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In-service EFL Teachers' Decision-Making in Classroom Instruction: The Impact of a Teacher Education Course



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ABSTRACT

The emerging interest in the concept of teachers' decision-making as a key to teaching effectiveness has mounted over the last few years. Although the number of studies conducted in this area has been vast, there is a paucity of literature on the impact of in-service teacher education courses on teachers' decision-making (re)construction. To bridge this gap, in the present qualitative multiple case study, pre- and post-course classroom observations and the teacher education course were conducted to investigate four novice EFL teachers' instructional decision-making. Content analysis based on *Stronge's (2007)* five teacher skills checklists and microgenetic constructivist moment-by-moment discourse analysis were employed. Findings indicated five shifts from using "L1 to using L1 as well as L2 for instruction", "one method to use different approaches and strategies in teaching," "paper-and-pencil based activities to incorporate technology in teaching," "whole-class or individual to using different grouping activities," and "a strict approach to using games for teaching and learning" in teachers' decisions. In view of the findings, it can be concluded that the focus of targeted teachers changed as a result of participating in this course. They brought valuable information from the tacit to the conscious level, negotiated it, and reshaped it to some extent. They became more aware of their abilities and considered the context, students' levels, needs, and demands. These results are consistent with many of the previous findings reported in the literature. The main implication of this study is for institute managers, teacher educators, and EFL teachers regarding decisions and the significant role of reflection on them.

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Introduction

Before the 21st century, the topic of “teaching” and its effect on human education has been one of the researchers’ main concerns (Badra, 2022). This concern has turned the effective preparation of teachers to meet students’ needs into one of the basic challenges of teacher educators. (Riley, 2019). This challenge gained momentum when researchers emphasized that teachers’ former experiences, their understandings of what they do, and the contexts in which they act are vital in forming how and why teachers do what they do (Johnson, 2009). According to Salehi (2001), “teaching” is a set of targeted actions teachers design, implement, and evaluate in the stages before, during, and after teaching. Therefore, effective teaching can be defined as a set of teacher behaviors that cause students to achieve educational goals and better learning (Zarei et al., 2017). Therefore, a teacher’s learning is realized as systematic and perpetual, created through participation in diverse activities in diverse social settings (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Stressing the socially related nature of teachers’ knowledge construction, which comes about in interaction with others (Vygotsky, 2018), the sociocultural concept of dialogic mediation indicates that the internalization of teacher learning is a developmental process that takes place initially in cooperation with others (other regulations) and then under the control of the individual (self-regulation) (Dimitrieska, 2018). Consequently, the concept of

‘cooperation’ has turned into a fundamental factor in teacher development, and there is a joint agreement that teachers’ reflective hones will be more effective if they work cooperatively with other teachers (Johnson, 2009). In addition, according to Aghaalikhani and Maftoon (2018), teachers are not regarded as passive technicians and imitators; instead, they work cooperatively with teacher educators in the realm of teacher development.

Taking the sociocultural perspective into account, Kumaravadivelu (2012) proposed a modular model, which is an effort to move away from traditional strategies and provide a cyclical, incorporated, cooperative, multidirectional and multidimensional focus. Thus, teacher education has shifted itself and its pattern from a traditional expert-teacher model to one that empowers teachers to critically examine their setting and necessities and build their context-specific approaches in the post-methodological period (McMorrow, 2007). Consequently, according to Borg (2011), the role of teacher education courses is to impact teacher cognition, leading to changes in teachers’ actions and decisions.

According to Rahmani and his colleagues (2018), “decision-making” is considered the primary skill in teaching, which acts as a guide in effective teaching. Since decision-making and cooperation among teachers (Cook, 2005) plays a significant role in students’ success, the education system’s

lofty goals cannot be appropriately achieved unless the transformation and improvement in teachers' educational decisions (Nasr Esfahani, 2012).

While reviewing the literature showed a rich body of research conducted on EFL teachers' decision-making from different angles (e.g., Lloyd, 2019; Paulsrud & Wermke, 2020), it confirmed the scarcity of studies addressing the current study's purpose. To bridge this gap, the current research explored the impact of a skill-based, transformative, and cooperative in-service teacher education course based on the KARDS model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and the effective teachers' checklists (Stronge, 2007) on novice EFL teachers' decision-making in classroom instruction.

1. Literature review

Like many other human activities, the foreign language teaching process depends mainly on making various choices, such as choosing materials, activities, methods, etcetera. Similar to tongue itself, language teaching is certainly linear, so decisions regularly need to be made, sometimes to remove alternatives, and sometimes to organize diverse activities in a productive order, and it is due to the fact that decision-making seems to be at the core of the teaching process (Rahmani et al., 2018; Shavelson, 1973). All teaching acts are the outcome of conscious or unconscious decisions adopted by the teacher following the complicated cognitive processing of accessible information. This

thinking process has led to the assumption that decision-making is an essential teaching skill (Shavelson, 1973), and teachers' decision-making might limit or smooth learning opportunities (Walsh, 2002).

According to Lloyd (2019), Teachers' decisions are essential in effective teaching and have a vital role in learners' accomplishments, and their beliefs and opinions form their interpretation of effective teaching (Loughran, 2019). Consequently, teachers' decisions are fundamental to teaching skills (Richards et al., 2001). As Farrell (2015a) contends, effective teachers have specific features and knowledge, including adequate subject knowledge, appropriate classroom management and teaching abilities, and many other behaviors. However, in his final statement, Farrell referred to constant participation in reflective practices as an essential competency of effective teachers. Meirink and his colleagues (2007) believe that teachers' cooperation and sharing of experiences, ideas, resources, and reflection on them can improve their performance. Goddard and his colleagues (2007) also referred to the direct relationship between teachers' cooperation and students' success. Therefore, cooperation between teachers can improve their skills and knowledge in teaching (Shakenova, 2017). Today, English language teaching is "a dialogic approach of co-constructing knowledge in and resulting from specific sociocultural processes and situations"

(Johnson, 2009, p. 21). A good reaction to today's need for designing language teacher education models in the era of fast economic, cultural and educational globalization is a conversion from traditional strategies of designing linear, product-oriented, transmission-based, discrete terms and programs into innovative ways of designing circular, process-oriented, transformation-based, comprehensive modules (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Medgyes, 2013). Therefore, Kumaravadivelu (2012) proposed a modular model that attempts to move further away from those traditional strategies, and instead, it provides a cyclical, incorporated, cooperative, multidirectional, and multidimensional focus. Kumaravadivelu's modular model is supported by five global viewpoints and three operational principles (Medgyes, 2013). The five consistent viewpoints that are possible to be useful in understanding the global context include the post-national, postmodern, postcolonial, post-transmission, and post-method perspectives. The first three perspectives are merged into historical, political, and sociocultural developments, whereas the last two viewpoints make the language teacher education (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). These views are cooperatively identified using a set of operating principles that can control the procedures and practices of SLTE. The operating principles, having particularity, practicality, and possibility specifications, are fundamental to the KARDS model.

Kumaravadivelu's modular model is designed in the form of five principal modules—Knowing, Analyzing, Recognizing, Doing, and Seeing (KARDS). The first module, knowing, authorizes teachers to know how to build a foundation for their professional, personal and procedural knowledge—analyzing notices about assessing learner motivation, needs, and independence. The third module, recognizing, is about identifying and validating one's identity, values, and beliefs as a teacher. Doing emphasizes how teachers perform, hypothesize, and discuss with other community members—seeing highlights the way students, trainers, and observers perceive a teacher's teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

As was expressed earlier, there is a significant educational debate nowadays about how to recruit and prepare teachers. In addition, it has been proven that traditional pre-service training programs cannot prepare the kind of teachers who can maintain outstanding education programs that contribute to student achievement. Therefore, Stronge (2007), by examining different models and the various studies performed, presented the qualities of effective teachers in five checklists: a teacher as an individual, a classroom manager and organizer, instruction preparation and coordination, implementing instruction, and monitoring student achievement and potential.

Considering the importance of teacher's responsibility, teaching skills, teachers'

cooperation and pedagogical decisions, numerous studies in the literature address the notions of teacher decision-making (e.g., Lloyd, 2019; Paulsrud & Wermke, 2020); the contributions of teacher education programs (e.g., Espasandin Lopes & Tornisiello Scarlassari, 2022; Kyza & Agesilaou, 2022; Stadler-Heer, 2022; van den Bergh et al., 2015); KARDS (Baktash, 2021; Hassani et al., 2020); and qualities of effective teachers (Tajeddin & Alemi, 2019), the contributions of an in-service teacher education course (considering the KARDS model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and qualities of effective teachers (Stronge, 2007)) to novice EFL teachers' decision-making has rarely been investigated to the best of researchers' knowledge. The lack of inquiries in this particular area in Iran and the fact that the teacher education courses are mostly transmissive rather than transformational (Baktash, 2021) made the researchers carry out the current study.

In this regard, this research is concerned with the following question: What aspects of EFL teachers' instructional decision-making have changed due to participating in the in-service teacher education course?

2. Research method

Participants

Four novice EFL teachers from diverse language institutions in Tehran, Iran, whose involvement was based on purposive sampling, made the current study participants. The researchers had two criteria

to choose the participants purposefully. They selected novice teachers whose teaching experience was less than two years (Farrell, 2013) and those who had passed pre-service teacher training courses. Sarah (1 year of experience), Maryam (6 months of experience), Ali (1 year of experience), and Reza (8 months of experience) participated in the current study. The participating teachers aged between 22 and 34 years old and their educational degrees were B.A. students and B.A. graduates. Concerning participants' characteristics, all the participants were Iranian and native speakers of Persian. To observe the research ethics, the names of the institutes where the research was run and the participants' names remained anonymous (pseudonyms are used).

Instrumentation and data collection

To collect data, Pre- and post-course classroom observations and a teacher education course were employed in the current research.

Pre-course and post-course Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is a valuable and useful data collection method since it permits the researcher to study individuals in their native environment to understand "things" from their perspective (Schepens et al., 2007). In this respect, the researchers in the current study chose observation to collect essential information concerning novice teachers' instructional decision-making. The first researcher in the present study observed,

took notes, and videotaped ten sessions of the targeted teachers' classes to investigate their classroom decision-making. The classes were video recorded to provide thorough evidence about participants and their decisions (Dornyei, 2007).

Finally, to ensure the stability of the changes one month after participating in the training course, the first researcher observed the targeted teachers' classes for ten other sessions to see their actual development and reconstruction regarding their decision-making.

It should be noted that classroom observations in this study were guided by a predetermined framework (Stronge's (2007) Effective Teacher Checklists). This framework was designed by researchers and was evaluated and revised by two experts in the field of teacher education before implementation (See Appendix).

Teacher Education Course

Forming such discussion groups is believed to provide the opportunity for teachers to cooperate with one or more colleagues to create a person with a specific way of teaching (Edge, 2002) which consequently leads to reflective professional development (Johnson, 2009). Respectively, the current skill-based, transformative, and cooperative teacher education course based on the KARDS model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and the effective teachers' checklists (Stronge, 2007) was run in this study to explore the targeted teachers' classroom decision-making reconstruction and development

resulting from their cooperative negotiations and exposure to the presented models during the course.

Accordingly, the researchers arranged a teacher education course. The course took twelve 90-minute sessions for the targeted participating teachers to get accomplished. Besides, the first researcher taught the models and guided the discussions. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions, the sessions were run online (on Skype). In the course, the first researcher and the participants collaboratively participated in 2 phases: knowledge construction and collaborative reflection. In the former phase, the researcher asked questions based on the KARDS model and requested participants to discuss those questions and provide their answers. To conduct the questions, the researchers pre-prepared a list of questions (based on the KARDS model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and its five modules, which were the focus of the current study. They also presented some scenarios according to teachers' actual classroom events and Stronge's (2007) checklists to prompt the participants in the cooperative development process and asked them to make the appropriate decision and discuss them. The researcher then began presenting each KARDS model module and Stronge's (2007) checklist. Each subject negotiated over one-session to achieve the desired results. In the next phase, the researcher presented some other questions and scenarios with the same

theme and asked the participants to discuss them and provide their opinions and answers. The questions and scenarios based on these significant aspects were formulated, written, and presented in the participants' mother tongue (Persian) and reviewed and revised by two experts in teacher education to check their content validity and relevance to the purpose of the study. It is worth mentioning that all sessions were video-recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis

In order to reveal novice EFL teachers' instructional decision-making, deductive content analysis was employed. A top-down version of content analysis was conducted based on Stronge's (2007) five teacher skills checklists. To this end, the researchers first read and reread the data, reflect, describe, compare, and finally relate them to Stronge's five teacher skills checklists. Then, they reduced the potential codes to the code words and categorized them.

In addition, microgenetic constructivist moment-by-moment discourse analysis (Vygotsky, 1978) on the transcriptions of participating novice EFL teachers' cooperative negotiations during the teacher education course was conducted. The researcher employed this process-oriented thorough analysis to go through each line of the transcriptions with a highly accurate observation to figure out every subtle/gradual shift, developments, or reconstruction that emerged in the participating teachers'

decision-making. Then, the exact process followed in the pre-course classroom observation was implemented again to find teachers' instructional decisions in the post-course phase.

Double-coding was used to analyze the transcriptions of pre-and post-course classroom observations to increase the reliability of codes and patterns. The codes and categories were finalized with the agreement of the two coders. At that moment, Cohen's Kappa measurement related to these parts between the two sets of codes was calculated, and inter-coder reliability of 0.84 and 0.82 was achieved, which indicated a high degree of agreement between the coders. Consequently, it confirmed the extracted codes to be reliable. Additionally, to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings and evade possible misinterpretations, the researchers employed member checking (Riazi, 2016).

Finally, the content analysis of the participating teachers' pre-and post-course classroom observations was compared and contrasted with a focus on Stronge's five teacher skills checklists to reveal the actual development and reconstruction of their decision-making. However, considering the scope of this study, the researchers focused on the development and reconstruction of the decisions regarding the "instructional strategies" domain of the implementing instruction checklist to provide a rich and profound picture of the results.

3. Findings

This study investigated the extent to which the skill-based, transformative, and cooperative teacher education course results in the reconstruction and development of novice English language teachers' instructional decision-making. The microgenetic constructivist moment-by-moment analysis of the participants' cooperative negotiations and reflections on the first dimension of implementing instruction checklists (Stronge, 2007) and comparing pre-and post-course observations revealed some cases in which the gradual process development occurred. The following five sections present the shifts resulting from participating in the course.

A Shift from “Overusing L1 to using L1 as well as L2 for instruction”

In the pre-course observations, it was seen that the participating teachers used their first language (in this case, Persian) to teach different parts, correct the students' mistakes, solve the problems, and even ask and receive answers from the students. During the course, the teachers discussed using the first language in teaching and reviewed various sources. Teachers changed their approach under the influence of each other's viewpoints and the models presented during the course. In one of the sessions, Sarah referred to this issue and explained the reasons for her decision and the changes that have taken place in her approach. She stated:

Before attending the course, the first way I thought of was to use students' first language to solve problems. Now I understand that as a teacher, I have to be more creative and use different methods to explain the subject to the students, and finally, if none of the methods solves the problem, I can use the first language as a last resort. (Sarah, female, experience = 1 year)

Ali also made this point:

As mentioned in the model, we have to consider the needs of our students, and their most obvious need is to learn English, which is definitely why they are sitting on the chairs of this class. So by overusing the first language, we ignore their primary need. (Ali, male, experience = 1 year)

In this excerpt, Ali refers to identifying and considering the needs of students, which has been emphasized in both models proposed in the course. Taking into account the needs of students is one of the subsets of the “analyzing” module of the KARDS model, as well as the domain of instructional strategies from the “implementing instruction” checklist (Stronge, 2007).

Post-course observations showed a change in their performance. Compared to teachers' decisions in the pre-course phase, in the post-course phase, the use of the first language decreased, and the second language increased significantly. They openly tried to use different strategies to postpone using the first language. For example, in Reza's class, he used different strategies such as asking students to help each other, using videos to

explain grammar, using scenarios and illustrations to explain and solve students' problems, and Finally, in rare cases, he switched to the first language. In addition, he encouraged the learners to use English as the primary language for answering the questions and participating in different tasks.

In addition to the proposed strategies, Sarah, another participating teacher, used finger puppets and drawings for further explanation and encouraged language learners to use these strategies instead of using the first language to convey the meaning. This issue made language learners use dictionaries more and try to solve their needs to communicate because they could not use the strategies suggested by the teacher to convey all concepts.

A Shift from “Excessive use of one method to use different approaches and strategies in teaching”

The first researcher's pre-course observations of the participating novice teachers' classes reflected their decisions to use a consistent approach to teaching different subjects. They found themselves committed to implementing a predetermined curriculum and being limited to some specific methods. Early in the course, teachers continued to emphasize their approach, giving various reasons for such decisions. For example, they mentioned reasons such as preventing students from getting confused, students' thorough understanding of the issue, not forcing

students, and saving time. However, their approaches changed over time, which was clearly seen in their speech. For example, Maryam said:

I used to think that I knew everything and my students did not know anything, and that was me who had to pass on the knowledge to them. But now I realize how wrong I was. I can use the students themselves to teach, have a more active class and increase their level of engagement, which ultimately leads to a better understanding of the material. We do not always have to tell students directly what we want to teach now. For example, we can show them a piece of a film and ask them to think about the structure used by the actors, ask them to talk to each other, and allow them to discover the subject themselves. (Maryam, female, experience = 6 months)

Maryam's speech shows a change in her viewpoint on using different approaches for teaching. What Maryam mentioned was proposed by Kumaravadivelue (2012) as moving away from the transmission to transformation perspective. Maryam also refers to increasing student engagement and emphasizing learners' abilities and problem-solving, which are issues raised in various checklists of Stronge's (2007) model. This issue was also seen in other teachers in different course sessions. For example, in another session, Reza said:

From now on, I will absolutely think about the parts I want to teach and consider my

students. It is a mistake to think just about covering the materials. We have to choose the suitable method according to students' learning styles. (Reza, male, experience = 8 months)

The point made by Reza about planning and thinking before the class and aligning the methods used with students' learning style related to the domains of "instruction plans" from the planning and organization for instruction checklist and "responding to student needs and abilities" from the monitoring student progress and potential checklist (Stronge, 2007). Considering these issues in the teachers' speeches can clearly show the effects of participating in the course on their perspective.

After the course, observations showed changes in this area. For example, Ali used different methods to teach grammar sections in his class. He brought a video related to the grammar section for his students and asked them to watch the film and then talk about it with each other. In another session at the beginning of the class, he described a scenario, asked the students to pay attention to the structures he used, and then taught that part. Sarah also used different methods to teach reading. For example, in one of the sessions, she wrote the title of a reading passage as a speaking topic on the board, discussed it with her students, and then started teaching the text. Then, in another session, she asked her students to teach their friends different parts of the text. These were selected examples of different methods used

by the participating teachers during the ten post-course sessions, which indicate some changes in their performance.

In order to strengthen the students' vocabulary skills, Reza asked them to teach phrases they learned to their friends in class. In another session, he played a podcast and encouraged students to guess the meaning of new words from the context. These were examples of the different methods used by the participating teachers during ten post-course sessions, indicating changes in their practice.

A Shift from "Failing to incorporate technology to incorporating technology in teaching"

Another issue in all four teachers' classes was failing to use technology and overdoing paper and pencil tasks. Early in the course, they cited various factors for such a decision, including time-saving, lack of facilities, and consideration of students' level. Ali, Maryam, and Reza pointed to the lack of facilities and expressed their dissatisfaction with the situation from a critical point of view; however, Sarah, while pointing to her desire to use technology in her classes, pointed to two other reasons mentioned above and she considered her decision to be a logical one. What the four teachers had in common, however, was the decision not to use technology. However, the trainer's presentation of the models used in the course and the teachers' discussions led to changes in their approaches. For example, Reza said:

It is true that the institute did not provide us with the necessary facilities, but we, as teachers, did not make any effort in this regard. I have never requested a laptop from the institute or used students' mobile phones in the classroom. Even once I had a problem teaching the meaning of a word to one of my students, the last way that came to my mind was to use mobile and the internet. In my opinion, technology has an undeniable role in education and teaching. (Reza, male, experience = 8 months)

The point mentioned by Reza about using technology was also one of the positive qualities of an effective teacher presented in the “planning and organizing for instruction” checklist by Stronge (2007). Mentioning this can also indicate the effects of participating in the course and the models presented from the teachers' perspectives.

The post-course observations showed a change in their attitude toward using technology. For example, Reza constantly used the internet in his classes and tried to introduce appropriate websites to his students to improve their skills. He also referred them to the internet and used it to find explanations on various topics. Ali often brought videos related to parts of the book and asked his students to search for parts on the internet and share them. Another common point among teachers was creating groups on social media to connect more with students and create more learning opportunities for them.

A Shift from “using whole-class or individual activities to using different grouping activities”

Observations of teachers' classes for ten sessions before participating in the course showed that they act in two ways in performing class activities. They either ask questions from the whole class or ask the students to work on a task individually. At the beginning of the course, they cited issues such as preventing chaos in the classroom, saving time, the issue of the COVID-19 virus, and considering students' level as reasons for such decisions and supported their approaches. After some sessions of exposure to the models presented and discussions on this subject, their approaches changed somewhat. For example, in her speech, Sarah referred to the issue of language learners' autonomy, which is one of the subsets of the “analyzing” module in the KARDS model. Looking at the following excerpt could be enlightening.

I think our previous approaches keep students dependent on the teacher. As we read in the KARDS model, we need to care about learner autonomy and train an autonomous learner. In my opinion, this is achieved by doing group work. (Sarah, female, experience = 1 year)

Maryam confirmed Sarah's words and said: *Exactly. I also think we are not only responsible for teaching and covering the predetermined materials. Rather, we have to strengthen the spirit of cooperation and*

teamwork training and, as a result, raise a better generation. I also agree that we should increase group work in our classrooms. (Maryam, female, experience = 6 months)

The point raised by Maryam is one of the highlights of Stronge (2007) in the domain of “teachers’ expectations,” which has led to a change in her approach in the domain of “instructional strategies.”

After the course, observations showed changes in their decisions about group working and using various grouping strategies. For example, teachers used two- or four-person group work during sessions and scored points for group work. They also asked their students to explain a part of the lesson to other students in groups, help each other solve their problems, and keep the classroom environment as far away from a purely competitive environment as possible.

A Shift from “Having a severe approach to using games for teaching and learning”

The last common decision frequently seen in teachers’ classes before attending the course was having a severe approach to teaching. They did not use games and other teaching strategies and considered using them as a cause of losing class organization and respect. During the course, they repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining the teachers’ respect and the distance between the instructor and the students, saying: *“The teacher should not play games with the students or joke with the students while teaching because it makes the students not to take the class seriously and not listen*

to the lesson” (Ali, male, experience= 1 year). However, the changes gradually showed themselves after a few discussion sessions on this issue. This change was first seen in Reza:

I used to think that everything should have its specific time in class. If you are joking, the class can no longer be controlled, so the class must be taken seriously. Or you cannot learn anything by playing games. But when I searched after our previous session, I saw how many games were introduced that we could use to teach. In this way, learners become more interested, and their motivation increases. Of course, we must know that while joking and playing, we must maintain our role as a teacher. (Reza, male, experience = 8 months)

In this excerpt, Reza pointed to the importance of student motivation, which is one of the subcategories of the “analyzing” module in the KARDS model, and also the “interactions with students” domain from the “teacher as a person” checklist in the Strong model (2007). These cases show the course’s effects and the mentioned models’ presentation in the teachers’ approach. These changes were also seen in the statements of other teachers.

After the course, observations showed that they had moved away from their previous severe approach and tried to play various games such as *Scrabble* to improve students’ vocabulary skills, singing in English to improve their speaking and listening skills,

and making stories to improve students' writing skills, etcetera.

To sum up, Teachers' points expressed during the course showed their satisfaction with participating and their desire to make changes and professional development. For example, in one of the course sessions, Maryam said: *"I am delighted that I participated in this course. Because I can become a better teacher now"* (Female, experience= 6 months). Reza also confirmed with Maryam: *"I think we were lucky teachers that we were on the way to progress. Getting to know these models, talking to each other, and exchanging ideas have all changed me"* (male, experience = 8 months).

4. Discussion

As the current study's findings revealed, there are five major shifts in teachers' decision-making. These shifts are from "Overusing L1 to using L1 as well as L2 for instruction", "Excessive use of one method in teaching to use different approaches and strategies in teaching," "Failing to incorporate technology to incorporating technology in teaching," "using whole-class or individual activities to using different grouping activities," and "Having a severe approach to teaching to using games for teaching and learning."

Based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning is a reciprocal process in which all agents might benefit, regardless of their level of expertise, may benefit. In the current study, the novice teachers' decision-making

was re-formed and reconstructed by negotiating with other colleagues during the teacher education course. Therefore, as Luneta (2012) stated, constant professional development is vital for the promotion and upgrading of teachers since the extent of social-educational modification and the fact that teacher training courses are more transitional than transformative make pre-service preparation an unsatisfactory and insufficient base for long-term professional competence (Bektash, 2021; Luneta, 2012). Therefore, according to Ahn (2019), engaging teachers in collegial and reflective practices would lead to their professional development. Farrel (2013) also highlighted the effect of teachers' negotiations and interaction on the reconstruction of their teaching perspectives via sharing their experiences. However, a significant point with the design of these types of professional development programs should be based on an adequate needs analysis that leads up to teachers' knowledge bases of the subject, content, teaching, and pedagogical knowledge (Luneta, 2012).

As Farrell (2015b) has highlighted, reflection is tied to the teacher's ongoing professional development and is a vital issue for effective teaching. Consequently, changes in teachers' attitudes and practices emphasize the importance of in-service teacher education courses. Other recent studies have reported changes in teachers' attitudes and practices after participating in such programs and

cooperating with other teachers, including the teachers' educators and other members of the community of practice (Espasandin Lopes & Tornisiello Scarlassari, 2022; Kyza & Agesilaou, 2022; Stadler-Heer, 2022; van den Bergh et al., 2015). Tajeddin and Alemi (2019) also highlighted the need to enhance teachers' beliefs about influential teachers' characteristics through teacher education courses.

In alignment with the result of the current study, Hassani et al. (2020) scrutinized the impact of the KARDS modular model on the reconstruction of EFL teachers' professional identity in Iran. The results showed significant transformations in participants' professional identity in four areas: achieving certainty in their teaching practice, implementing more macro-strategies, adopting a critical view of language teaching, and expanding the sense of non-conformity to the ideologies imposed by others.

Furthermore, the findings of this research concur well with the studies conducted by Ebadi and Qaisari (2016). They reached the conclusion that the concepts of teachers' classroom behavior and teaching can be reformed and renovated by raising their critical thinking and awareness about their teaching behaviors. Johnson & Golombek's (2011) findings also support this study's findings. They suggested that the process of in-service teacher development in conceptualizing current thinking and restructuring their classroom performance should be reinforced by providing

appropriate dialogic mediation with the use of tools such as awareness-raising and critical thinking.

Overusing the first language is a big mistake by novice teachers because they are either not competent in L2 or think L1 is more effective as the medium of instruction (Lee, 2016). Following this method, they take the chance for students to be exposed to L2. Therefore, the shift from "Overusing L1 to using L1 as well as L2 for instruction" concurs with a study conducted by Mahmutoğlu and Kıcı (2013). They mentioned that it would be prudent for the teachers to assign a "go-between" function that is justifiable in terms of costs and benefits. Teachers, in all situations, should critically assess their environment and make well-informed, realistic judgments about the usage of the L1 rather than half-heartedly or blindly sticking to an assumption because they are in a superior position (Mahmutoğlu & Kıcı, 2013). There are other studies that highlight the importance of using the mother tongue in language classes while keeping an eye on the amount and purpose of use of the mother-tongue (Hawa et al., 2021; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Parba, 2018). Consequently, recent literature emphasizes the importance of having professional platforms in which teachers could gather and talk about their experiences regarding using L1 and L2 in their classes and create a conventional and purposeful use of the first language instead of overusing or prohibiting it completely (Hall & Cook, 2013).

Teachers in this study decided to use a limited number of teaching approaches, indicating their opposition to using diverse teaching approaches (Stronge, 2007). Opposition to shifting the approaches used by teachers, even when confronted with difficulties, designates that novice teachers do not reflect much on their attitudes and approaches (Farrell, 2013). Nevertheless, teachers give students outstanding learning opportunities by reflecting on their acts (Webster & Schempp, 2008) and improving the quality of their decisions (Lloyd, 2019), which could be one of the redeeming features of an expert teacher (Tsui, 2011). These points were indicated in the shift from “Excessive use of one method in teaching in the pre-course phase to different approaches and strategies in the post-course phase. It was also emphasized by Stronge (2007) that an influential teacher uses a set of instructional strategies. Hoff (2003) also pointed out that by being limited to a teaching strategy, we, as teachers betray our students. Therefore, the findings of this study show that the teachers participating in this study are moving towards being effective teachers.

The findings also demonstrate that instructors are inept in utilizing technology for instructing and center more on paper and pencil assignments prior to partaking in the course, which is one of the signs of ineffective teaching (Stronge, 2007). Their decisions regarding this issue and discussions throughout the course showed their lack of

awareness regarding the positive impacts of utilizing technology in teaching-learning a language reverberates with research conducted by Cahyani and Cahyono (2012). Novice teachers are not that much able to work with technology because they are not experienced, and their focus is so much on deductive teaching that they fail to use extra methods. However, expert teachers can utilize different types of materials with different technologies which motivate learners and make an up-to-date learning environment (Meskill et al., 2006). The findings of this study are also confirmed by Nushi and Ghasemi (2021) because they also concluded in their study that Iranian EFL teachers have a positive attitude toward using technology, and their desire is to have teacher-centered classrooms, which were quite obvious in the pre-course phase of this study. The results of this study are also consistent with the results obtained in the study by Espasandin Lopes and Tornisiello Scarlassari (2022). Since they also pointed out in their study that content knowledge is not enough for teaching, there is a need for pedagogical knowledge, understanding students’ learning styles, considering students’ needs, and the importance of using technology in the classroom. Instructors get to meet learners where they are (Danielson, 2007). Concurring with this framework, as learners live in a technology-based world, teachers must prepare them for their future by taking on the challenges of incorporating

technology into classes (Kazu & Issaku, 2021). This issue has been considered in the KARDS model (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) in learner needs analysis and has also been emphasized many times in the checklists presented by Stronge (2007).

Other decisions regularly seen in targeted teachers' classes in the pre-course phase included using few groups and pair activities during instruction which might be signs of ineffective teaching based on Stronge's (2007) checklists. In addition, it was emphasized by Kumaravadivelu (2012) that teachers should be knowledgeable about different pedagogic procedures which Facilitate lesson flow. Those procedures include "(a) when to opt for individual, pair, group or whole class activity; (b) what criteria to follow to form pairs and groups; (c) the length of time they will have to wait after posing a question before rephrasing or redirecting the question to another student; and (d) if and when to allow learners to use their first language in class (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 31)." After the course, there was a shift from "using whole-class or individual activities to using different grouping activities," which echoed the existing literature. The teachers showed interest in encouraging learners to work in groups and help each other complete the task. These findings align with Ebadi and Beigzadeh's (2015) and Lee's (2009) findings. Therefore, considering what has been emphasized in the previous literature, the findings obtained in

the post-course phase show that teachers are moving towards professional development.

Kumaravadivelu (2012) emphasized embedding lessons in meaningful contexts using communication tasks (e.g., games or information gap activities) to catch the learner's attention to the interactive nature of discourse, meaning, and form, which increases the explicit degree needed to promote L2 development. Stronge (2007) also noted that an influential teacher acts so that both s/he and the students enjoy teaching and learning instead of being overly strict and having hard-and-fast rules. The positive effects of using technologies and games in the classroom were also examined in other studies, and their findings confirmed these positive effects (Allsop & Jessel, 2018; Dixon et al., 2022).

5. Conclusions and Implications

This study illustrated the impact of a skill-based, transformative, and cooperative in-service teacher education course on novice EFL teachers' decision-making in classroom instruction. From what has happened, it can be concluded that novice teachers do not have enough awareness about their potential and rely on the pre-service teacher training courses they have taken and what has been passed on to them from others. They do not reflect on their decisions and constantly think about implementing a predetermined schedule in their classroom. Therefore, the subject of planning based on the context, students' levels, needs, and wants,

emphasized in the KARDS model (Kumaravadelu, 2012) and Stronge's (2007) effective teachers' checklists, were generally ignored. However, holding transformative teacher education courses early in their career can help them reshape their minds, resolve misconceptions, reflect on their decisions, and become cognizant of their strengths and weaknesses. As in the current study, changes were made in these teachers' approaches during the course, and different decisions were observed after the course, which showed that teachers were more aware of the issues raised. Overall, the role of the in-service teacher education course was proved to be significant as it provided the participating teachers with the opportunity to bring valuable information about different issues from the tacit to the conscious level, negotiate them, and reshape them to some extent.

The findings of this study have some pedagogical implications, which address three groups. The first implication is for institute managers to provide opportunities to have such teacher education courses for in-service teachers during their teaching years to share different situations and experiences, to create a cooperative and collegial environment instead of a competitive environment, and to create a spirit of seeking professional development in teachers. The second implication is for teacher educators who could make teachers aware of the value and importance of their decision-making and

their direct impact on language learners. They are also expected to change the transmissive structure of teacher education programs to a more transformative structure. Furthermore, they are supposed to make teachers cognizant of the potential problems in their classes and how they can reflect on their decisions regarding these issues. Finally, teachers should be cognizant that participating in pre-service teacher training courses is just the beginning of their professional journey, which is a never-ending process. Therefore, they are expected to reflect upon their decisions constantly to bridge the gap between their current stage and what they have to achieve.

This study has its own limitations, which should be considered in future research. Firstly, the participants' gender was not considered a factor for probable distinctions in the teachers' decisions. Consequently, other research could be done to scrutinize the effect of gender on teachers' instructional decisions. Besides, as the participating teachers were only four and were nominated from different language institutes located in only one city (Tehran) in Iran, further studies can be conducted on more participants and nationwide and from different contexts to give more thoughtful insight into the novice English language teachers' and decision-making. This study takes advantage of classroom observation and a teacher education course to interpret the findings. Therefore, richer data can be collected to

analyze teachers' instructional decision-making. The COVID-19 pandemic is another issue that prevented a few of researchers' plans from being executed. In this manner, comparable studies can be done to explore this restrictive factor or to look at the impacts of COVID-19 on teachers' decision-making in online and in-person classes. Finally, novice teachers' imagined decision-making can be investigated to reveal how much it distances from their actual decisions.

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