Chapter Five

Conclusions Drawn from Research Findings

5.1. Introduction
   5.1.1 Overview of the Chapter

5.2. Review of Chapter One and Two

5.3. Review of Chapter Three and Four

5.4. Conclusions of the Study
   5.4.1. Peer Observation
   5.4.2. Teacher Diary
   5.4.3. Students’ Feedback
   5.4.4. Audio Recording

5.5. Pedagogical Implications

5.6. Concluding Remarks
   5.6.1. A Model of Developing a Reflective Teacher

5.7. Recommendations for Further Research
5.1. Introduction

Theories underlying different teaching methods can be divided into top-down and bottom-up approaches. Top-down approaches apply the findings of educational research to teaching. Bottom-up approaches basically focus on the teachers’ experiences and advance theories for effective language teaching. As Richards elaborates, in second language teaching, the top-down approaches are those which apply the research findings in the second language learning to the activities of language teaching (e.g., Audiolingualism). Similarly, Task-based Language Teaching, among other recent methods of language teaching, utilizes “learning research as a basis for teaching” (Richards, Reflective Teaching 2).

In the field of teacher education, Richards categorizes “training” as a program which is based on a top-down approach. “Some of the techniques, used in training reflect a view of learning as ‘modeling’: student teachers model the behaviors of master teachers or effective teachers or they model proven techniques of teaching.” Based on this approach, the role of the trainee teacher is to follow the presented teaching procedures and master new techniques. The ultimate goal is that teachers apply what they have learned to their classrooms and “become better teachers” (Reflective Teaching 5).

On the contrary, bottom-up approaches to second language teaching focus on the process of teaching. “Bottom-up approaches start from the assumption that teachers, rather than methods, make a difference, that teachers are engaged in a complex process of planning, decision making, hypothesis testing, experimentation and reflection . . . , and that they should form the focus of teacher education and teacher professional development.” Based on this approach, teachers make their own theories of teaching, evaluate their decision-making process and build up plans for reflection on their teaching and make required modifications (Richards, Reflective Teaching 6).

Adopting the bottom-up approach in the field of teacher education, in the words of Richards, refers to “a shift in emphasis from ‘training’, to that of ‘education’, or ‘development’” (Reflective Teaching 7). In this view of teacher education, reflection plays a crucial role in the teachers’ development. The present
study which has been an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools used in reflective teaching in EFL and ESL contexts is considered as one step forward to facilitate the application of bottom-up approach to teacher education programs, that is, to help teachers in choosing the appropriate tools for reflecting on their teaching.

5.1.1 Overview of the Chapter

In this chapter, which is devoted to the conclusions drawn from the research findings; firstly, a review of the preceding chapters is presented; secondly, the research conclusions are elaborated in the light of the educational experts’ suggestions and/or compared with the conclusions of other such studies; thirdly, the pedagogical implications of the study are explained; fourthly, a subsection is given to the researcher’s concluding remarks; finally, the researcher’s suggestions for further research are mentioned.

5.2. Review of Chapter One and Two

Teacher’s reflection, reflective teaching and reflective tools have been the main concerns of the present study. As it has fully been elaborated in chapter one, research shows that reflective practice has been effective both in pre-service and in-service levels of teaching. DeShon Hamlin believes that “Worldwide, researchers in teacher education have considered reflective practice in various forms as an underlying principle guiding teacher education.” To support his claim, he refers to opinions expressed by educators like Dewey, Schon, Adler, Zeichner and Liston. The author also quotes Beijaard who states, “Reflection serves the functions of encouraging student teachers to assume responsibility for their own learning and to become critical towards their beliefs about good or effective teaching” (168). According to Dewey, reflection “limits the impulsive nature of teaching and enables the educator to act with intention and deliberation” (qtd. in Moran and Dallat 21). Rogers believes that, “Reflective practices that are intellectually credible can promote resiliency and resourcefulness in the face of life’s dynamic challenges and encourage habits of individual and collective attention and analysis that can sustain higher education as it works to address the problems of society” (57).
The process of reflective teaching proposed by Bartlett has five elements: mapping, informing, contesting, appraising and acting (see 2.3.1). Mapping, by definition, is the teacher’s observation and collection of data about his/her teaching. The first step of reflective process proposed by Cunningham Florez includes collecting descriptive data about the classroom events (see 2.3.2). Therefore, at the first stage of reflection, teachers should gather data, and this makes them face a puzzling situation, that is, choosing an appropriate reflective tool which obtains the data required for reflection. The purpose of the present study was to assess the effectiveness of the reflective tools in ESL/EFL contexts and provide teachers with the hierarchies which arrange the tools based on the teachers’ educational needs.

Regarding the aforementioned problem and the purpose of the study, the following research questions were posed in order to be answered through conducting the study:

1. Is there any difference among the kind of data that all the tools obtain?
2. Is a single tool applicable to obtain any kind of data for a teacher to reflect on?
3. Regarding the authenticity of the obtained data, which tool has priority?
4. Regarding the first three questions, is there any difference between the obtained data from ESL and EFL contexts?

The following null hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the above research questions in the following interrelated statements:

1. There is no difference among the kind of data that all the tools obtain. No matter which tool is used, the data remain the same.
2. There is no relationship between the kind of data that teachers need to reflect on and the selected tool.
3. Regarding the authenticity of the obtained data, no tool has priority.
4. There is no difference between the obtained data from ESL and EFL contexts in this regard.

The role of the research questions was to make a boundary for the scope of the research and provide the researcher with some criteria to decide what was related to the research thesis statement. It helped the researcher broaden his view about the
subject matter and then narrow the focus of the study to a workable and feasible research problem. The research contextualization entitled, “Review of the Related Literature” included: reviewing different definitions suggested for reflection; comparing different stages followed in the process of reflection; reviewing the purposes and benefits of reflective teaching; introducing reflective teaching tools; elaborating on teacher training and teacher development; characterizing reflective teachers and; reporting other studies done in the field.

5.3. Review of Chapter Three and Four

The data collection methodology and research design were elaborated in chapter three. The study was comparative i.e. the subjects were chosen from India and Iran where English is considered to be taught as the second and foreign language respectively. To gather the required data for the study, the researcher observed 20 classes in both contexts which comprised 485 students.

Since there was no ready-made instrument to be used, the researcher decided to design two instruments, namely “Decision-Making” and “Authenticity” questionnaires. The blueprints of the questionnaires were prepared using the educational experts’ comments on designing reflective tools (see 3.3). Then, the designed questionnaires were reviewed by some experts in the fields of education and applied linguistics, and the weak and unrelated items were modified according to their comments. Furthermore, in the process of standardization of the questionnaires, using a piloting sample, the indexes of validity and reliability were obtained and the required modifications were made accordingly.

As it has thoroughly been explained in subsection 3.9.4, the four reflective tools were administered to research subjects in each class. The researcher as a non-participant observer was present in each teaching session and recorded his observation by completing the designed questionnaire. The teaching process was tape-recorded in the same session. Later, the recording was reviewed by a researcher’s colleague, and the given questionnaire was filled out accordingly. When the class teacher was finished with the lesson, students were asked to give their feedback on the teaching process by completing their questionnaires.
Furthermore, they filled out the authenticity questionnaire and provided the researcher with their attitudes towards participating in the study and the accuracy of their answers to the first questionnaire items. The teacher was the last subject who reflected on his/her teaching by completing the first questionnaire.

The last subsection of chapter three was devoted to the elaboration of the statistical formulas utilized in the analysis of the data. In addition, the procedure followed for converting the obtained data to SPSS files and running the desired statistical methods was explained in that section. As the software is very user-friendly, the reason behind including the description of its use in subsection 3.9.7 is to help the reflective teachers enjoy its practicality and analyze their own research findings.

In chapter four, first, the indexes of validity and reliability of the designed questionnaires were obtained, and the desirability of the instruments was discussed. The results showed that Questionnaire (A) had acceptable indexes of construct and predictive validity, and the reliability of both questionnaires was also satisfactory (see 4.2). In the next section, the descriptive statistics of the data obtained from the administration of Questionnaire (A) to the research subjects were presented. To examine the normality of the data, the descriptive statistics of the extracted data from both ESL and EFL contexts were compared with the characteristics of a normal distribution. The results depicted in tables and figures showed that the distribution of the data was normal.

To examine research question one, which asked whether different reflective tools obtained the same kind of data, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run. The results of the statistical analysis rejected the null hypothesis which stated that there was no difference among the kind of data that all tools obtained. Furthermore, to identify the degree of the difference among the data obtained from different tools, Post Hoc Tests were applied. The results showed that: Tape Recording tool obtained the most different data; Teacher Diary produced more different data than Students’ Feedback and Peer Observation; the data provided by Students’ Feedback and Teacher Diary were very similar to each other.

The idea that whether a single tool was applicable to obtain any kind of data
was under examination through research question two. In order to investigate the problem, first, two sub-scales were extracted from the main questionnaire. The items of Sub-scale (A) focused on the data which a teacher might need when s/he decided to reflect on his/her teaching. The results of running the analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that data provided by different tools were significantly different. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there was no relationship between the kind of data required by teachers to reflect on and the selected tool was rejected. In addition, the Post Hoc Tests were applied to make out which tool was more comparable to Teacher Diary in providing similar data. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that: Tape Recording tool obtained the least similar data to Teacher Diary; Peer Observation tool produced more similar data than Students’ Feedback. A proposed hierarchy of reflective tools arranged based on the data obtained from Sub-scale (A) was presented in Figure 4.16.

Sub-scale (B) focused on the learners and learning process. Here again, the results of running the analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that different reflective tools obtained different data and the related null hypothesis was rejected. Furthermore, the Post Hoc Tests were applied to see which tool was capable of obtaining more similar data to that of Students’ Feedback. The results of the statistical analysis specified that: Peer Observation tool obtained the most similar data to Students’ Feedback; Teacher Diary extracted less similar data than Audio Recording tool. The suggested hierarchy of reflective tools arranged based on the data obtained from Sub-scale (B) was given in Figure 4.17.

Regarding the authenticity of the obtained data, research question three asked whether any of the reflective tools had priority over the others. In the first part of the statistical analysis, the mean of the data obtained by the four tools was calculated, and the coefficient of correlation between each tool and the obtained mean was determined. The assumption was that the tool whose obtained data showed high correlation with the mean of all data had priority over the other tools. The first outcome of the applied statistical analysis showed that: Audio Recording tool had the most coefficient of correlation with the mean of all data; Peer Observation, Students’ Feedback and Teacher Diary, in turn, obtained less
correlation with the mean of all tools. On the contrary, the discussion of data authenticity led to the change of Tape Recording position in the suggested hierarchy of reflective tools (subsection 4.5.3).

In the second part of investigating the authenticity of the obtained data, the results of administering Questionnaire (B) to students were analyzed. Tables 4.32 to 4.36 as well as Figures 4.11 to 4.15 depicted the obtained data. The results showed that concerning the students’ attitude towards completing Questionnaire (A), they had answered the questions with high degree of authenticity, and the obtained data were quite reliable and genuine.

Research question four asked whether there was any difference between the data obtained from subjects in ESL and EFL contexts. In order to examine this research question and its related null hypothesis, the researcher went through the procedures which he once followed for each of the first three research questions, but at this time, he considered the research samples chosen from ESL and EFL contexts as independent samples and compared the results obtained from the two samples.

Examining the data obtained from the administration of reflective tools to subjects in ESL and EFL contexts showed that the full-scale reflective tools had similar functions in both contexts; therefore, the fourth null hypothesis was not rejected in this regard. However, later analysis proved that the mean differences between pairs of tools were quite dissimilar in ESL and EFL contexts.

As it was noted before, research question two was addressed in two phases. In the first phase, the data obtained from the administration of Sub-scale (A) in ESL and EFL context were examined, and the statistical analysis showed that the functions of the tools were different in two contexts. Therefore, the fourth null hypothesis which stated that there was no difference between the data obtained from ESL and EFL contexts was rejected. In the second phase of addressing research question two, the data obtained from the administration of Sub-scale (B) in ESL and EFL contexts were analyzed. The results of statistical analysis showed that the four reflective tools in both contexts had similar functions when the focus of the study was limited to Sub-scale (B). Consequently, the related null hypothesis was not rejected. But, later investigation of the results, through Post Hoc Tests, showed that
although the overall performance of the tools appeared to be similar, each individual tool had different functions in two contexts (see 4.5.4). In the end, based on the data obtained from ESL and EFL contexts, some modifications to the given hierarchies of reflective tools were suggested in subsection 4.5.4.

Research question three which addressed the authenticity of the obtained data also had two phases. In the first phase, the mean of the data in both ESL and EFL contexts were separately calculated. Later, the coefficient of correlation between data obtained from the administration of each reflective tool and the given mean was computed to find the differences between the two contexts. Among the observed differences, the various performances of Audio Recording and Teacher Diary tools were more noticeable than the others. Therefore, the pinpointed differences rejected the fourth null hypothesis which stated that there was no difference between the data obtained from ESL and EFL contexts. Research findings from ESL context reconfirmed the suggested hierarchy of reflective tools presented in Figure 4.18. However, the data obtained from EFL context suggested Teacher Diary as a tool which provided the data with the highest correlation with the mean of all data. Therefore, the proposed hierarchy of reflective tools based on the data obtained from EFL context appeared to be as follows: (1) the mean of all data; (2) Teacher Diary; (3) Peer Observation; (4) Students’ Feedback; and (5) Audio Recording. The findings related to the administration of Questionnaire (B), presented in Table 4.47, can be restated in the following way:

The comparison of the data obtained from the administration of Questionnaire (B) to ESL and EFL contexts showed that 88.4 percent of Indian and 77.2 percent of Iranian students either completely agreed or just agreed to the statements related to the authenticity of the data. Consequently, the data obtained from the administration of Students’ Feedback tool to Indian students could be considered slightly more authentic than the ones obtained from Iranian students. The other differences among the subjects in ESL and EFL contexts have been discussed in details in subsection 4.5.4.
5.4. Conclusions of the Study

In this section, the research conclusions are stated and elaborated in the light of educational experts’ suggestions and compared with the conclusions of other such studies. This study is unique because it has been able to effectively bring about some hierarchies of reflective tools arranged based on the teachers’ needs in both ESL and EFL contexts. The following subsections present the research findings which deal with each reflective tool.

5.4.1. Peer Observation

As far as the results of this research are concerned, Peer Observation has proved to be a very effective reflective tool. This tool is quite high up in the three suggested hierarchies of reflective tools. It means that it has obtained the data with the most coefficient of correlation with the mean of the data obtained from all reflective tools. It also provided the most relevant data for reflection when teachers’ special needs were the scope of the study (Sub-scales A and B).

In spite of the abovementioned advantages, observation is judged by some teachers as supervision; so, they do not like to be observed even by their peers. On the other hand, “the disadvantages identified by Cox and Ingleby (1997) are that peer review via observation of teaching can be a perpetuation of conformity of teaching; the behavior of the observed is affected by the observer; and no one else is qualified to comment on someone else’s teaching” (qtd. in Blackmore 223).

In order to reduce the negative effects of observation on the teachers’ performance, the researcher held a short meeting with each class teacher and explained the purpose and the process of data gathering and the way that the data collected from their classes would be treated confidentially. Despite this precaution, a few teachers were reluctant to participate in the study. Therefore the researcher accepted their excuses and replaced them by other subjects. Farrell faced the same problem when his subject who was a Korean teacher did not accept to be observed. He believes, “As observation can be a sensitive issue in all contexts, both Asian and non-Asian, a discussion of how this can be incorporated into a reflective experience should be negotiated by each individual.” To explain his subject’s reluctance to be
observed, Farrell states, “Heesoon did not like to have her class observed and this researcher respected her wishes. It may have been the case that she was not ready to have an outsider observe her class or that she was not ready to become so critical of her teaching” (Tailoring Reflection 35).

5.4.2. Teacher Diary

Bailey who attended a class to learn the French language conducted a diary study. As a participant, she recorded whatever she observed in the process of teaching and learning. As she explains, her first impression was that she “was a very cooperate, group-oriented language learner.” When her teacher read the diary and advised her to review it, she had a different idea. Then, she writes, “A subsequent analysis of the diary entries revealed numerous manifestations of competitiveness... which I had not noticed in my original review of the entries” (225).

There are some other authors, cited by Bailey, who have commented on the benefits of keeping a diary. Deen’s study “showed the role of diary played in defining a personal philosophy of teaching.” It also depicted the teaching problems by presenting “an image” of the classroom and the role of the teacher in “project-based learning.” Deen asserted that diary study provided him with an opportunity to spell out his “thoughts and feelings about learning” and showed him a way to manage the problems that he faced in the process of learning. Butler-Wall is another diarist who states that diary study was helpful to her. By diary keeping, she was able to “sort out recurring issues, important questions and points to keep an eye on in the future” (Diary Studies 224).

Bartlett in Teacher Development Through Reflective Teaching, mentions that the best way to observe and gather data about one’s teaching might be to record what is obtained in a written form. “In writing we begin not only to observe, but we take the first step in reflecting on and about our practice” (209).

However, if the diarists do not reread the recorded entries, they will not be able to discover the recurring patterns in the process of teaching, and in turn, they will not benefit from the full advantages of keeping a diary. “Thus, in reworking, rethinking and interpreting the diary entries, teachers can gain powerful insights into
According to Jeffrey and Hadley, diary keeping has some advantages as well as disadvantages. Diaries “may reveal aspects of diarists’ teaching that can lead to a deeper understanding of themselves and their students.” The authors report that writing and analyzing their diaries was “a motivational experience” for them. It increased their “self-awareness” and helped them gain confidence to examine the effectiveness of novel teaching techniques. However, “diary studies take a lot of dedication because they are not as simple as one might believe: they are time consuming and can become laborious” (211).

Christensen et al. cite Bullough and Gitlin who believe that one of the ways through which reflective teachers can examine their own methods and attitudes towards teaching is diary keeping, or what they call as “autobiographical means”. “Teachers who examine their views by writing about them look closely at their images of the work that they do. Such a reflective exercise can stimulate teachers to reconsider and accept new boundaries of thought and innovative ways of teaching” (205).

Regarding the findings of the present study, Teacher Diary was a tool appreciated by most of the class teachers, especially when it was accompanied by a questionnaire which made the task of reflecting on teaching and learning easy. The majority of class teachers found it an effective tool to be utilized for gathering data. Some of them even asked the researcher to give them a copy of the questionnaire for their own reflective purposes.

Richards in Theories of Teaching in Language Teaching introduces keeping diary as a tool for reflecting on teachers’ decision making. However, the findings of the present study did not support the idea in some cases. In spite of the fact that the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the subjects, a few teachers were not critical enough of their teaching and overestimated their ability of teaching. An example can be illuminating here. In the process of data gathering, the researcher noticed that one of the subjects first read all the items once and then put a cross in all boxes in the column which read “Completely Agree.” To justify this, the subject then said that as he had tried his best to cover all these in his teaching, he completely...
agreed to the suggestions. As another example, the researcher heard a teacher who told students to be careful, because whatever they might say would be recorded. Therefore, the preliminary findings of the tool administration seemed to be different from the data provided by other reflective tools.

To reduce the risk of misunderstanding, it seems useful to have an orientation course and get the teachers familiar with the reflective teaching process. Farrell whose findings show that his subject found journal writing as an unfavorable tool for reflection suggests getting teachers familiar with the tool in advance. “Teachers may require special training in journal writing before teacher educators can assume that they just record their reflections. This training could take the form of a workshop prior to the start of the reflective period. Teachers could be given models of effective journal writing and asked to follow these models” (Tailoring Reflection 35).

A point worthy of noticing is that when class teachers are aware of the content of the questionnaire supposed to be filled out later by them, their teaching is affected positively or negatively. The positive point is that they focus on their teaching to see what they do during teaching to complete the questionnaire precisely. The negative point is that they may teach in a way that is in accordance with the statements made through the questionnaire items. In this regard, one example may be illuminating. The researcher believed that reviewing the questionnaire by the class teachers beforehand created no problem; thus, when one of the teachers showed his interest to preview a copy; the researcher agreed. During the teaching session, the teacher decided to use the board and looked for a piece of chalk. When he did not find any, he looked at the students as well as the researcher and said, “You see I wanted to use the board. But it is not my fault. There is no chalk here!” Then, he told the students that as one of the items checked whether the teacher used the board or not he wanted to use the board. In sum, weighing up the pros and cons of applying Teacher Diary, the researcher recommends it for reflection; since, the tool can record what the teacher feels, thinks, or does in the class and develop his/her reflective teaching (Bailey et al., Gebhard & Oprandy, Richards, and Gallo & Renandya, qtd. in Gebhard & Toshinobu 2); it also “provides a vehicle for inner
dialogue that connects thoughts, feelings, and actions” (Hubbs and Brand 62).

5.4.3. Students’ Feedback

Considering the homogeneous subsets of the reflective tools (Table 4.16), which are the results of addressing research question one, Students’ Feedback appears to be the only tool which has obtained the data similar to Peer Observation and Audio Recording. This is a unique advantage of this tool which lets it be in two suggested subsets. In other words, the results of administering the full-scale questionnaire show that Students’ Feedback has obtained the most moderate data.

The other advantage of Students’ Feedback tool is that it has obtained authentic data. Regarding research question three, the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the administration of Questionnaire (B) to students showed that 82.68% of subjects even completely agreed or just agreed to the statements supposed to be the criteria for the authenticity of the obtained data.

Regarding the suggested hierarchies of reflective tools presented in Figures 4.16 and 4.18, the results of investigating research questions two and three showed that Students’ Feedback tool has obtained the data which had moderate correlation with Teacher Diary (research question two) and with the mean of all tools (research question three). This has been still another advantage of the Students’ Feedback which has made the tool preferable and positioned it after Peer Observation in both hierarchies of reflective tools.

5.4.4. Audio Recording

As Kember asserts, audio tape recording is “the least intrusive method of obtaining a record of what happens in class” (49). Audio Recording tool can be used for different purposes. Teachers can use it for self observation. It can provide reflective teachers with feedback on their interaction with students, the ways that they encourage students when students answer the questions, the amount of time given to students to answer the questions, the catch-all phrases that they frequently use, etc. As Tice mentions:
You may do things in class you are not aware of or there may be things happening in the class that as the teacher you do not normally see. Audio recordings can be useful for considering aspects of teacher talk.

- How much do you talk?
- What about?
- Are instructions and explanations clear?
- How much time do you allocate to student talk?
- How do you respond to student talk? (Reflective Teaching 1)

Audio Recording tool can also be used to gather data from a teaching session in order to provide the opportunity for a colleague to listen to them and give his/her feedback later on. In this study the tool was applied to fulfill the very last purpose. The results of the study show that the tool is able to obtain invaluable data for reflective teachers. The outcomes are unique, because they can be reevaluated as many times as the listener decides to listen to the audio recording and recheck the events of the teaching session.

Addressing research question three, Table 4.31 showed that the data obtained through the administration of Audio Recording had the highest correlation (i.e. .846) with the mean of all data; therefore it had to be considered as the most favorable tool. However, some disadvantages of the tool made the researcher not locate it high up in the hierarchy of reflective tools. In sum, the tool was not able to obtain appropriate data regarding those aspects of teaching which were rather visual or related to students’ background. So, it is recommended to merely use the tool for reflecting on those aspects of teaching which can be judged by listening to the recording.

The results of the study done by Jensen et al. showed that audio-visual technology is an effective tool for reflection in teacher education. While it has proved effective with pre-service teachers, who have no choice but to follow what has been planned for them in teacher training courses, the researcher’s experience suggests that in-service teachers have different attitudes towards recording their teaching. Generally, most teachers are not even willing to be observed by their
peers or outsiders, let alone recorded! As Day concludes, “One of the drawbacks to
the use of both audio and video recordings, however, is the fact that they are
intrusive, with the latter much more so than the former” (44).

Among different attitudes that teachers had towards the application of Audio
Recording in their classes, the following were more noticeable:

- The immediate reflection of some subjects was that the research had been initiated
  by the administrative authorities, and the recordings would finally be submitted to
  them. The questions posed by these teachers prove the concerns: “Who told you
to record my teaching? Is it really necessary to record my voice? Can you assure
me that my teaching specifications will remain confidential?”

- A few teachers felt a sense of frustration when they started teaching. Of course, it
  was because of both being observed and recorded. More experienced teachers
  either did not get embarrassed or managed it in no time. Some of the teachers
  asserted that they had not experienced such a situation before and some stated that
  it was an opportunity for them to reflect on both their teaching strengths and
  weaknesses.

5.5. Pedagogical Implications

An important offshoot of the present study is a standardized instrument
(Questionnaire A) which enjoys acceptable indexes of validity and reliability. The
practicality of the instrument has also been proved in the data collection procedure.
The three versions of the instrument which have been developed in this research (see
Appendixes A, C and D) let the ELT reflective teachers obtain data from different
sources. Each version of the questionnaire can be used at a time to obtain data from,
say, students, or two or three versions (class teacher’s version, student’s version
and/or colleague’s version) can be applied simultaneously to let the teacher compare
the results. In sum, the instrument is used to convert the qualitative data obtained
from Teacher Diary, Students’ Feedback, Peer Observation and Audio recording to
uniform quantitative data which can be analyzed statistically and discussed
objectively.

Cooper and McIntyre believe that effective teaching “depends on the degree
to which teachers make themselves open to pupil influence, and the ways in which they incorporate pupil influence into their classroom teaching.” The authors later explain that the teaching effectiveness depends on the teachers’ eagerness to get feedback about the student’s “immediate concerns and interests” (qtd. in Mills and Satterthwait 37). As the results of the study show. Students’ Feedback proved to be an effective tool for providing teachers with the data which they may need in order to reflect on their teaching and, of course, take the students’ “concerns and interests” into consideration.

Some reflective teaching activities are more personal (e.g., Teacher Diary) and can be done by an individual teacher who is interested in reflecting on his/her teaching. But, when some other reflective activities are concerned (e.g., Peer Observation), the teacher has to ask the administration of the institute to manage it, because it is beyond the teacher’s control. On the other hand, if the administration’s policy is to take reflective teaching as the institute’s approach, there should be some provision for all teachers who are supposed to reflect on their teaching. Zeichner believes that all teachers are reflective in one way or another. He asserts:

There is no such thing as an unreflective teacher. We need to move beyond the uncritical celebration of teacher reflection and making the tacit explicit, and become more interested in more complex questions than whether teachers are reflective or not. We need to focus our attention on what kind of reflection teachers are engaging in, on what it is teachers are reflecting about, and on how they are going about it. (18)

To monitor and direct the teachers’ reflective activities, in a way that addresses Zeichner’s concerns, the administration of the institute should manage to “get interested teachers to come together in small groups to talk about their teaching. If the group is meeting in a formal setting, the teacher educator, the group leader (or whoever) should provide encouragement and support for the group” (Farrell, Tailoring Reflection 35). Another role of the teacher educator is to give feedback to reflective teachers on their development and providing them with required training. As Denny emphasizes, the educator’s guidelines should not violate “the collaborative developmental and non-judgemental nature of Reflective Practice” (9).
The meetings should be held at regular intervals and each member of the group should get a copy of the agenda for the next meeting including the reflective activities which s/he is supposed to do before the group meets.

One of the sources of teacher evaluation in educational institutes is to ask students to give their feedback on their teacher’s performance. Regarding the findings of the study and the researcher’s experience of his workplace in this regard, the considered implications are as follows:

- If the questionnaire is administered when the students have passed/failed the course, they will not be able to give unbiased feedback.

- If the gap between the time of taking a course, and when the questionnaire is administered is too long (the time interval in the researcher’s workplace is usually around five months), students can not provide accurate feedback, because they can not remember the teaching/learning events precisely.

- If the administration of the instrument occurs in the end of the course, they will not be motivated enough to answer the questions authentically. Because they know that the outcomes do not affect their own educational future.

- Worst of all is a situation in which completing the questionnaire is considered a prerequisite for the student’s next term enrolment. Introducing this enrolment regulation in the researcher’s workplace led students to fill out the questionnaires as carelessly as possible just for the sake of fulfilling the prerequisite.

- Regarding the findings of the research, it is concluded that when the questionnaire is administered in the middle of the course, students can give more accurate feedback, because the related data are fresh in their minds.

- Findings also show that when there is no obligation for attending the study, and students anonymously give their feedback, the obtained data are more accurate.

- When students are assured that their teachers will be informed about the results of the research, and this is a chance for them to give their suggestions to their teachers, they will be motivated to answer the items accurately.

- The purposes of administering the questionnaire can be twofold: first, it can inform the officials of the institute about the quality and quantity of teaching/learning process; second, it can provide teachers with invaluable data
about their teaching to reflect on, provided that the questionnaire is designed based on the specifications of different fields of study and administered in a way that does not violate obtaining accurate data.

The instrument will obtain more accurate data from students if it is administered by academic staff who hold a ten-minute orientation session to elaborate on the purposes of conducting such a survey.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

It is not easy to imagine that there are some teachers who teach and do not think of their teaching. All teachers reflect on their teaching in one way or another. While Kyriacou accepts this fact, he considers reflective teaching to be further than just thinking about what a teacher does in his/her class. He defines reflective teaching as “an approach to teaching in which teachers regularly think about and evaluate their own practice in a systematic way with a view to developing and further improving their classroom practice.” As Kyriacou truly clarifies, there is always the possibility of implementing “an uncritical and mechanistic approach” (9) to one’s teaching especially when the task of teaching is taken for granted, and there is no intention to become professional.

Elaborating on Dewey’s philosophy of reflective teaching, Willower writes, “A key point is that reflective methods depend not only on a clear picture of the facts of the case, but also on the use of ideas to guide searches for relevant information, alternatives and consequences, and ultimately, wise choices” (14). In order for reflective methods to be exclusively employed and practiced in an educational organization, “they should be reflected in the norms, values, symbols and shared meanings that characterize the organization and its participants, as well as in various structures and procedures.” It means that the methods of reflective teaching ought to be “institutionalized”, and the staff is supposed to adapt the attitudes which go along with reflective practices. Willower believes that reflective practitioners are those whose attitudes and values can be described as follows:

- They make an effort to find alternative ways to make things get better in their workplace.
If they feel that something goes wrong, they try to modify it.
- They are courageous enough to appraise suggestions.
- They weigh a problem and find an appropriate way to solve it.
- When they are going to make some modifications to something, they are apt to predict the consequences.

5.6.1. A Model of Developing a Reflective Teacher

In this concluding section, the researcher puts forward a model for developing a reflective teacher which is mainly based on the suggestions made by Kent in The Foundations of a Reflective Teacher.

What a Reflective Teacher Does

In the first stage of introducing a model of developing a reflective teacher, Kent makes some assumptions about the capabilities of a reflective teacher, and what s/he tends to accomplish by following the process of reflection. According to her, a reflective teacher: (1) is self-critical, that is, capable of judging his/her own deeds, behaviors and character; (2) evaluates the efficiency of his/her teaching to see how much s/he has been successful in facilitating students’ learning; (3) is able to modify his/her plan to satisfy the learners’ needs in a given context and attain course objectives; (4) is able to pinpoint the problems which negatively affect the teaching results and try to solve them.

Practical Theory

A reflective teacher is not developed by providing him/her with special amount of knowledge and technique. Kent believes that teacher’s “practical theory” is an essential element of reflection. To elaborate the term, she quotes Handal and Lauvas who define practical theory as “a person’s private, integrated but ever changing system of knowledge, experience and values which is relevant to teaching practice at any particular time.”

According to Kent, the majority of student teachers possess a fully-built up practical theory when they enter a course for professional development. While the
teacher may not explicitly state the formed theory, it plays a major role in his/her practices. Therefore, one of the purposes of teacher education is to make the student teachers aware of the importance of practical theory and equip them with the tools “to bring to the surface of consciousness this ‘baggage’ of practical theory” and evaluate its reliability. When prospective teachers are finished with weighing up their practical theories, it is time to help them formulate more consistent theories through broadening their horizons, i.e. forming new ideas as well as gaining more knowledge and experience (58). The teacher educator is not supposed to provide the trainee teachers with “an alternative practical theory”; on the contrary, his responsibility is to teach them how to continually reformulate their practical theory based on the new experience and knowledge that they achieve. This process engages a reflective teacher “in a life time cycle of application, observation, evaluation and adaptation.” The very ability of continually reformulating the practical theory is the distinctive feature which distinguishes a reflective from a non-reflective teacher (59).

Micro-teaching

Fry et al. define micro-teaching as “intensive practice of a skill under observation” (138). They also mention that the practice is generally recorded and reviewed by an educator or advisor who gives his/her feedback. Johnson and Johnson believe that micro-teaching is only applied to the teacher training courses. According to them, the purpose of micro-teaching is “to enable pre-service teachers (of any subject) to practice particular teaching skills in isolation and in highly controlled circumstances” (215). Regarding the definition and application of micro-teaching, it is advised to be used just for pre-service teachers. In addition, in-service teachers usually have the chance to reflect on their own teaching in the assigned classes.

Kent proposes applying micro-teaching as the first stage of developing a reflective teacher, i.e. identifying the practical theory of the teacher trainee. In this stage, every teacher trainee is given an opportunity to teach a class for half an hour once in a week. The teaching course is divided into two phases and it takes eight
weeks for the teacher to cover each phase. In the first phase, the teacher’s focus is on his/her teaching to reveal the practical theory. The educator does not provide the teacher with any guidance in order not to get in the way of the normal teaching process. “For actual lessons students [trainees] are given clear objectives for both pupils and students but almost no directions as to strategies to be employed” (59).

In the second phase, the teacher’s presentation is analyzed by his/her peers and the educator. “The exercise brings to light very interesting performance features which yield valuable insights into the unconscious beliefs about how a teacher operates” (Kent 59).

Aside from micro-teaching, experts in the field of teacher education in TESOL suggest some activities to trainees through which they can become fully informed about their own teaching. Elaborating on the first principle (Becoming well-informed) of the Acquisition of Language Teaching Abilities (ALTA), Murphy asserts, “In order to facilitate participatory acts of cognition of this kind, many teacher educators provide candidates with opportunities to explore personal attitudes, values, and conceptions of teaching through (a) experiential activities and tasks, (b) teaching and micro-teaching opportunities, and (c) ample time for reflection” (Principles of Second Language 11).

Post-lesson Review

When the trainee is finished with teaching, the first task is to review the video recording. It is normally done by the educator and peers. As the researcher explained in discussion section, most in-service teachers do not like applying video-recorders in their classes; thus, video recording is suggested here for pre-service teachers. However, video-recorders or audio-recorders can be applicable with the in-service teachers’ consent. If they do not agree to the suggestion, the alternative tools (e.g., Teacher Diary) will be used. Elaborating on the merits of the analysis of recorded teaching sessions, Kent asserts, “Through this process of consultation, the student becomes aware of the hypotheses or premises which form part of her initial practical theory. This awareness brings with it a realization of the possibility and, in many cases, the necessity for developing or actualizing the theory through increased
knowledge and experience” (60).

Seminars

The purpose of holding the seminars is to get the trainees familiar with the technical terms which they need when they want to analyze their teaching and describe their revealed practical theory. Trainees attend the seminars while they are involved in their teaching tasks (i.e. micro-teaching). As Kent explains, the seminars also increase the trainees’ understanding of “language learning theory” and “applied linguistics.” By attending the seminars, trainees become aware that there is no “best way” of teaching and learning languages (60). As far as On the Job Training (OJT) courses are concerned, seminars can provide in-service teachers with required terminology as well as the recent trends in education and specifically in language teaching and learning.

Risk-taking and Experimentation

In this phase, the student teacher is involved in applying what s/he acquires by attending the seminars to his/her classroom practices. Kent believes that the appropriate time for the process of risk-taking and experimentation is the second four teaching sessions (i.e. the second phase of micro-teaching). According to her, the most important feature of this phase of reflective teacher development is that the trainee teacher has an opportunity to continually get feedback from his/her peers and reviews the class recordings with the educator. The findings of the present study show that each reflective tool is capable of obtaining certain data; therefore, both pre-service and in-service teachers are advised to choose the appropriate tool in order to collect the data resulting from the application of their new knowledge about the teaching and learning process.

Concurrent Nature of “Doing” and “Reflecting”

The reflective teacher model, as Kent truly emphasizes, is not an easy model for the prospective and in-service teachers. It would be ideal if we were able to find a model which would be valid forever and have a long lasting application.
However, the main feature of this method is that it is developed through the interaction between the teacher’s “doing” and “reflecting”. Furthermore, the teacher’s practical theory has to be examined and revised in the teacher’s “working life.” Therefore, there is neither a ready-made “package of training materials” to be applied to different teaching and learning contexts, nor “little possibility of short cuts” to be taken for developing a reflective teacher (61).

While developing a reflective teacher appears to be a complicated and time consuming process, research findings indicate that it is well worth practicing. Clayton and Ash found that “reflection on their teaching both deepens faculty’s understanding of their roles as educators and allows them to model those abilities and perspectives they want their students [trainee teachers] to develop” (161). Referring to the growing interest in the function of reflection in the classroom, Marchant reports that “Stanford University describes the major aim of their teacher education program as educating students to become reflective teachers” (487).

Marchant also quotes Clark and Peterson whose research findings depict teachers as reflective professionals who make decisions. According to them, teachers are not planned to merely teach; they make decisions while teaching and the number of the decisions is approximately one in every two minutes of instruction.

Silcock who has studied the history of educational reform in England and Wales asserts that teachers have not played a reasonable role in the educational modifications. He believes that “one achievement of those who have promoted reflective practice as the dominant model of teaching has been the elevation of teachers as persons capable of ultimately managing and directing events through knowledge and expertise” (283). As it has been emphasized through conducting this research, reflective teaching can equip teachers with required tools to: examine the efficiency of class activities; promote their level of knowledge and skills; become critical of the adapted or assigned methodology and syllabus and; take the responsibility of changes in educational reforms. Therefore, reflective teaching deserves to be in the limelight, and other researchers devote their efforts to its development.
5.7. Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of the tools used in reflective teaching in EFL and ESL contexts. Among the topics which can be explored by reflective teachers, the focus of the study was on teacher decision making. Therefore, there are at least five other related areas which can be investigated through further studies. Regarding Murphy’s list of topics, the suggested areas for investigation are: (1) communication patterns in the classroom; (2) ways in which learners apply knowledge; (3) the affective climate of the classroom; (4) the instructional environment; (5) a teacher’s self-assessment of growth and development as a professional (Reflective Teaching 501).

As far as the available related literature shows, this research is the first of its kind; therefore, it is a good idea to do some research focusing on the same topic, but in alternative contexts to see whether the same results are obtained. For instance, a context in which English language is the subjects’ first language can be a great situation for replicating the study, no matter the teachers are native speakers of English language or students or both.

In this research, every step was taken to preserve the subjects’ anonymity. The reason was to assure the students that there was no possible way to pinpoint the identity of the respondents. Although, it provided the researcher with authentic data, it made some further investigations impossible which, of course, was not the focus of the study and might be investigated in a separate study. Further obtained data about the subjects (e.g., gender, age, first language) can provide new insights into the way the researcher processes the data obtained from reflective tools. For instance, knowing the gender of the students, the researcher can explore whether students of different genders have the same attitude towards the teacher with the same or different gender.

In this research, one of the criteria for selecting a class as a part of research sample was to see whether one of the basic skills or components of English language was being taught by the class teacher. In order to obtain precise data pertaining to each skill or component of English language, further studies can be carried out focusing on each skill (e.g., reading comprehension) or component (e.g., structure)
at a time. Furthermore, in this study, the level of the students was not taken into consideration. Therefore, more studies can be carried out to compare the results obtained from the administration of Students’ Feedback tool to subjects who study in the same or different classes but have different levels of proficiency in English.

In addition, further research can be conducted on the three interrelated phases of teacher decision making, i.e. planning decisions, interactive decisions and evaluative decisions. A thorough statistical analysis, which was possible but out of the focus of the present study, would show the effectiveness of reflective tools in obtaining the most relevant data in each of these three phases of teacher decision making.