



knowledge sharing through WhatsApp: Does it promote EFL teachers' reflective practice


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Abstract

Purpose: Reflective practice can greatly improve teachers' professional development. Accordingly, the present study was conducted to examine the effect of knowledge sharing in a popular online forum-WhatsApp- on EFL (English as Foreign Language) teachers' reflective practice. It was also aimed to probe the challenges the teachers faced to share information in their daily practice.

Design/methodology/approach: The experimental study was pre-test and post-test. To do so, 60 available EFL teachers were chosen as the participants. They were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Both groups received the English language teaching reflection inventory as the pre and post-test. As the treatment, the online discussion among the teachers regarding their daily practice took around 1 hour and lasted two weeks. 

Findings: The result of the post-test revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in their reflective practice. The results of the interview revealed that among other factors the EFL teachers' lack of awareness regarding the importance of knowledge sharing, sticking to conventional methods of teaching, and considering authorities' views as more trustworthy were the barriers which impede their knowledge sharing.

Originality/value: Some studies have argued that knowledge sharing may contribute to the promotion of EFL teachers' reflectivity. There are also studies that have reported that teachers' involvement in sharing of knowledge does not have a significant effect on their reflective practice. Accordingly, contradictory results have been reported regarding the effectiveness of knowledge sharing in promoting teachers' reflection. In addition, it seems that exploring the impact of knowledge sharing on EFL teachers' reflectivity via WhatsApp deserves more attention.

Keywords: knowledge sharing, reflective practice, EFL teachers, challenges to knowledge sharing

Introduction

Information sharing is a process that can be found in any community. Likewise, in a community of practice, members have the responsibility of sharing information in order to promote their own status as well as that of the whole community. With the emergence of computers and the application of the Internet, recently sharing information has eased among the members of all communities. Teachers can easily communicate and share information and their experiences with their professional counterparts. As the result, they can improve their teaching knowledge and skills. This trend has also affected EFL learning and teaching-learning a foreign language through technology has been widely accepted among EFL practitioners. As Liu (2009, p. 101) points out, nowadays technology has "a greater role during class and home study, as computer-assisted instruction and interactive media technologies supplement the traditional use of chalk and the blackboard". In this regard, Nicholson and Bond (2003) assert that "electronic discussion boards can play an integral role in the development of pre-service teachers. First, they benefit pre-service

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3 teachers in terms of time, scheduling, and geographical issues. Next, they provide emotional and
4 intellectual support and foster a sense of community. And finally, they promote growth of
5 reflective discourse” (p. 261). In the same line, the National Educational Technology Standards
6 cited in Hernández-Ramos (2004, p.1-2) enumerates the following goals for the use of technology
7 in education:

- 8 • Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice.
- 9 • Teachers use technology resources to engage in ongoing professional development and
10 lifelong learning.
- 11 • continually evaluate and reflect on professional practice to make informed decisions regarding
12 the use of technology in support of student learning.
- 13 • apply technology to increase productivity.

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17 Recently, social media has found strong acclaim in the world and there is a growing trend toward
18 using various applications to share information via social media. People spend lots of hours
19 sending and receiving informal information to entertain themselves, buy and sell goods, and gain
20 knowledge. As Bigdeli and Ghanadi Nezhad (2019, p.2) explain “using social networks in
21 academic communications can increase scientific transparency in universities and speed up
22 information flow and effectiveness and trust among scholars”.

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25 Among different applications for social networks, one of the most preferred ones is WhatsApp
26 (Çetinkaya & Sütçü,2018). Purkayastha and Chanda (2018) carried out a study on the use of
27 WhatsApp among so[redacted] professionals in India reported that the respondents use WhatsApp for
28 various purposes such sharing knowledge content, being in connection with others, sharing
29 documents, photos, and videos, and sending and/or receiving messages. In Iran also WhatsApp is
30 a popular social network that is used for versatile purposes. It can be used to share messages,
31 videos, audio, and images. Rezaei and Meshkatian (2017) who investigated ELT (English language
32 teaching) views attitudes towards WhatsApp found that the participants showed a positive attitude
33 towards the use of social media in ELT courses. Tawiah, Nondzor, and Alhaji (2014, p.105) argue
34 that WhatsApp “has cost efficiency, effective, quick and easier mode of communication,
35 confidential, and convenient usage; allows learners to communicate with peers and teachers”. As
36 such, it seems that the use of social networks like WhatsApp is promising for the inexperienced
37 EFL teachers who wish to promote their practice in the profession or those who regularly reflect
38 on their practice.

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43 Dewey as the founder of reflective thinking defined reflection as “active, persistent and careful
44 consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support
45 it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 6). Schön (1983, 1987) later expanded the idea
46 and suggested two modes of reflection; namely, Reflection-on-action and Reflection-in-action.
47 Reflection-in-action takes place when a teacher reflects on his action at the moment it occurs. He
48 evaluates the assumptions underlying the action and considers the consequences of the practice.
49 Reflection-on-action happens after the action. As such, the teacher should look back at and
50 evaluate the event. Reflective action, as Akbari, Behzadpoor and Dadvand (2010, p.212) put it, “is
51 contrasted with impulsive and routine actions.... [which is] based on trial and error”. As they
52 maintain “a reflective teacher...is one who critically examines his/her practices, comes up with
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3 some ideas as how to improve his/her performance to enhance students' learning, and puts those
4 ideas into practice".

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6 Although different theoretical frameworks have been suggested for reflection (e.g. Gibbs, 1988;
7 Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991), our treatment is based on the model proposed by Gibbs (1988). There
8 are six stages in Gibbs' reflective cycle, description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and
9 action plan. The first element of Gibbs' cycle is 'description' that refers to the factual description
10 of the event. The second element is 'feelings' indicates one's emotions one may have during and
11 after the incident. 'Objective evaluation of the situation' is the third stage of Gibbs' reflective
12 cycle. At this stage, one evaluates whether things went well or poorly. As the next element,
13 'analysis' is related to the experienced one has gained from the events and requires one to relate
14 the experience to past experiences or to the theories he is familiar with. 'Conclusion' deals with
15 whether based on what one has learned she could have reacted differently to that incident. Based
16 on 'action plan' one considers how she responds better in a similar situation in the future based on
17 the lessons you have learned.
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23 Various studies have demonstrated that teachers' knowledge sharing has a positive impact on their
24 reflection (Attard 2012; Clarà et al., 2019; Daniel et al, 2013; McCullagh 2012). On the other hand,
25 some other studies have reported that teachers' collaboration in knowledge sharing does not have
26 a significant effect on their reflection (Wopereis et al., 2010; Killeavy and Moloney, 2010; Loh, et
27 al., 2017). In addition, the researchers did not find any study on the impact of knowledge sharing on
28 teachers' reflective practice through the implementation of WhatsApp. Accordingly, the following
29 research questions were posed:
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32 RQ1. Does information sharing via WhatsApp have a significant impact on EFL teachers'
33 reflective practice?
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35 RQ 2. What challenges EFL teachers encounter to share information in their daily practice?
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39 Methodology

40 Participants

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42 Sixty EFL teachers from seven language schools were recruited as the participants of the study.
43 The teachers' experience ranged from three to ten years. The incentive for participating in the
44 course was that all participants were required to attend the teaching training course (TTC). All
45 participants had master's degree in TEFL. The participants were randomly assigned to the
46 experimental (n=30) and control group (n=30). Regarding the years of experience, all the teachers
47 had more than 5 years of experience.
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Instruments

Three instruments were utilized in the study, namely, The English language teaching reflection inventory, a semi structured interview, and WhatsApp.

The English language teaching reflection inventory

To assess the EFL teachers' reflective practice The English language teaching reflection inventory developed by Akbari, Behzadpoor, and Dadvand (2010) was employed in the present study. There were 29 items with five subscales and have a five-point Likert scale. The subscales were, practical reflection (six items), cognitive reflection (six items), affective reflection (three items), metacognitive reflection (seven items), and the last subscale, critical reflection (seven items).

A semi structured interview

To find the difficulties EFL teachers encounter to share information in their daily practice, a week after the treatment a semi structured interview with 21 volunteer EFL teachers from the experimental group was carried out. The interviews were conducted in Farsi to let the teachers express themselves freely in their first language. Each interview lasted for 45 minutes. The interviewees were asked if they share ideas regarding the latest theories on language teaching and if the answer is positive how they do it and what are the hurdles they may encounter. The interviewees responses were recorded, transcribed, and translated to English.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp as a popular social media in the country was used to allow the teachers to share and negotiate their ideas regarding their daily practice with the colleagues. Each participant was guided to set up an individual WhatsApp for herself.

Procedures

Before starting the study, the participants were informed that the data would be used just for the research purposes would remain completely confidential. The EFL teachers were handed in The English language teaching reflection inventory in their tea break. Both groups went through the first cycle but the second cycle, as the treatment, was just for the experimental group. While the first cycle included four stages, the second one included six stages which were based on Bener and Yildiz's (2019) guideline.

For the first cycle, important recent theories in TEFL extracted from either books or articles sent to the teachers via WhatsApp. The teachers were required to answer some questions regarding the extracts and send the answers to the researcher's email. Feedback was given on the content of the answers. If found unsatisfactory, the participants were asked to redo the assignment. As for the second cycle, the following steps were taken. It should be noted that one of the researchers who held Ph.D. in TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) The experimental group was asked to choose a specific event which drew their attention or caused a problem and describe it in the joint group. The online discussion took around 1 hour and lasted two weeks. When there was no volunteer to begin the discussion, the researcher chose a teacher and asked her about her experience. The teachers were required to describe a specific event or a problem. As the second step, the researcher asked the teacher who described the problem about her purpose of the practice. She was also asked about his feeling. It should be noted that other teachers were free to ask their questions or comment on the experience. In the third stage, the teachers

were asked about what was good and bad about the experiment. At this stage, care was taken by the researcher not to pass his judgment. Next, the EFL teacher was asked about any alternative strategies she could adopt and if she could behave differently. Finally, the teacher talked about how she could act differently the next time. After the treatment, both experimental and control groups were given The English language teaching reflection inventory again.

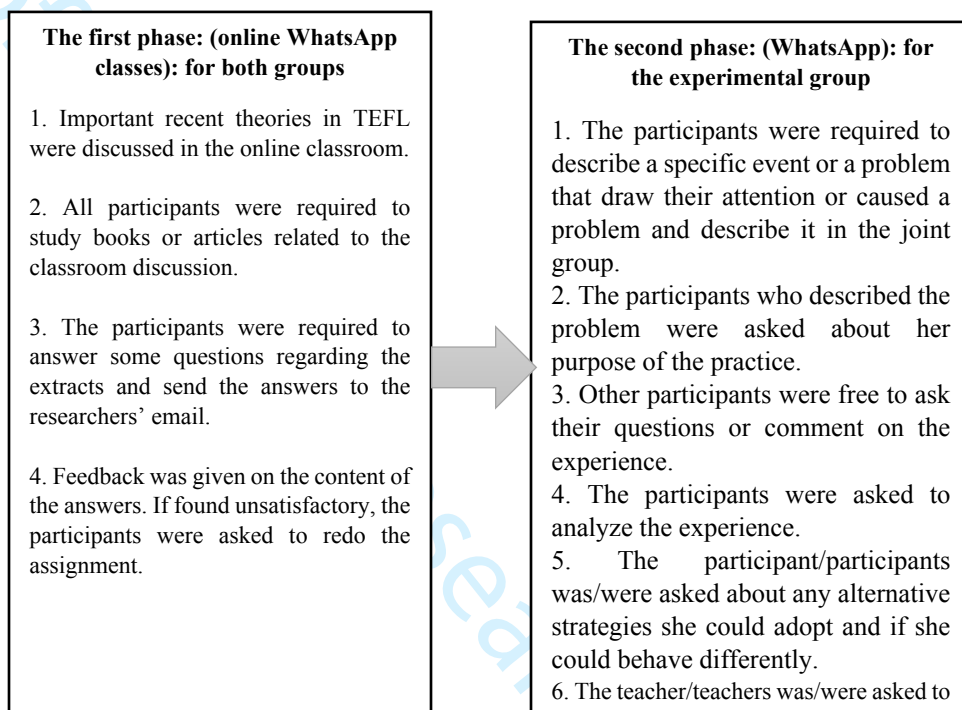


Figure 1. The framework for knowledge sharing through WhatsApp

Findings

Before presenting the results, the demographic information of the participants is presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. The distribution of participants' gender

Group	Gender		Total
	female	male	
Experimental	13 (43.3%)	17 (56.7%)	30
Control	11(36.7%)	19 (63.3%)	30
Total	24 (40%)	36 (60%)	60

According to Table 1, demographic characteristics show that 24 of the participants (40%) were female and 36 (60%) were male.

Table 2. participants' level of education

Group	Level of education			Total
	BA	MA	Ph.D.	
Experimental	17 (56.7%)	12 (40%)	1 (3.3%)	30
Control	10 (33.3%)	17 (56.7%)	3 (10%)	30
Total	27 (45%)	29 (48.3%)	4 (6.7%)	60

The statistical population of the study showed that a total of 27 of the participants (45%) hold bachelor degrees; 29 (48.3%) were masters and 4 persons (6.7%) had Ph.D. Degrees. Regarding the level of reflectivity of the EFL teachers, as already stated they were given The English language teaching reflection inventory. The results of which are shown in table 3. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that teachers developed their reflectivity during the course of the treatment.

Table 3. The English language teaching reflection inventory

Items (Never=1; Rarely=2; Sometimes=3; Often=4; Always=5)	Grope	Pre M	Pre SD	Post M	Post SD	t	Sig.
1. I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.	ex	2.13	.628	2.80	.55	-4.551	.000
	co	1.70	.595	1.93	.449	-2.971	.006
2. I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice/feedback.	ex	2.03	.764	3.13	.571	-7.503	.000
	co	1.53	.507	1.76	.430	-2.971	.006
3. After each lesson, I write about the accomplishments/failures of that lesson or I talk about the lesson to a colleague.	ex	2.50	.508	3.33	.606	-8.601	.000
	co	2.43	.504	2.56	.504	-2.112	.043
4. I discuss practical/theoretical issues with my colleagues.	ex	2.13	.571	3.53	.507	-12.339	.000
	co	2.40	.498	2.53	.507	-2.112	.043
5. I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices	ex	2.46	.730	3.71	.466	-6.954	.000
	co	2.33	.958	2.50	.900	-2.408	.023
6. I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance.	ex	2.46	.730	3.70	.465	-6.954	.000
	co	2.30	.702	2.40	.563	-1.795	.083
7. I read books/articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance.	ex	3.03	.927	3.66	.546	-2.726	.011
	co	2.73	1.01	2.83	.985	-1.795	.083
8. I participate in workshops/conferences related to teaching/learning issues.	ex	2.76	.504	3.60	.498	-6.113	.000
	co	2.03	.927	2.20	.805	-2.408	.023
9. I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences	ex	3.00	.830	4.53	.628	-8.063	.000
	co	2.20	.846	2.33	.711	-2.112	.043
10. I look at journal articles or search the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.	ex	2.53	.628	4.50	.508	-11.609	.000
	co	2.06	.944	2.20	.846	-2.112	.043
11. I carry out small scale research activities in my classes to become better informed of learning/teaching processes.	ex	2.16	.592	4.60	.498	-17.223	.000
	co	2.13	.730	2.23	.773	-1.795	.083
12. I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method for investigating them	ex	1.70	.794	4.06	.520	-13.443	.000
	co	2.36	.764	2.50	.682	-2.112	.043
13. I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences	ex	1.96	.850	3.56	.504	-9.049	.000
	co	2.10	.959	2.26	.868	-1.980	.057
14. I talk to my students to learn about their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests and abilities.	ex	1.66	.711	4.066	.691	-19.484	.000
	co	2.00	.787	2.16	.647	-2.408	.023

15. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.	ex	2.46	.730	3.76	.727	-6.040	.000
	co	1.93	.639	2.06	.739	-2.112	.043
16. As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.	ex	2.40	.621	4.23	.626	-9.251	.000
	co	2.33	.958	2.43	.971	-1.795	.083
17. I think of the ways my biography or my background affects the way I define myself as a teacher	ex	2.16	.698	3.80	.996	-8.391	.000
	co	2.30	.702	2.43	.678	-2.112	.043
18. I think of the meaning or significance of my job as a teacher	ex	2.60	.968	4.00	.643	-7.167	.000
	co	1.93	.827	2.03	.808	-1.795	.083
19. I try to find out which aspects of my teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction	ex	2.30	.702	4.03	.764	-8.308	.000
	co	2.36	.927	2.66	.606	-3.525	.001
20. I think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher	ex	3.06	.868	4.43	.678	-6.458	.000
	co	2.33	.802	2.70	.534	-3.266	.003
21. I think of the positive/negative role models I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice	ex	2.03	.764	3.50	.682	-8.572	.000
	co	1.76	.727	2.06	.691	-3.071	.005
22. I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.	ex	2.13	.628	4.30	.651	-13.57	.000
	co	1.83	.833	2.03	.718	-2.693	.012
23. I think about instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes.	ex	2.20	.961	3.40	.563	-6.180	.000
	co	2.23	.678	2.40	.498	-2.408	.023
24. I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination, and gender bias.	ex	2.13	.571	3.63	.668	-7.883	.000
	co	2.40	.498	2.50	.508	-1.795	.083
25. In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women and minorities, and poverty	ex	2.46	.730	3.70	.702	-6.495	.000
	co	2.43	1.19	2.60	1.03	-2.408	.023
26. I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views	ex	2.16	.698	3.86	.628	12.420	.000
	co	2.30	.702	2.46	.507	-2.408	.023
27. I think of ways through which I can promote tolerance and democracy in my classes and in the society in general	ex	2.76	1.19	4.20	.664	-4.746	.000
	co	1.80	.886	2.10	.711	-3.525	.001
28. I think about the ways gender, social class, and race influence my students' achievements	ex	2.23	.773	3.76	.727	-8.630	.000
	co	1.96	.850	2.20	.664	-2.971	.006
29. I think of outside social events that can influence my teaching inside the class.	ex	2.70	.952	4.43	.504	-8.785	.000
	co	2.16	.874	2.40	.674	-2.971	.006

Note: M= mean; SD= standard deviation; ex= experimental; co= control

To check whether the differences in means were significant before examining the research hypothesis, descriptive statistics including mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics including independent samples t-test were used. The descriptions of the experimental and control group scores are reviewed in Table 4.

Table 4. Pre-test scores for the control & experimental group

	Variables	Practical		Cognitive		Affective		Meta-cognitive		critical	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
pre-test	Experimental	2.23	.308	2.53	.325	1.92	.434	2.38	.377	2.38	.381
	Control	2.11	.244	2.25	.373	2.01	.535	2.12	.361	2.18	.320
post-test	Experimental	3.31	.261	4.16	.260	3.80	.285	4.04	.212	3.85	.246
	Control	2.28	.210	2.38	.309	2.16	.444	2.33	.263	2.38	.216

Note: M= mean; SD= standard deviation; df= degrees of freedom.

According to Table 4, the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test scores of the subscales; namely, practical, cognitive, affective, metacognitive, and critical are not significantly different in the experimental and control groups, but the mean and standard deviation of the two groups show a significant difference. The mean and standard deviation of the experimental group showed a significant increase in the post-test score, and the mean increased receiving the treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that knowledge sharing via Watts App has been effective in enhancing EFL teachers' reflective practice. To make sure the differences were significant one independent sample T-test was used to test the hypothesis of each subscale in the two experimental and control groups. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent sample t-test for the pretest of the control & experimental groups

	variable	groups	M	SD	t	P-value
	pre-test	Practical	Experimental	2.23	.308	1.701
Control			2.11	.244		
Cognitive		Experimental	2.53	.325	3.071	.003
		Control	2.25	.373		
Affective		Experimental	1.92	.434	-.705	.483
		Control	2.01	.535		
Meta-cognitive		Experimental	2.38	.377	2.746	.008
		Control	2.12	.361		
Critical		Experimental	2.38	.381	2.146	.036
		Control	2.18	.320		

As shown in Table 5, there was a slight significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups before the treatment regarding cognitive, metacognitive, and critical affective subscales; however, it is important to note that this difference can be due to the sample size, which affects the significant with a small change.

Table 6. Independent sample t-test for the post-test of the control & experimental groups

	variable	groups	M	SD	t	P-value
	post-test	Practical	Experimental	3.31	.261	16.761
Control			2.28	.210		
Cognitive		Experimental	4.16	.260	24.041	.000
		Control	2.38	.309		
Affective		Experimental	3.80	.285	16.951	.000
		Control	2.16	.444		
Meta-cognitive		Experimental	4.04	.212	27.547	.000
		Control	2.33	.263		
Critical		Experimental	3.85	.246	24.668	.000
		Control	2.38	.216		

According to Table 6, there is a significant difference between the scores of the two experimental and control groups in all of the reflective thinking subscales. In general, the state of reflective thinking before and after the treatment is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of independent sample t-test for the control & experimental groups

	variable	groups	M	SD	t	P-value
pre-test	Reflective Practice	Experimental	2.33	.216	3.139	.003
		Control	2.15	.236		
post-test		Experimental	3.84	.118	44.129	.000
		Control	2.32	.146		

As Table 7 illustrates, the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test of The English language teaching reflection inventory were not significantly different in the experimental and control groups, although the difference was significant. But the post-test means and standard deviation of the two groups showed a significant difference.

Covariance analysis was used to compare the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental and control groups. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	34.857 ^a	2	17.429	1416.006	.000	.980
Intercept	3.225	1	3.225	261.994	.000	.821
Group	27.195	1	27.195	2209.451	.000	.975
Pre-test effect	.327	1	.327	26.558	.000	.318
Error	.702	57	.012			
Total	607.465	60				
Corrected Total	35.559	59				

According to Table 8, Levene's Test was used to examine the covariance analysis of variance. Based on the results, the slope of regression coefficients showed that this defect is in post-test ($P < 0.05$). The results of covariance analysis are compared in the post-test and after controlling for the pre-test effect in the above table. As can be seen, there was a significant difference between the two groups in posttest training ($P < 0.000$). In addition, the effect (Eta squared) is 0.980. Therefore, sharing knowledge helped teachers improve their reflective practice.

To find out the answer for the second question, a semi-structured interview was conducted. The results of the content analysis are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. challenges EFL teachers encounter to knowledge sharing in their daily practice

Challenges	Frequency	Response percentage
Lack of awareness regarding the importance of knowledge sharing	13	61.9

Sticking to conventional methods of teaching	10	47.6
Considering authorities views as more trustworthy	8	38
Teachers' overreliance on theories	8	38
Heavy work-load and not having enough time	6	28.6
Not considering knowledge sharing as being efficient	4	19
Not Considering colleagues' views as trustworthy	3	14.2
Lack of motivation	3	14.2

The data based on the interview provided the answer to the second research question which inquired the challenges EFL teachers encounter to share information in their daily practice.

In response to the question on the barriers to information sharing in the educational context, the first theme was lack of awareness regarding the importance of knowledge sharing. As one of the interviewees put it, "we are so used to thinking about the teaching process on our own that we do not realize its importance". Another teacher also considered lack of awareness important, and reported that "in teacher education courses less emphasis is placed on knowledge sharing and that teachers have always been regarded as independent individuals who should totally rely on their own knowledge and skills".

Sticking to conventional methods of teaching was the second theme. Ten interviewees stated that the habit of using conventional methods has prevented them from considering knowledge sharing as being important. A teacher said, "from the time we were students we have learned that a teacher should model other successful teachers". Another said, "what is absent is reflection on teaching and what is prevalent is teaching recommended books by the institute page by page. As if it is the book that sets the pace".

Eight teachers reported that the classroom teachers do not believe that they have a say in English. They consider curriculum developers and ELT authorities' views as more dependable than their own. A Ph.D. holder teacher expressed her opinion as the following:

"I have learned to follow textbook developers view.... on top of that, before attending this course [the experiment] I thought that how can one expects that her views regarding teaching and learning are superior than that of those laid out in prestigious books". Such a response indicated that the teacher had a low opinion of herself.

When asked how she developed such an idea she explained that "we [EFL teachers] have no say regarding the specification of educational objectives and preparation of EFL curriculum knowing that those were a priori prescribed by instructors.

As the fourth theme teachers' overreliance on theories was recognized as a barrier to knowledge sharing. Based on what interviewees stated some Iranian teachers rely heavily on theories, and these theories may keep them away from the real world. At the same time, it prevents reflecting on one's daily practice in the classroom.

Heavy work-load and lack of enough time were considered as another challenge. One teacher reported that "we are so involved in teaching that we rarely talk to each other about effective teaching". Another teacher commented "due to heavy workload I do not have enough time to think about what is right or wrong. In

informal encounters with other teachers, we may discuss a few problems with others, but the discussion is not taken seriously by teachers”.

It was surprising that four teachers said that before the treatment they were not sure about the effectiveness of knowledge sharing. A teacher said that many teachers find that talking about teaching methods and adapting them to teaching theories does not help much in improving teaching. There is a common notion, as he stated, that there are specific methods of teaching that need to be taught to naïve teachers.

Based on the content analysis, three teachers expressed that lack of trust in the opinion of other colleagues was another obstacle to knowledge sharing. As a teacher said, “Sometimes it is difficult to prefer colleagues’ opinion to well-known theories and techniques which can be found in the books”.

As the last theme, lack of motivation was another barrier to knowledge sharing. Teachers’ lack of motivation, based on the interviewees reports, can be attributed to factors such as lack of time, unfamiliarity with knowledge sharing experience, heavy workload, and lack of teacher autonomy.

Overall, the analysis of the data revealed that there was a lack of support from the educational context to implement knowledge sharing and this alleviated EFL teachers’ lack of awareness and respect for knowledge sharing. This may lead to the teachers’ demotivation to share their ideas with the colleagues.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study sought the impact of knowledge sharing on EFL teachers’ reflective practice. In response to the first research question, studies have shown that collaboration with others results in effective professional learning (Eaker et al. 2002; Huffman et al. 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert 2006). The findings are also in line with what Hawkes and Romiszowski’s (2001) since as they reported although computer-mediated teacher dialogue was less interactive than face-to-face meetings, it was more reflective. In tandem with the findings, in a qualitative study Schoffner’s (2008) investigated the integration of blogs in a teaching course. It was shown that that the characteristics of blogs, namely, flexibility, personalization and informality enhance reflective exchanges among the teachers.

In an answer to the second question, it was found that there are several challenges EFL teachers face in their attempt to share information. The results showed that EFL teachers’ lack of awareness regarding the importance of knowledge sharing was the biggest challenge. This calls for raising teachers’ awareness as to the importance of sharing knowledge with their colleagues. Sticking to conventional methods of teaching was the third challenge EFL teachers face. Based on the results, teachers were inclined to teach as they had been taught and did not “theorize what they practice or practice what they theorize” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.37). Considering authorities’ views as more trustworthy was rated as the third challenge. The finding is not surprising since “in a top-down system of education, the absence of questioning, challenging work conditions, lack of pedagogical knowledge, and the degree of support in favor of the reflective practice are abundant” (Avarzamani& Farahian, p. 3). Accordingly, “knowledge is perceived as simple and certain rather than complex and uncertain” (Chittooran ,2015, p.79). Teachers’ overreliance on theories was another challenge, based on the interviewees’ report. Perhaps, teachers consider theories as more trustworthy and considers themselves as those who should apply theories. This keeps them away from ‘theorizing their own practice’ in Kumaravadivelu’s (2006). term. The fifth challenge was the heavy workload which deters teachers from knowledge sharing. Soodmandafshar and Farahani (2017) have also reported that teachers’ working conditions negatively affect their reflective practice. The next challenge the teachers reported was that teachers did not consider knowledge sharing as being efficient. It seems that EFL teachers undervalue the discourse which takes place among them. In this

regard, teachers also reported that they do not consider their colleagues' views as trustworthy. Lack of motivation was the last barrier for the teachers. Overwhelmed by their daily problems such as financial problems and heavy workload, EFL teachers are left with low motivation for "self-construction and self-conceptualization of pedagogic knowledge" (Kumaravadivelu's, 2006, p.173) from one hand and considering negotiation with other colleagues from another hand.

Overall, it seems that more collaboration among EFL teachers is needed in order to boost their professional development. Here social media can be an important means through which teachers can in light of the related theories share ideas, learn from each other, and ultimately gain education-related knowledge.

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