to participate in in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted in Persian to ensure that the interviewees put their ideas into words willingly. This provided opportunities for participants to communicate in their native language and reduced any potential communication barriers that could arise from speaking in a second language. The interviews that lasted for 20 to 35 minutes were conducted with the

participants' assent and recorded for accuracy. The data obtained from both the semi-structured and focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions underwent member checking (Cohen et al., 2007), where participants provided feedback to ensure data consistency. Subsequently, a three-stage thematic analysis process (Merriam, 2014) was conducted using NVivo 12, employing an inductive approach. In the first stage, the researchers engaged in a comprehensive review of the transcriptions to familiarize themselves with the data and identify broad themes. After identifying themes, the researchers conducted a thorough examination, refining them as needed, merging or eliminating redundant themes, and synthesizing similar ones into coherent categories. Each category was then meticulously labeled to precisely represent its underlying content (i.e., naming categories). Subsequently, codes and categories were formulated by integrating established reflective teaching theories and insights into teacher immunity, informed by the literature review. On the whole, to enhance the reliability and validity of research findings, member checking and triangulation were utilized to ensure the accuracy of the results. Member checking involved participant feedback to ensure data consistency. Triangulation combined semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and a survey to validate findings from various viewpoints.

Results

The study took advantage of statistical measures to summarize the total and subscale scores of the reflection inventory and TIS instruments. The results are illustrated in Table 1. The Cronbach alpha values ranged from 0.73 to 0.94, denoting a high level of internal consistency in individuals' answers to the questions in both surveys. Furthermore, the probability value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test ranged from 0.05 to 0.20, advocating an adequate normal distribution of the variables.

The findings of the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis manifested a significant relationship between participants' total reflection and their immunity scores ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$) (refer to Table 2). This indicates that EFL teachers who exhibit a higher degree of engagement in reflective practices tend to have higher levels of professional immunity. Concerning the association between the subscales of the reflection inventory and teachers' immunity, significant positive correlations were observed in the case of practical reflection ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.05$), cognitive reflection ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$), affective reflection ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$), metacognitive reflection ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), and critical reflection ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), with the metacognitive subscale showing the greatest correlation (see Table 3).

Consequently, in the second part of the study, the researchers aimed to delve deeper into the impact of reflection subscales in determining EFL teachers' immunity. The results of the multiple regression analysis (Table 4) revealed that both metacognitive and cognitive reflection are powerful predictors of EFL teachers' immunity. The model summary (Table 5) elucidates that there is a significant correlation (0.61) between the teachers' reflection subscales and their immunity, with an adjusted square value of 0.35. The model, which includes all the reflection inventory subscales, can precisely predict 35% of immunity, pointing to a moderate effect size ($f2 = 0.59$). In the main, 35% of the variance in teachers' immunity can be clarified by their reflective practices.

Table 1

Correlation Between Total Reflection and Total Immunity

	Immunity
Reflection	0.56[**]

[**]Two-tailed, significant at 0.01.

Table 1 displays the correlation between total reflection and total immunity scores, with Cronbach alpha values indicating high internal consistency.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Reflective Practices and Their Immunity

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Alpha	KS Sig.
Reflection	1.83	5.00	3.61	0.64	0.94	0.20
Practical reflection	1.67	5.00	3.74	0.71	0.76	0.20
Cognitive reflection	1.50	5.00	3.30	0.79	0.83	0.20
Affective reflection	1.33	5.00	4.00	0.73	0.79	0.06
Metacognitive reflection	1.00	5.00	3.39	0.85	0.85	0.20
Critical reflection	1.86	5.00	3.81	0.62	0.81	0.05
Immunity	1.97	5.92	4.23	0.56	0.90	0.20
Teaching Self-efficacy	1.86	6.00	4.43	0.74	0.73	0.08
Burnout	1.00	5.40	2.47	0.68	0.73	0.07
Resilience	1.40	6.00	4.28	0.98	0.75	0.07
Attitude toward Teaching	1.20	6.00	4.51	0.93	0.76	0.09

Table 2 illustrates the results from the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, indicating a significant positive relationship between participants' total reflection and immunity scores ($r = 0.56$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3

Correlation Between the Subscales of Reflection and Total Immunity

components of reflection	Immunity
Practical reflection	0.43[**]
Cognitive reflection	0.53[**]
Affective reflection	0.49[**]
Metacognitive reflection	0.55[**]
Critical reflection	0.38[**]

[**] Two-tailed, significant at 0.01

In Table 3, significant positive correlations were found between teachers' immunity and various subscales of the reflection inventory, with the metacognitive reflection showing the strongest correlation ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4

The Results of Regression Analysis for Teachers' Reflection Subscales and Immunity

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	Significance of the slope	
	β	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
Practical	.035	.063	.045	.557	.578
Cognitive	.173	.069	.242	2.493	.013
Affective	.228	.072	.297	3.187	.002
Metacognitive	.214	.070	.325	3.062	.003
Critical	-.245	.088	-.273	-2.780	.006

In Table 4, the findings of the multiple regression analysis demonstrate that both metacognitive and cognitive reflection play substantial roles as predictors of EFL teachers' immunity.

Table 5

R2 Table for Reflection as the Predictor of Teachers' Immunity

Model	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.608[a]	0.370	0.354	0.45147

- Predictors: (Constant), Practical Reflection, Cognitive Reflection, Affective Reflection, Metacognitive Reflection, and Critical Reflection.
- Dependent Variable: Total Immunity

The model summary in Table 5 illustrates a significant correlation (0.61) between teachers' reflection subscales and their immunity, with an adjusted R-squared value of 0.35.

The Impact of Teachers' Reflective Practices on Their Immunity

To comprehend the underlying reasons for the strong or weak correlation between the five subscales of the reflection inventory and teachers' immunity, the researchers conducted interviews with teachers after the completion of the previous phase. These interviews aimed to explore the factors that contribute to such associations. In this section, the findings from the interviews are presented, with an emphasis on the contribution of each of the five subcomponents toward immunity. This section outlines the predominant recurring themes identified through meticulous content analysis.

Practical Reflection and Immunity

Peer observation as a practical reflection

During the interviews, eight of the participating teachers referred to peer classroom observation as a practical method for reflection. They expressed their belief that observing their colleagues' classes could facilitate familiarity with alternative teaching techniques and contribute significantly to their teaching improvement. By observing other teachers in action, they asserted that they could acquire new insights, which would enable them to enhance their teaching methods and, consequently, improve their overall performance. Regarding this matter, the remarks made by Nazanin, one of the interviewed teachers, are particularly persuasive:

> *I find that observing my colleagues teach is like watching a cooking show, where I can take notes from the chef's techniques and apply them to improve my culinary skills. Similarly, by attending my peers' classes, I can learn from their teaching approaches and integrate them into my pedagogical style. This practice can contribute significantly to my confidence and reduce stress levels in the classroom, as it allows me to refine my teaching strategies and adapt to different situations.*

Peer Discussion for Problem-Solving

Another common theme for practical reflection among the eight interviewees was discussing teaching problems with colleagues. All of the teachers acknowledged that they tended to share issues related to their classroom performance with their peers. However, they also admitted that they often limited these discussions to a fixed group of friends. By Paniz's verbal communication:

Usually, I talk about my teaching problems with my more experienced colleagues while I am in the office. Right now, I'm not in a good environment because of a strained relationship with the people around me. This makes me uncomfortable talking to them about my problems.

Cognitive Reflection and Immunity

Intellectual Growth through Cognitive Reflection Activities. Capturing cognitive reflection activities such as being present at conferences, studying pertinent journals and textbooks, and managing small-scale classroom research is an effective way of fostering intellectual growth and development. This has been exemplified by Ali's comments:

I *agree. Conducting research allows me to make decisions based on evidence rather than assumptions or personal biases leading to more informed and effective decision-making. Also, it helps me build a more robust body of knowledge to improve my classroom.*

As Melika put it:

I agree with you! Books are a great way to gain knowledge and keep up with the latest trends in teaching. I love how they provide real-life examples and case studies that give me insights into what works best in the classroom. It's like having a roadmap for success.

Affective Reflection and Immunity

Tailoring Teaching Methods to Student Backgrounds and Interests. During the interviews, all participants revealed that gathering data on students' family cultures, and personal priorities would exceedingly enhance their capacity to establish effective teaching methods. Tailoring lessons to students' backgrounds and interests makes teaching more enjoyable and fulfilling, which is essential for promoting immunity. For instance, Mari left a comment collecting background information on the students:

I ask them about their interests and backgrounds, so I can better understand their unique perspectives and tailor my teaching approach accordingly. This not only helps me build stronger relationships with my students but also leads to greater job satisfaction. When my students feel welcomed and valued, they are more likely to be engaged in the learning process and achieve their full potential.

Sara's statement regarding reflecting on students' learning styles and backgrounds is noteworthy:

> *I believe that taking the time to reflect on students' learning styles and backgrounds can be helpful for both students and teachers. By doing this, we can find ways to make lessons more engaging and relevant and ultimately improve student learning outcomes. It also creates a sense of community among students, which is important for teachers' satisfaction.*

Metacognitive Reflection and Immunity

Significance of Pedagogical Beliefs in Teaching Efficacy. The prominent theme that emerged in our discussion on the reflection subscale was the importance of a teacher's pedagogical beliefs and their ability to self-evaluate or self-monitor their teaching practices. Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, it can be inferred that there exists a strong correlation between teachers' teaching attitudes and their efficiency in the classroom. This was exemplified by Baran who expressed:

> *Every student has the right to feel respected. For instance, I believe that students should be given more autonomy, but I tend to manage them myself due to my fear of losing control in the classroom. This realization was obtained through self-reflection.*

The importance of self-monitoring in bolstering teachers' immunity is highlighted by Kimya's remarks:

> *I often reflect on my personal beliefs and welcome feedback from my students because it serves as a mirror for me. I am flexible and regularly self-check because everyone has some challenges. Through this, I can pinpoint sources of stress or burnout, and create effective strategies to manage them. Doing so helps me sustain my passion for teaching in the long run.*

The importance of reflecting on personality as a teacher to increase immunity is underscored in Ali's viewpoints:

> *I practice exhibiting patience and respect toward my students while also encouraging critical thinking in the classroom. Even when a student asks a question that I have previously addressed, I make a conscious effort to remain calm and respond patiently instead of losing my temper. I acknowledged their inquiry by saying Ah, yes, we covered this question earlier and proceeded to answer patiently. Creating a positive learning environment with patience, respect, and encouragement for critical thinking can reduce stress levels for both me and my students, ultimately contributing to stronger immunity for teachers.*

Critical Reflection and Immunity. The results of the previous phase of data collection revealed that teachers received the lowest rating (a mean score of 3.81) in the critical reflection subscale of the inventory. In addition, during interviews, none of the teachers declared the significance of this particular subscale in their reflection. A majority of the teachers expressed that they were not permitted to argue sensitive

political matters due to conventional regulations within the classroom setting. Under Bita's statements:

> *In my classroom, I'm dedicated to teaching about environmental awareness. However, because of my limited class time and the strict curriculum, it's challenging to cover all the complex ecological topics thoroughly. While I encourage students to think critically and explore various perspectives, time limitations often prevent me from diving deeper into these topics.*

Kimya's statement was thought-provoking when he mentioned:

> *My goal as a teacher is to foster an inclusive learning environment where students can focus on the subject matter without any distractions from sensitive topics like religion and social issues. By avoiding potential conflicts, I can effectively handle challenges and maintain a positive classroom atmosphere, which ultimately strengthens my resilience as a teacher.*

Discussion

The first research question investigated whether there was a significant correlation between the reflective teaching practices of Iranian EFL teachers and their immunity. The findings of the study evidenced that EFL teachers who engage in reflective practices are more likely to have higher immunity. However, not all the reflection subscales had an equal impact on promoting immunity. One of the noteworthy findings of the quantitative phase is the positive link between EFL teachers' practical reflection, the first reflection subscale, and teacher immunity. Within this particular subscale, the first theme revolves around the discussion of problems with colleagues, encompassing the provision of feedback by fellow teachers. The study's results could be explained by the notion that using reflective practices could provide EFL teachers with valuable observations regarding various aspects of their workplace. Consequently, this may have led to an improved comprehension of the factors influencing their immunity (Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). The reflective practices can transform teachers from relying solely on traditional methods to becoming skilled and knowledgeable professionals with a deeper understanding of teaching (Farrell, 2015). Engagement with peer feedback through observation and collaborative discussion of teaching challenges can enable teachers to validate or question their customized approaches, as well as adapt their instructional techniques to suit the requirements of their students. Considering this matter through the lens of immunity, it has been found that engaging in reflective practice can enhance teachers' professional skills and also contribute to lower levels of stress and higher resilience (Shirazizadeh et al., 2019). It is implied that Fostering a culture of reflective practice among educators yields significant benefits for teaching effectiveness, professional development, and well-being. Through activities like peer feedback and collaborative discussions, teachers can adapt their instructional approaches to meet student needs while also enhancing their resilience and reducing stress.

The relationship found between the second subscale of cognitive reflection and teacher immunity can be explained by encouraging reflective thinking among teachers which can enhance their ability to critically evaluate their performance, leading to increased resilience (Ayoobiyan & Rashidi, 2021). According to Brown and Ryan (2003), the concept of cognitive reflection can be applied through action research, which involves a teacher conducting classroom-based research on a small scale. This approach is particularly useful for addressing immediate problems and improving current practices within the classroom (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). The third subscale of reflection, namely affective reflection, has been found to have a positive impact on teachers' immunity. According to Akbari et al. (2010), the affective aspect of teaching involves teachers reflecting on their students' requirements, backgrounds, preferred methods of learning, emotions, and academic progress. This reflection allows teachers to use effective teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of their learners (Carrington & Selva, 2010). Namaziandost et al. (2023) suggested that EFL teachers with high emotional resilience may be more resistant to workplace stress and disruptions. This finding aligns with Zhao's (2021) suggestion that utilizing strategies for managing emotions can help EFL teachers regulate their emotions, and prevent them from negatively impacting the classroom environment during tense moments. Consequently, reflective practices, including cognitive and affective reflection, develop teacher resilience by enabling critical self-assessment and tailored teaching strategies. This adaptability mitigates workplace stress and prevents negative impacts in the classroom, fostering a more effective and resilient teaching environment.

One noteworthy result of the study was the discovery of a robust correlation between teachers' metacognitive reflection and their immunity. The subscale measuring reflection consisted of items related to teachers' comprehension of their teaching philosophy, and assessment of strengths and weaknesses, to shape their views about teaching. This suggests reflection is an active process in which individuals intentionally explore their experiences entailing questioning assumptions and gaining new insights to develop a deeper understanding of themselves (Rogers, 2001). Through intentional exploration of the teaching philosophy and self-assessment, teachers not only improve their pedagogical approaches but also strengthen their resilience. Ultimately, this active process of reflection empowers educators to examine existing assumptions and gain new insights. Teachers can maintain their emotional well-being and professional growth by gaining valuable insights from difficult experiences. The findings from the multiple regression analysis manifested that metacognitive and cognitive reflection had a considerable influence on predicting teachers' immunity. Ultimately, the absence of a meaningful correlation between critical reflection and self-efficacy can be ascribed to several reasons. Firstly, the items included in the reflection inventory that measure this particular subscale tend to focus on teachers' preoccupation with socio-cultural matters like gender, social hierarchy, bias against marginalized groups, and destitution and their potential impact on the classroom environment. Furthermore, according to the teachers who were interviewed, critical reflection was not considered a primary responsibility within their job specification. Teachers encounter financial challenges and various external constraints originating from their institutions or society, which significantly restrict their capacity to engage as agents of social change (Akbari, 2008). The aforementioned situation can be validated by the narrow correlation between critical reflection and immunity.

Conclusion

This study represents the initial seek to demonstrate the positive association between reflective practices and immunity among EFL teachers integrating quantitative and qualitative methods for an inclusive analysis. The statistical analysis phase revealed that four subscales related to reflection were significantly correlated with teachers' immunity, while the qualitative part elaborated on how teachers' involvement in reflective practices plays a role in the development of their immunity. Based on the study's findings, it is inferred that EFL teachers who engage in reflective practices may possess a higher degree of resilience when faced with challenges in the workplace. Based on these findings, several recommendations for L2 teaching and teacher preparation programs are assigned: it is recommended that teachers engage in a regular practice of observing peers' classes and offering effective evaluation, to gain vicarious experience. To facilitate this process, administrators should provide teachers with sufficient background information about their students, thereby enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of individual learning styles and ultimately improve their performance. This study points to the need for investigation of psycho-emotional constructs such as reflective practices and immunity about EFL teaching. Private language institute owners can take advantage of the insights gained from this research by arranging mini-workshops for their EFL instructors.

These workshops would aim to equip teachers with various strategies to enhance their reflective practices, which can help them manage stress and maintain their well-being in the classroom. This research implicates the role of private language institute owners across the globe. By hosting influential workshops that aim to cultivate reflective practice abilities among EFL teachers, these owners have the potential to enhance teacher efficacy, ultimately resulting in enhanced EFL education worldwide. Policymakers can also derive advantages from creating nurturing organizational climates that alleviate stress for EFL teachers and promote positive teaching environments. The present study acknowledges certain limitations that signify potential directions for future research. An important restriction is a narrow focus on private language institutions, which calls for further exploration of the potential correlation between EFL teachers' reflective practices and immunity, particularly within state schools and universities. Broadening the scope of the investigation to include these educational settings would contribute to a more holistic understanding on an international scale. As the current study solely focused on analyzing the correlation between two constructs, there is an opportunity for further investigations to elucidate the associations between EFL teachers' immunity and additional constructs.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. Do you ever think about teacher immunity? If yes, what strategies do you employ to improve it?

2. Can you explain your understanding of the reflective practice concept?

3. In what ways has reflective practice helped you to build your immunity?

4. Do you think observing your colleague's classes is a suitable method for improving teaching effectiveness? Can you mention an example?

5. How do you believe conducting research and reading books contribute to your teaching effectiveness? Can you mention an example?

6. How do you think understanding your students' interests and backgrounds helps you teach better?

7. How do you believe your self-monitoring of teaching practices and your resilience as a teacher?

8. How do you believe reflecting on sensitive topics in the classroom affects handling challenges as a teacher?

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