

Research Paper

A Study of Iranian Novice vs. Experienced EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Grammar: Searching for Professional Development

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Abstract

The present study aimed at comparing the perceptions of two groups of Iranian EFL teachers'- novice vs. experienced- of their Professional Development (PD) regarding teaching grammar. Ten EFL teachers were selected as novice teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and ten teachers were selected as the experienced teachers with more than twenty years of teaching experience. A structured interview was applied to determine and compare the novice and experienced teachers' attitudes toward PD based on the issue of teaching grammar. Content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The results indicated that most novice teachers believed that their views concerning teaching grammar have changed as they became more experienced. They mentioned some examples of such change in their teaching practice such as using L1 when necessary, taking several English classes to enhance their experience, reading different books, learning from more experienced teachers, revising errors with the help of knowledgeable teachers, etc. Based on the ideas of the experienced teachers, adhering to a fixed old method cannot answer the complexity of teaching to different learners at different points of time. Therefore, most of them mentioned that through reflection on their teaching practice and reading articles and consulting other teachers, they try to keep up-to-date. The study presented a number of implications for language teachers and curriculum designers on the issue of PD.

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1 Introduction

Teaching English became a vital requirement for language learners. However, it can be viewed as a complicated system, involving several interrelated components whose full-fledged functioning guarantees its success and the prosperity of the nation (Postholm, 2012). Hence, the teacher and his/her properties such as behavior, personality and teaching efficiency are among the issues that affect the other parts of the educational system directly and indirectly (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009; Sharma, 2012). Accordingly, the form of recruitment, professional development of teachers and their empowerment should be of the most fundamental issues in the process of teacher education in a modern society (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2015; Johnson, 2009).

Teacher education is a field of Professional Development (PD) with novice teachers at one end and experienced teachers at the other end (Hughes, 1991). Therefore, teacher PD is an integral part of teacher development that deserves top priority in any country's education system. It is also a vital component of teachers' professional lives. There are various conceptions defining PD. Some people regard PD as training, workshops, in-service days, etc. while others consider it as a lifelong learning process for teachers about their professions. Freeman and Johnson (1998) in their prominent study indicated how teacher PD is constructed from the teacher's experiences as a teacher, understanding of theory and research, continuing reflection on learners and their learning processes, and soliciting and acting on information from learners about their own learning. Since one of the most

important principles of teacher development is experience, it can be concluded that there are differences in novice and experienced teachers' attitudes toward this issue.

Twenty years later, Cross (2020, p. 15) stated 'the importance of acknowledging what our teacher-learners bring to the teaching/learning relationship is now axiomatic in second language teacher education. However, Freeman and Johnson's (1998) reconceptualized knowledge base calls for more than a focus on the learner's history. It requires understanding how these learners will go on to be situated within spaces to develop into new ways of being. After Vygotsky, it is a future-oriented understanding of teacher development where identity is central. The learners must note who they are and who they must be relative to the conditions that will shape what and how they need to know, think, and do to be successful within such spaces for activity.

It has been established that experienced teachers differ from novice teachers in their knowledge, skills, and beliefs (Rodríguez & McKay, 2010). They need PD to affirm their knowledge, experience, and intuitive judgment cultivated during their careers. At the same time, teaching experience does not necessarily result in expertise (Mehrpour & Mirsanjari, 2016; Tsui, 2005). Some experienced teachers are not as receptive to PD as the novice teachers, even though they might benefit from opportunities to reflect on and enhance their knowledge and refresh their enthusiasm for teaching.

Identifying teachers' perceptions of PD are useful for both teacher and students in the process of language learning and teaching. In this way, the critical role of the teacher should be taken into

consideration. With this motivation, the focus of this study is on exploring the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on PD for both novice and experienced teachers. Regarding the importance of teachers' perceptions of language teaching and learning, it is significant to compare novice and experienced teachers' perception and ideas on grammar teaching.

This study is significant since it can help teachers to understand how their beliefs influence their classroom practices, and this may encourage them to be interested to the area of PD and try to improve it, which may make them cognizant of the effect of those beliefs on their pedagogical decisions. According to Gabillon (2013) and Khader (2012), by identifying the matches or mismatches among teachers' beliefs and practices, teacher trainers, in-service teachers, and prospective teachers can better understand each other's perspectives and consequently work together to converge teachers' beliefs and practices. As Borg (2003, 2006) stated, studies investigating teachers' cognition in foreign language contexts have been limited, and studies like this may shed more light on this issue.

Moreover, language teachers' PD is considered as one of the most important issues in every current educational system in the world. Regarding the importance of narrative inquiry in creating teachers' PD, the present study outlines the rationale behind using narrative inquiry by teachers. In fact, language classroom is a place providing this opportunity for teachers to explore themselves and their perceptions against the reality of their classes. This helps teachers research areas such as grammar and contribute their views into other teachers.

Based on the above-mentioned purposes, the following research questions have been formulated:

- 1: What are the novice teachers' perceptions of teaching grammar?
- 2: What are the experienced teachers' perceptions of teaching grammar?
- 3: Is there any trace of teacher's PD in the narration of novice teachers concerning teaching grammar?
- 4: Is there any trace of teacher's PD in the narration of experienced teachers concerning teaching grammar?

Literature Review

2 Professional Development (PD)

PD, in a broad sense, refers to the development of person in his or her professional role. More specifically, teacher development is the "professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically" (Glatthorn, 1995, p. 41). PD includes formal experiences (such as attending workshops and professional meeting, mentoring, etc.) and informal experiences (such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc.) (Ganser, 2000).

This concept of PD is, therefore, broader than career development, which is defined as 'the growth that occurs as the teacher moves through the professional career cycle' (Glatthorn, 1995, p. 415), and broader than staff development, which is 'the provision of organized in-service programs designed to foster the growth of

groups of teachers; it is only one of the systematic interventions that can be used for teacher development' (Glatthorn, 1995, p. 416). When looking at PD, one must examine the content of the experiences, the process by which PD will occur, and the contexts in which it will take place (Fielding & Schalock, 1985; Ganser, 2000).

Definitions of teacher development and, more generally, PD, are difficult to find. Fullan (1995, p. 1) commented 'how little systematic attention has been devoted to understanding the topic'. Definitions of teacher development are almost entirely absent from the literature; even those who are generally considered leading writers in the field do not define precisely what they mean by the term. Darling-Hammond (1995), Fullan (1995), and Leithwood (1992), for example, all fail to offer operational definitions of teacher development or of PD.

One of the very few available simulative definitions is Day's definition (1999, p. 12) of PD; he writes, 'PD is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purposes of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues through each phase of their teaching lives.'

PD includes both formal and informal experiences. Formal learning opportunities consist of learning environments with a structured program such as postgraduate courses or compulsory PD. Such experiences represent conventional practices of PD. Formal learning opportunities enable teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills with workshops and courses. Experts

generally think that the information provided through these short-term events will be put into practice. On the other hand, informal learning opportunities do not follow a structured program and are not restricted to specific educational settings. They include individual activities such as reading and classroom observations as well as collaborative activities such as interviews with colleagues and parents, mentoring activities, teacher networks, and workgroups (Yurtseven-Yilmaz & Sever, 2021).

3 Typical Modes of PD

Mizell (2010) mentioned some typical modes of PD, including:

- Individual reading/study/research;
- Study groups among peers focused on a shared need or topic;
- Observation: teachers observing other teachers;
- Coaching: an expert teacher coaching one or more colleagues;
- Mentoring of new educators by more experienced colleagues;
- Team meetings to plan lessons, problem solve, improve performance, and/or learn a new Strategy;
- Faculty, grade-level, or departmental meetings;
- Online courses;
- College/university courses;
- Workshops to dig deeper into a subject;
- Conferences to learn from a variety of expertise from around the state or country;

- Whole-school improvement programs.

3.1 Empirical Studies on Teacher's PD

Asa'di & Motallebzadeh (2013) studied classroom observation based on a factor for Iranian EFL teachers' PD and their students' achievements. They described the processes used to examine the effect of less-experienced teachers' participation in experienced teachers' classes on students' achievements in terms of their proficiency levels in both elementary and pre-intermediate levels. This quasi-experimental design study was conducted in KISH Language Institute in Bojnurd. Twenty-one EFL teachers were selected as experienced and less-experienced ones. Moreover, 169 male and female students (with the age range of 15-45 years), taking elementary and pre-intermediate courses, formed the participants of this study. The participants assigned into experimental and control group. Data analysis and statistical calculations through t-test and one-way ANOVA revealed that, although both control and experimental group students' proficiency in English enhanced, there was a significant difference in experimental group students' final scores before and after the treatment.

Alibakhshi and Dehviri (2015) explored the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers of continuing PD and identified their main PD activities through a phenomenological research design. Twenty EFL teachers were interviewed. The data were content analyzed in line with Randor's model. The results showed that the participants perceived continuing PD to entail skills development, continuous learning, keeping up to date, learning for interest, and professional revitalization. Ad-

ditionally, they developed professionally through work, formal education, attending continuing PD events and presenting at such events.

Tanang and Abu (2014), in their study entitled "Teacher professionalism and PD practices in South Sulawesi, Indonesia", asserted that their investigation focused on teachers' behavior-attitude, pedagogic skills, and diversity learning activities through effective PD. The supporting factors and the constraints of being professional teacher were also identified. They employed an exploratory mixed-methods design with triangulation approach. Simple random sampling was used to select 331 samples out of 2367 individuals to answer the questionnaires. Finally, twelve teachers were selected using purposive sampling for interview and observation. The t-test and ANOVA analysis showed that gender significantly affects behavior-attitude practice, while education professional qualification has a significant impact on teachers' behavior-attitude and learning activities. The qualitative findings showed the need to display exemplary behavior-attitude and strength teaching skill, knowledge and beliefs through diversity learning activities in effective PD. Teacher PD needed supports in policy, infrastructure, and moral and financial arenas to lead teachers to be professional.

Simegn (2014) assessed perceptions and practices of secondary school (Grade 9-12) EFL teachers' self-initiated PD in his study. A questionnaire of Likert scale items and open-ended questions was used to collect data from thirty-two teachers. The teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire at Bahir Dar University during their registration for pursuing their second degree in English education. The collected data were analyzed as

descriptive statistics using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that despite insufficient practices, the teachers had clear consensus on the need for employing self-initiated PD at their working environment. There seemed to have more awareness of self-driven professionalism with a few practical experiences in their work places. Their school management problems, limited learning facilities, and discouraging traditions of self-improvement created pressure on teachers' implementation of the self-initiated PD.

Jazi, Talebinejad & Hashemian (2015) examined Iranian high school EFL teachers' perception of professional obstacles in terms of gender, academic qualification, years of experience, and age. Their study aimed at investigating different PD obstacles on the way of EFL senior high school teachers. More specifically, it examined the role of gender, academic qualification, years of experience, and age in teachers' professional obstacles, which are defined as a combination of Instructional Professional Obstacles (IPO), Self-Directed Professional Obstacles (SDPO), and Work-Related Professional Obstacles (WRPO). The participants were 100 EFL high school teachers who were teaching in senior high schools in Isfahan. They were selected based on convenience sampling procedures to respond to the questionnaire. To collect the intended data, a questionnaire from Herzallah (2011) was adapted, translated, and utilized. Then, Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was employed for THE two research questions of the study. The findings revealed that gender and age had significant effects on the overall attitudes of the teachers towards professional obstacles. Among the

three components of the teachers' attitudes, nonetheless, only WRPO was shown to be influenced by age. IPO and SDPO were not affected by the teachers' age.

Babanoğlu and Yardimci (2017) examined perceptions of state and private school EFL teachers towards PD. They focused on interpreting the concept of PD, putting emphasis on different perceptions of teachers working in different types of schools, as well as gender and age factors to shed light on the current issues of teacher development. 45 state and 45 private school EFL teachers were involved in data collection procedure. A 16-item Likert scale questionnaire was administered and the outcomes were interpreted statistically. Results of the study indicated that all teachers involved in the study had positive perceptions towards PD topics, especially lifelong and ongoing PD and belief in themselves and their profession. When private and state school teachers were compared, private school EFL teachers were more concerned about some principles of PD in teaching than the state school EFL teachers. Thus, gender had an effect on teachers' perceptions of PD in favor of female EFL teachers whereas age was not a decisive factor on their perceptions.

4 Methodology

4.1 Participants of the Study

Twenty EFL teachers working in different language institutes participated in this study. They were selected based on the non-probability sampling due to some limitations (not being able to visit and invite a large number of EFL teachers because of Covid-19 restrictions). Nonprobability sampling is a sampling

technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the participants or units in the population equal chances of being included. Among different types of non-probability sampling, the convenience sampling was applied.

Accordingly, ten EFL teachers were selected as novice teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and ten teachers were selected as the experienced ones with more than twenty years of teaching experience. All participants were teaching in different language institutes in Babol, Mazandaran. The teachers were both males and females with the age range of 27-50. It should be noted that the gender effect was not considered in this study. The participants had Bachelor's (B. D.) and Master's (M. D.) degrees in language teaching and all were native speakers of Persian. The participants were ascertained that their answers to the interview will be kept confidential and just will be used as research data.

5 Instruments

For accomplishing the main purpose of this study, structured interview was applied. However, it was desired to add another instrument such as observation to increase the reliability of the data which was impossible due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. To justify our use of one instrument for data collection, we adhere to Creswell and Creswell (2018) who supports using one instrument for data collection in qualitative research in certain situations where other forms of data collections are not possible.

6 Structured interview

A structured interview was prepared to investigate the language teachers' perceptions of and practices on teaching

grammar. This interview was a researcher-made interview and its items were associated with different aspects of teaching grammar. It included questions about PD perceptions as well. The interview was prepared in English version and involved five open-ended items. The items were about the teachers' perceptions towards language learning, and teaching, focusing specifically on teaching grammar to the learners. The interview was checked and modified by two TEFL experts to maximize its reliability and validity. The interview was emailed to the participants' email box (See appendix A).

6.1 Research Design

To carry out the present study, a qualitative research design was applied. In the data collection process, the structured interview was selected as a qualitative basis. Then, a content analysis was conducted on the data consisting of the teachers' narrations.

6.2 Data Collection Procedure

The main purpose of the present study was to study novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of teaching grammar and to look for any trace of PD in their narration. Each participant was given an identification code (novice teachers as NT1 to NT10 and experienced teachers as ET1 to ET10). Not to sensitize the participants, the purpose of the study was not disclosed to them. The interview was sent to the participants via email, their answers were received via email or applications such as Telegram or WhatsApp. All teachers answered the interview questions and sent their answers to the researchers.

7 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed to evaluate teachers' perceptions towards teaching grammar and to trace any hint to their PD. With this purpose, the collected data were transcribed, analyzed and evaluated. Content analysis was utilized to extract important common themes in the teachers' narration. The major themes extracted from the data were classified under these headings: reflection on teaching, constant learning, self-evaluation, witnessing change in one's teaching beliefs and practice.

Member checking was applied to the data to confirm the validity and inter-coding agreement was applied to check the reliability of the findings.

According to Barkhuizen (2011), a narrative frame is 'a written story template consisting of a series of incomplete sentences and blank spaces of varying lengths' (p. 402). Well-designed narrative frames help respondents to talk about their experiences in narrative form, with an outcome which reflects 'a coherent snapshot' (Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 13) of their experiences in narrative form.

8 Result and Discussion

8.1 Results of the First Research Question

RQ1: What are the novice teachers' perceptions of teaching grammar?

The first question deals with the perception and practice of novice teachers in the field of grammar teaching. Therefore, in this part, their answers to interview questions will be presented and analyzed.

The first question of the interview was: Can you describe the process of teaching grammar to your students with some examples? Did you follow the same procedure at the beginning years? The participants provided a number of answers listed below:

NT1. *"In the first year of teaching, I explained all the grammars in Persian to the students according to their rules, and after that I gave examples to the students. But now that I have been teaching for almost 4 years, I use less Persian to explain and try to give more examples in English. The reason is grammar teaching sessions at the institute."*

NT2. *"I teach grammar based on the text of the book and the examples in the book. That is, I highlight the examples in the book and write them on the board, and then I ask the students to give examples like me, and then I explain the rules"*

NT3. *"In my first two years of teaching English, I mostly explained grammar. But after reading articles about how to teach grammar and college class, I tried to teach grammar to students using YouTube videos. I think they learn better"*

NT4. *"Grammar is one of the most important parts of language learning. I still think that grammar rules should be explained to students first and then taught by example. Because this way they can learn the rules better and it stays in their minds more. I have three years of teaching experience"*

NT5. *"Every day I add to my teaching experience; I try to make changes in my teaching style. To teach grammar, I think many examples can help students better. I even try to use chain drills to practice the taught grammar point"*

NT6. "My grammar teaching is definitely by example. The way of teaching is different from the past. I used to explain more and now I give more examples and I try to ask students questions so that they can give many examples".

NT7. "I use the traditional method of teaching grammar, i.e., explaining grammar in Persian, and the reasons for this are the level of students as well as my level as a teacher".

Regarding the attitudes of the participants towards teaching

grammatical points, most of them believed that grammar is one of the most inevitable components in the process of language teaching. They also thought that the grammatical structures have to be taught through sufficient examples. They also provided some other points such as having grammar sessions, enhancing their teaching experiences, reading academic papers, and participating in university classes. Table 1 presents the novice teachers' attitudes towards describing the process of teaching grammar.

Table 1 Novice teachers' attitudes towards describing the process of teaching grammar

1. Using different examples and texts, and highlighting the grammatical rules in the textbooks.
2. Using learners' first language and trying to present more examples.
3. Reading different articles about teaching grammar, using YouTube videos.
4. Using extensive explanation to teach grammar.
5. Using different drills and activities in teaching grammar.
6. Using traditional method in teaching grammar such as GTM.

The second question of the interview was related to the main factor in teaching grammar based on teachers' views. The participants provided a number of answers listed below:

NT1. "In my opinion, two factors are the most important factors in teaching grammar to students. The first factor is the grammar teaching method and the second factor is various examples. The teaching method can help the student to learn a lot and learn the grammar point faster".

NT2. "I think the teacher's teaching style can be the most important factor in teaching grammar to students. Because if it is not the right teaching method, students will not be able to communicate with the grammar topic".

NT3. "I think the most important factors in learning grammar are the teacher's teaching and examples that are related to the grammar of the lesson".

NT4. "In my point of view, grammar is an important part of teaching. The teacher should choose the book based on the student's level and use the simplest method to teach grammar".

According to the opinions of most of the participants, the most important factors in teaching grammar were the teacher's teaching method, the use of effective tools for teaching, and the choice of grammatical points based on the students' level. Table 2 presents the novice teachers' attitudes towards finding the most important factor in teaching grammar.

Table 2 Novice teachers' attitudes on the most important factor in teaching grammar

1. Teacher's method in teaching grammar.
2. Providing useful examples in teaching grammar.
3. Relying on learners' textbook to be in line with the learners' proficiency level.
4. Choosing grammatical points based on the students' level.

As discussed above, through these questions, it was tried to concentrate on the teachers' beliefs about their conception and practice on the issue of teaching grammar. It was also attempted to investigate whether their ideas have gone through some kind of change over time. Based on the literature, beliefs are considered to be unverified aspects of knowledge the individuals deem to be true (Murphy & Mason, 2006; Pajares, 1992), which gives directions on the way individuals reflect on, interpret and conceptualize the processes (Buehl & Beck, 2015; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992). Equally important, more inquiries have contributed to our understanding of the field with a primary purpose to expand whats and hows of knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Muis, 2004; Schommer, 1994).

Nevertheless, an issue of debate is: how teacher belief can undergo changes during different activities and contexts? To answer this question, researchers have gone through a variety of research methods, e.g., questionnaires and interviews, to glue teacher's belief pertaining to the changing nature of belief under different contexts (e.g., Olafson & Schraw, 2006; Yadav & Koehler, 2007), and different teacher education programs (e.g., Brownlee, Purdie, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001; Gill, Ashton, & Algina, 2004).

It should be emphasized that answering these questions requires a lot of reflection on the part of the teachers about how to teach, how to give feedback to students,

and affirming and thinking about teaching problems. Since reflection is the essence of PD (Borg, 2006), it can be claimed that the participants of the present study had experienced PD (in different levels and amounts) while answering these questions. Also, when they talk about how their ideas and attitudes had gone through some kind of change and modification through time, again some aspects of PD would glitter to us.

The next question was about the participants' opinions about the problems in teaching grammar. The participants provided a number of points listed below:

NT1. *'One of my most important problems in teaching grammar is explaining it quite simply. Sometimes my students do not notice the teaching. For example, the concept of the simple present tense or its difference from the continuous present tense'.*

NT2. *"My main problem in teaching grammar is the lack of sufficient knowledge in teaching grammar. I mean, I do not know all the techniques and ways of teaching grammar to use them at the right time".*

NT3. *"As a teacher, I always have trouble explaining grammar. I do not know what the reason is. But it may be my lack of knowledge and not choosing the right method, students' expectations, not having the right connection with the grammar point".*

NT4. *"I think the lack of effort of the students is one of my most important problems in teaching grammar. I explain all*

the points several times with examples, but unfortunately the lack of work of students makes them unable to learn”.

NT5. “In my opinion, the way I teach, the difficulty of the grammar point can be one of my problems in teaching grammar”.

According to the novice teachers’ point of view, several factors were among the most important shortcomings and problems of teachers in teaching grammar structures, including the teaching method, insufficient teacher knowledge about grammar teaching, students’ expectations, and learners’ lack of understanding of grammar points.

The last question of the interview was about the novice teachers’ successful experience in teaching grammar. In the following section, some of their answers are mentioned:

NT1. “Perhaps one of my most important achievements and successes in teaching grammar was dealing with students’ different grammar problems and solving them. This was seen as an increase in my experience”.

NT2. “After a few years of teaching the language, and the grammar section, I realized that it is better for children to rely more on examples than to use grammar rules”.

NT3. “From my point of view, my experience as a teacher has changed over the last few short years. Because I had classes with many students, I attended several instructional sessions and read a few articles related to teaching grammar. All of this helped me to make changes in the way I taught grammar”.

NT4. “I try to use examples, videos that teach grammar, and related explanations. Each of these helped me to teach grammar

in different ways, and this can help my experience. It was a success for me”.

NT5. “At the beginning of my teaching I was completely anxious and could not have confidence. In some lessons, I had difficulty explaining grammar points. But now, after three years, I have gained more and better confidence and I was able to learn how to deal with students”.

The novice teachers mentioned their views about their successful experience in teaching grammar. They maintained few reasons such as recognizing different problems of the students while teaching grammar, using different methods in teaching grammar, attending training sessions to enhance experience, and increasing confidence in teaching grammar points. In general, novice teachers were able to achieve some levels of PD in teaching grammar through reflection and self-evaluation, although the extent and level of their PD varied among the participating teachers.

8.2 Result of the Second Research Question

RQ2: What are the experienced teachers’ perceptions of teaching grammar?

The first question of the interview was related to the description of teaching grammar through presenting examples to learners. The experienced teachers provided a number of descriptions listed below:

ET1. “Grammar is a very important topic in learning and the key is reading, writing and speaking. That’s why you have to pay more for it. I teach grammar through explanation in class and my explanation is mostly in Persian”.

ET2. “Grammar is an integral part of language and must be learned by example and text. Yes, I will definitely use it. In addition, I ask students to give different examples or even make a conversation based on the grammar point”.

ET3. “One of the features of my teaching is that I use grammar tips with a variety of examples from my personal life that students may be able to relate to more. For example, in the simple present, I try to give an example of my daily work”.

ET4. “In teaching grammar, I try to use examples, videos, as well as written and spoken learning tasks, because I think a combination of these exercises can help you better understand the material”.

ET5. “I think grammar teaching should be based on the level and age of the students. For younger ages I use examples because children are less likely to understand the rules and adults are more likely to use the rules”.

Based on the teachers’ responses, some issues have been regarded referring to grammar as an essential element in language teaching which can be taught through using personal examples, explanations, videos and tasks.

The second interview question was related to the main factor in teaching grammar based on teachers’ points of view. The participants provided a number of answers listed below:

ET1. “In my opinion, the level and age of the class can be the most important factors in teaching grammar. Because students of different ages have to learn in different ways”.

ET2. “I think that important factors in teaching grammar can be effective: the level of personal information, the readiness of

people to learn grammar tips and the way the teacher teaches”.

ET3. “The teacher should use the best method in teaching this important part of the language. So, the efficient method of the teacher is the most important component”.

ET4. “The most important factor in teaching grammar is adequate and correct explanations to students that can help them learn”.

ET5. “Teaching style, the selected contents as same as student’s level, and interesting points, effective practices and materials can be important factors in teaching grammar to students”.

According to the teachers’ responses, the most important factors in teaching grammar were the teacher's teaching method, the use of attractive materials, and adequate and correct explanations, paying attention to the students' level, the use of effective practices and the selection of contents appropriate to the students' level.

Next question was about the participants' opinions about problems in teaching grammar. The participants provided a number of answers listed below:

ET1. “One of the most important grammatical problems for students is understanding students and not doing proper exercises”.

ET2. “The most important problem for students about grammar is the incompatibility of grammatical concepts with the real world. This means that students do not have the ability to use grammar in the real world”.

ET3. “Because I almost always use one method, this cannot be helpful for students”.

ET4. *“Some of my students can not relate to grammatical concepts, and this is very important”.*

ET5. *“One of the most important problems in teaching grammar is the use of various tools in teaching grammar that are sometimes difficult to find”.*

According to the experienced teachers, several factors are among the most important shortcomings and problems in teaching grammatical structures, including the incompatibility of grammatical concepts with the real world, lack of using various tools in teaching grammar, and using a fixed and boring method of teaching grammar.

Next question was related to the teachers' different experience in teaching grammar during recent years. In the following sections, a number of teachers' attitudes are reported:

ET1. *“In recent years, grammar teaching has changed and the type of teaching is chosen according to the age and level of students”.*

ET2. *“Due to my extensive experience in language teaching, there has been no noticeable change in recent years, and grammar issues are mostly taught explicitly”.*

ET3. *“I am constantly studying and thinking with my colleagues and this helps me to teach grammar points better. I think someone is constantly learning”.*

ET4. *“Previously, in the early years of teaching, I used a few methods in teaching grammar, but after increasing my experience, attending university and writing two articles on language teaching, various issues in grammar teaching come to my attention”.*

Most experienced teachers believed that their teaching styles in grammar has been changed while a couple of teachers believed that there were no noticeable changes in their grammar teaching.

The last question of the interview was about the experienced teachers' successful experience in teaching grammar. In the following section, some of teachers' views are mentioned:

ET1. *“I am constantly teaching grammar as one of the most important components of language. The fact that students learn and can use it in their communication is a very positive thing”.*

ET2. *“The main point of my teaching method was that I was able to better understand the difference between grammar teaching methods in children and adults and teach it to my colleagues. This can be considered one of my best achievements in the field of grammar.”*

ET3. *“Teaching experience taught me to learn many points in teaching grammar and this is considered as the best success in teaching grammar to students”.*

ET4. *“Understanding students' problems, especially in grammar discussions and solving them, is one of my best achievements in teaching grammar”.*

ET5. *“My most important achievement in teaching grammar was its more efficient teaching in many language situations and more meaningful exercises for students”.*

The experienced teachers mentioned their views about their successful experience in teaching grammar. They maintained few reasons such as finding the learners' problems in grammar and providing a solution for them, applying various methods in teaching grammar, and expanding teaching experience as the

main reasons for the success of the experienced language teachers.

8.3 Result of the Third Research Question

RQ3: Is there any trace of teacher's PD in the narration of novice teachers concerning teaching grammar?

NT1. *"Teaching English has always changed my attitude. Because of the connection with diverse students and their diverse type of learning. I always tried to learn more and more so that I could be a better teacher in the classroom. It has changed in proportion to the type of teaching, the confidence, the type of assessment of the students, and the relationship with the students in previous years".*

NT2. *"Teaching is a difficult profession. You must be constantly changing so that you can give better and more useful information to students. Is it possible to teach students with old information? I read a variety of scientific articles and from time to time I critique my teaching with my colleagues and try to improve the way I teach".*

NT3. *"I learned English very basically and always tried to teach basics. But my attitude is completely different from the first years of teaching, because of meeting different students, reading different books, and learning from more experienced teachers".*

NT4. *"My first teaching is very different from now. I sat in the classroom of many professors, I had many students, correcting sessions were held at the institute, and my opinion was very different from before. I used to think that I had to decide the teaching method myself and I thought I used the best teaching method. Now I think I*

became a more experienced person and gained more experience."

NT5. *"At the beginning of my teaching, I did not pay any attention to psychological issues and only followed the content according to the curriculum without any flexibility, but after three years of teaching, many psychological characteristics such as motivation, stress, risk-taking and ... can be influential factors in learning."*

NT6. *"I think the teacher's method of teaching words can have the most important effect on the knowledge of lemons and their learning rate in vocabulary. Teacher teaching can have a direct impact on students' learning".*

Based on the opinions of novice teachers mentioned above, it can be concluded that their perception and practice concerning grammar has changed over time. They believed that their teaching ideas and practices has changed since the beginning of their teaching. Thought and practical experience and venturing self-criticism made them aware of the multidimensional nature of teaching. Novice teachers reflected on their practice and questioned their beliefs permanently which led to a kind of PD at different levels.

8.4 Result of the Fourth Research Question

RQ4: Is there any trace of teacher's PD in the narration of experienced teachers concerning teaching grammar?

ET1. *As a teacher, I have to change day by day and improve the teaching process because it is not possible to teach all students in one way. For example, I taught both low-level and high-level students, and found that it was better to give them comprehensible information based on how much they understood".*

ET2. *“I think as the student learns more over the years. As a teacher, I also face a variety of opportunities in teaching that can help me learn and change the way I look at teaching”.*

ET3. *“Teaching is a difficult profession. You must be constantly changing so that you can give better and more useful information to students. Is it possible to teach students with old information? I read a variety of scientific articles and from time to time I critique my teaching with my colleagues and try to improve the way I teach”.*

ET5. *“With my long history in teaching and numerous articles that I have read in the field of language teaching, reasons such as lack of experience, lack of knowledge, choosing the wrong methods, lack of proper needs assessment and not using educational tools can be the samples of problems”.*

Based on the ideas of the experienced teachers, adhering to a fixed old method cannot answer the complexity of teaching to different learners at different points of time. Therefore, most of them mentioned that through reflection on their teaching practice and reading articles and consulting other teachers, they try to keep up-to-date. They also consider themselves as constant learners who keep their minds open to analyze and criticize their routines to learn more and more. This trend of reflection is the basis of PD.

Generally, most novice teachers believed that their views concerning teaching grammar have changed as they became more experienced. They mentioned some examples of such change in their teaching practice such as using L1 when necessary, taking several classes to enhance their experience, reading different books, learning from more experienced teachers, revising errors by

knowledgeable teachers, etc. The most important factors in teaching grammar were the teacher's teaching method, the use of efficient tools for teaching, and the choice of grammatical points based on the students' level.

Several factors were among the most important shortcomings and problems of teachers in teaching grammar structure, including teaching method, insufficient knowledge about teaching grammar, students' expectations.

Regarding the attitudes of experienced teachers, the most important factors in teaching grammar were the teacher's teaching method, the use of attractive points and materials as well as adequate and correct explanations, considering the students' level, providing effective practices and selecting contents appropriate to the students' level.

According to the experienced teachers' point of view, several factors are among the most important shortcomings and problems of teachers in teaching grammar structure, including the incompatibility of grammatical concepts with the real world, lack of using various tools in teaching grammar, using one method in teaching grammar.

Most experienced teachers believed that their teaching style in grammar has been changed. A couple of teachers believed that there were no noticeable changes in their grammar teaching.

The emerged themes first revealed that teachers believed PD is a "perpetual development" which continues throughout the teacher's professional life. They also perceived PD to be "necessary" and "beneficial" to teaching expertise. Besides, teachers conceived that PD has "developmental stages" which leads to

“deeper understanding and cyclic reflection”. This finding is also in accordance with previous studies such as Borg (2006), Clathorn (1995), and Fallen (1995).

The results showed that there was a difference between the experienced and novice teachers in grammar practices and attitudes. This finding was also supported by some previous studies, e.g., Richardson (1996) in his study entitled “The role of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach”, found that more experienced teachers held apposite stance towards PD activities. Byrnes and Wasik’s (2009) study also revealed that action research can be considered a PD tool for the ESL teachers.

As teachers’ beliefs and attitudes play a significant role in their PD (Braten & Ferguson, 2015), their beliefs about sources of knowledge and how they consider PD activities could be taken as significant factors affecting the motivation for learning in teacher education. Also, as Braten and Ferguson (2015) found, there are strong relations between teachers’ justification for what they do and beliefs they hold in science, motivation for understanding what they read in science, and their professional and scientific achievement.

9 Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that PD is considered important by both novice and experienced EFL teachers.

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However, the experienced ones paid more attention to the activities which could pave the way for their development. Given that the students’ learning and achievement is so greatly impacted by the quality of teaching, effective teacher development is important for any educational system to function properly in the global arena.

PD in general, and effective PD activities, in particular, are of paramount importance in promoting teaching literacy and educational pedagogy. Teacher education, as an ongoing process, requires that EFL teachers keep abreast with the novel educational issues and concepts, get updated in terms of psychological and educational findings and share their findings with their colleagues to generate new ideas (Lopez, 2017). In this regard, the findings of the present study could be employed by EFL teachers in various educational settings, especially in the private institutes and language learning centers to promote teaching literacy.

The researchers hope that the Ministry of Education will consider these findings and begin providing more effective PD activities for teachers, both in the schools and institutes. Without taking advantage of on-going PD activities, the Iranian teachers’ growth will be stunted, and students will fail to be prepared to compete in the 21st-century global environment.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you describe the process of teaching grammar to your students with some examples? Did you follow the same procedure at the beginning years of teaching? If no, what was the reason for that change?
2. What factors do you think are important for teaching grammar? Why?
3. Did you feel any gap in the procedure of teaching grammar? How did you try to fill the gap?
4. Do you think five or six years later your method of teaching grammar would be different from now? Why?
5. Did you have any successful experience in teaching grammar to your students? Can you elaborate on that?