



## **The Impact of Traditional vs. E-learning In-service Programs on EFL Teachers' Educational Empowerment**

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### **Abstract**

Language teaching and language training are integral parts of the educational curriculum in every language centers around the world. Offices, companies, and educational centers should update themselves to keep the current progression and try to help their employees to refresh their minds based on educational development. Hence, this study explored the effectiveness of different in-service training programs on EFL teachers' empowerment concerning two factors: self-efficacy and innovation and creativity held in Khuzestan- Iran. To this end, 30 EFL teachers were selected through convenient sampling related to their experiences in each of the programs- E-learning, Class-based, and Blended ones. The participants were divided into three groups of 10 – Class-based, group A., E-learning, group B., and the experiences of the two classes (A & B), group C. An interview with 8 open-ended questions was conducted. First, all interviews were transcribed, summarized, categorized, and analyzed. Then, the derived themes were coded and analyzed through content analysis. The findings uncovered that about 80% of the participants leaned to participate in Traditional in-service class (class-based) since it had a great impact on teachers to develop and fortify their educational empowerment. Therefore, policymakers and educational centers should raise their awareness on the notion of teachers' empowerment while emphasizing on, at least, Traditional programs instead of the current E-learning and the blended ones.

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## Introduction

Educating is always considered the most crucial feature in each community and causes deep changes in the cultural, social, political, and economic life of human beings. Among them, teachers are of great importance to educational systems and can change societies in which they do duties perfectly. All educational systems require professionally developed staff; language education is no exception to this rule. Language teaching, like all sorts of teaching, is a lifelong, ongoing, ever-changing, and dynamic process in which teachers need to firmly believe that their competencies are never perfect; they should always do something “to upgrade their command of English, their literacies, and skills of teaching methodology and testing, their thinking, and philosophy of learning and their attitudes towards their profession” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 2).

The role of language teacher education programs and language teachers gained considerable momentum, generating an upsurge of research on the part of the scholars to explore the impact of teacher training courses on teachers' factors and other related areas to show the importance of such training in guiding teachers. Offices, companies, and educational centers should update themselves to keep their progression and try to help their employees to refresh their minds based on this rapid development. Educational centers like universities, schools, etc. try to help their officials and staff to update their knowledge and skills to develop them based on up-to-date technologies and rapid growth. One acceptable way by these staff is through in-service training programs. In-service training programs are recognized as a basic component in improving the education process among teachers and staff. These programs, in any form, help any employee to develop and to refresh his mind and to expand and empower some personal factors such as motivation, innovation and creativity, and self-efficacy. These factors could be encapsulated within the 'empowerment' term.

Shirvani et al. (2016) mentioned that (staff) empowerment is one of the most effective strategies for optimum use of their potentials and abilities to achieve organizational goals. Bolin (1989, p. 82) states that **teacher empowerment** is defined as investing teachers with the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and to exercise professional judgment about what and how to teach. To follow the definition, administrators must be active in providing experiences for all teachers to grow as leaders and to be effective members of their society. Additionally, one interesting study done by De Jong (2012) pointed that by empowering our teachers, we can enhance teachers' innovation and creativity to develop new knowledge, beliefs, and skills.

But, how can we help our teachers to develop their empowerment to be effective members in changing societies and even in changing themselves? The rational answer for the question is through in-service programs held in every educational center. In this paper, we want to elaborate on and discuss these programs.

In-service education allows for such activities that may include seminars, workshops, conferences, classes, exhibitions, etc. that are designed to develop and improve employees in an organization from the initial employment stage to retirement. From the foregoing, it

becomes imperative that every attention should be devoted to the in-service education of teachers to promote their professional growth and development (Osamwonyi, 2016).

Ganjinia et al. (2013) researched to examine the impact of in-service training on employees' empowerment to be identified as an effective way in-service training has. The study showed that there was a significant relationship between in-service training and feelings of competence, feelings of efficacy, feelings of meaning, feelings of trust, and feelings of organizing self and finally there was a significant relationship between in-service training and empowerment.

While changing and developing in every field need advanced technologies and modern approaches in the area of education, instruction necessitates in-service as well as pre-service training in teacher education centers. Empowerment, whether through in-service training programs or any other forms, familiarizes employees especially teachers with new knowledge and assists them to expand their motivations, innovation and creativity, and self-efficacy. Nowadays, the current in-service program- e-learning- announced itself as a pioneer in the field of technological language teaching and learning. In contrast, most teachers claimed that this program could not help them to meet their needs regarding expanding their motivation, self-efficacy, and innovation. They wished to go back to the previous mood of in-service training- class-based- since it helped them to catch their goals and satisfy themselves to meet their colleagues during the session. In addition, other teachers lent to take part in both forms of the programs- e-learning classes and the traditional ones- to catch their ends. Some studies (Alfaidi & Elhassan, 2020) claimed that traditional in-service programs or generally in-service training just developed one aspect of teachers' knowledge, while others (Öztürk, M. 2019) announced that these classes could cause significant changes both in the teachers' perceptions, awareness, and practices.

Hence, the current study, however, wanted to explore the gap and tried to find the distance, to cover, and to fill this gap. Meanwhile, its purpose(s) was to illustrate different viewpoints regarding the programs and showed the right path for language teachers to follow based on their colleagues' viewpoints. Therefore, more studies needed to be conducted in this area so that we could find more valid findings of the present study and see the impact of these programs on teachers' empowerment concerning their innovation and self-efficacy. These studies will hone our understanding of how nonnative EFL teachers can act more effectively in educational settings and even in their life.

### **Literature review**

Educational experts have suggested in-service training programs for the language teachers- novice or experienced - guide and train them, and follow updated approaches and techniques in their teaching. As such, in-service training has offered one of the most basic paths to the development and expansion of instruction. It includes the goal and content, the training process, and the situation. Accordingly, the primary purpose of in-service training is to enable instructors to get a new understanding and instructional skills. It pays attention to creating learning environments that enable instructors to develop their effectiveness in the classroom. It helps language teachers' viewpoints to expand and extend the quality of their work. Generally, teachers have experienced different in-service programs based on their needs and

goals. Some have experienced traditional in-service programs, others e-learning programs, and the rest have experienced both the class-based and the e-learning ones.

In this aspect, the most usual in-service programs are classroom-based agendas or traditional methods in which language teachers should attend the class. In such classes, language teachers should bear the burden of long-distance difficulties and spend much time attending the classes to get some new skills and knowledge to refresh their minds and change their behaviors so that new learning points would take place. These traditional methods of professional development have included workshops, learning communities, and college classes at a basic level where a trainer provides knowledge taken from textbooks in the form of lectures. Most of the traditional professional development opportunities occur locally not nationally. Working in local communities allows teachers to address the professional norms of practice for the area in which they practice, and allows them to form more appropriate policies.

The other type of in-service training is known as E-learning. The development of high-speed internet access has helped to bring about the new virtual learning environment in which students can learn even when they are thousands of miles away (and in different time zone) from a teacher or other classmates (Harmer, 2007). Accordingly, this high-speed development is called 'Digital Literacy' which is defined by Gilster (1997) as the usage and comprehension of information in the digital age. This literacy /training usually is used not only for language teachers in the system of education but for any employee who works and serves in companies. Such programs have become the most widely used learning channel over the past decades. E-learning is a relatively thoughtful solution to the present and future challenges of educational systems. Meanwhile, any distance education program must cultivate in teachers the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to succeed in a world that increasingly demands creative workers, collaborative problem solvers, and critical thinkers.

Accordingly, some studies have been done to show the impact of such programs on learners' knowledge, perception, and many other personal factors. Alfaidi and Elhassan (2020) conducted a study regarding the role of in-service training programs in teachers' development. They wonderfully indicated that most in-service training programs focused on a single side of teachers' development related to the teachers' specialization or profession. In addition, these programs did not contribute to the teachers' personal and educational needs. However, the present study claimed that in-service training programs should not focus on a single side of teacher development, but it should focus on the overall take into consideration the teachers' personal and educational needs. To make these programs more effective, they should be diverse and continuing. On the contrary, Öztürk (2019) claimed that in-service classes like traditional ones could change significantly in the teachers' perceptions, awareness, and practices, and the organization, in particular, the place and time of training sessions could be improved.

In Iran, this phenomenon- in-service training- in any form, has been considered as an integral part of language teaching and learning and has effective roles in EFL teachers' empowerment included self-efficacy, creativity and innovation, and motivation. At any level, EFL teachers have wished to have in-service training to update their knowledge along with passing the time. To have a narrow view regarding the role of in-service programs on teachers' variables- self-efficacy, creativity and innovation, and motivation, many studies had

investigated this role in Iran. To exemplify the hints, Ganjinia et al. (2013) performed a study in Gilan and tried to examine the impact of in-service training on electrical employees' empowerment. They sought to identify some effective ways of in-service training on employees' empowerment. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between in-service training and feelings of competence, feelings of efficacy, feelings of meaning, feelings of trust, and feelings of organizing self, and finally between in-service training and empowerment. Fathi Vajargah (1997) emphasized that in-service training improved the systematic and continuous staffing of knowledge, skills, and behaviors. It would help the welfare and organization of their service. Some scholars such as Amadi (2013) and Zanzanizadeh (2007) pointed that in-service training is considered as a workshop for employed professionals, paraprofessionals, and other practitioners to acquire new knowledge, better methods, etc. for improving their skills toward more effective, efficient, and competent rendering of service in various fields and resulted in employees increase in function.

As such, the current research tried to show this reality that in-service training in any form was a basic phenomenon and many factors and variables might be involved in its mechanism to have an impact on EFL teachers' factors. The first variable involved in this study was the EFL teachers' self-efficacy that might change its direction concerning the impacts of in-service training, either by Traditional training, E-Learning, or both of the programs. Empirical studies from different contexts had revealed that teachers who took part in such programs modified and adopted their beliefs about capabilities in certain areas or related to certain tasks in an attempt to fulfill the requirements needed for taking the in-service programs and to improve their capabilities to be as an effective person in their society and help their learners to change their beliefs regarding EFL. (Tzivinikou, 2015; Woolfolk et al., 2003).

The second variable investigated in the present study was EFL teachers' creativity and innovation, which could be considered as technical terms in educational policy and planning. They resulted from deliberate efforts that were perceived as a new thought, that were intended to bring about improvements, and that had the potential for diffusion (Murray & Christison, 2012). It was also discussed that teachers' sense of these terms resulted from the ongoing interaction between in-service training and their empowerment manifests itself in teachers' creativity and innovation, self-efficacy, and change in the level of motivation.

Regarding the previous studies, the reasons for emphasizing such factors in this research were as follow: EFL teachers with high efficacy tend to do experiments with methods of teaching to meet their students' needs, spend more time planning, persist longer with students who struggle, and promote achievement, efficacy, and motivation in their student. So, by taking part in such programs, EFL teachers would believe more in their abilities which can be expanded and enforced via the programs (Tzivinikou, 2015). Regarding innovation and creativity, it would be pointed that such programs would make EFL teachers use their knowledge of the subject matter, teaching, learning, and technology to empower their experiences resulted in expanding students' learning, creativity, and innovation in both face-to-face and virtual environments (Mirrezaei et al. 2018; Woolfolk et al., 2003). Khodayi and Kargaran (2016) indicated that in-service training could be used to empower employees/staff resulted in developing their factors enhanced through this training while doing their duty as a

staff. Additionally, EFL teachers demonstrated creative thinking, constructed knowledge, and developed innovative products and processes to guide themselves and eventually their students. EFL teachers could apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes, create original works as a means of personal or group expression, use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues. Under these studies, the present research aimed to investigate the possible effects of in-service training on EFL teachers' innovation and creativity, and self-efficacy.

So, the most prominent rationale behind running the present study was to attempt to compare and contrast types of in-service training programs- Traditional training, E-learning training, or the blended ones - in terms of their possible impacts on teacher empowerment (self-efficacy & innovation and creativity) in educational centers- schools- held in Iran. Besides, it aimed to suggest an effective differentiation among the programs for teachers and especially for policymakers who were responsible for programming and controlling these systems of education in Iran, virtually and physically. So, to respond to the existing needs in the literature and in an attempt to gain new insight to identify whether there was a difference in the EFL teachers' perceptions toward training modality effectiveness and whether there were differences in the perception of the training programs among EFL teachers, the current study qualitatively addressed the following research questions:

1. How do in-service traditional and e-learning training improve EFL teachers' self-efficacy during their instruction?
2. How do EFL teachers expand and promote their innovation and creativity by taking part in in-service traditional and e-learning training?

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

This study was carried out with Iranian teachers who had more than 10 years of experience in language teaching. Their age ranged from 30 to 50 with an average age of 40. They all taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the first and the second level of state/public high schools in main cities in Khuzestan Province-Iran- including Shush Daniel, Dezful, Andimesk, Ahvaz, Abadan, and Shushtar with BA and MA degrees in TEFL. To meet the aim of the study, 30 EFL teachers including both genders – related to their experience in in-service programs- as a convenience sampling were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview session. They expressed their inner viewpoints as the main sources of data gathering for the current study.

### **Instruments**

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, a semi-structured interview was applied. Generally, an interview is one of the most widely used and basic methods for obtaining qualitative data. It is used to gather data from participants about their opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations in their own words. In this study, a semi-structured interview was conducted because in this type of interview one used a written list of questions as a guide, while still having the freedom to digress and probe for more information (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The interview consisted of two sections. The first section was intended to gather previous educational information about the participants. It helped the researcher to get information about the

interviewees' length of teaching experience, engagement in the types of in-service programs, and the participants' experiences regarding the programs. The second step was comprised of eight open-ended questions. The questions were examined the applicability of in-service programs to see their reflection regarding the mentioned variables. The questions for the interview were developed by the researcher and the items were examined and reexamined by an expert holding Ph.D. in the field of TEFL and four related EFL experts teaching in Payame Noor University with an M.A degree in TEFL to reexamine the language, content of the questions, the effectiveness of the questions, and to see if it was necessary to be modified. The translated version of the interview was validated through checking its content and language by three language teachers and they all agreed upon the content and form of the translated version of the interview items to catch the aim of the study. Each interview session lasted approximately between 25-30 mints.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Based on the purpose(s) of the study, more than 20 questions related to the variability-creativity, and self-efficacy- were prepared by the researcher. The questions were examined by an expert holding Ph.D. in the field of TEFL and four related EFL experts teaching in payame Noor University with M.A degree in TEFL to reexamine the language, content of the questions, the effectiveness of the questions, and to see if it was necessary to be modified. Then, 8 questions were chosen and finalized as interview questions. Through convenience sampling and the related fields of in-service programs, 30 EFL instructors were selected and interviewed. The interviewees were divided into three groups of 10 (A, B, and C) based on the experience of participants in training programs. The translated version of the interview was validated through checking its content and language by three language teachers and they all agreed upon the content and form of the translated version of the interview items to catch the aim of the study. Based on the opinion of the interviewees the language was chosen, that is, in case the interviewee was not comfortable with English as the language of the interview, Persian equivalence was used, instead. All interviews were recorded digitally for further analysis. The recordings were transcribed, summarized, analyzed, and categorized based on the recurrent patterns to provide a rich response to each qualitative research question. Then, because of the current pandemic worldwide Coronavirus period, interview sessions were conducted through phone, video chat, E-mail, and other electronic social networks such as Whats app, Telegram, etc. Each interview session lasted approximately between 25-30 min. While interviewing, the researcher noticed the related main points as basic hints to verify and use the questions for the following phase (content analysis) in the coming interviews.

It is good to be mentioned that, in this study, the researcher followed Dornyei's (2007) guideline and also extracted some steps based on Maykut & Morehouse's (1994) rules which completely indicated the ways of conducting an interview. Generally, the guidelines started from how to prepare an interview, sequence of questions, and wording of the question to carrying out an interview. Thus, during the interview sessions, the issues concerning the EFL teachers' empowerment as a result of being trained in in-service programs were fully talked upon.

### **Data Analysis**

Regarding the questions and the purpose(s) of the current study, a comprehensive content analysis was carried out to extract the main related words and phrases used by the participants via the interview sessions. Content analysis (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994) was the basic method of analyzing the interviews by which the transcripts were broken into smaller units for coding. The analysis of the qualitative data is a process that brings order to the data by organizing content into patterns, categories, and descriptive units (Patton, 1988).

As mentioned before, the interviews were recorded and transcribed during the current Covid-19 period which encompassed the entire world. So, the length of the interviews taken through electronic devices was between 25 and 30 minutes. Besides observing Dornyei's (2007) guidelines considering conducting an interview, the researcher used the constant comparative method of data analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), which involved a four-step procedure:

1. Inductive category coding and the simultaneous comparison of units of meaning across categories
2. Refinement of categories
3. Exploration of relationships and patterns across categories
4. Integration of data that yield an understanding of the people and setting being studied (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.134)

Accordingly, all interviews data were firstly examined and checked by words, phrases, sentences, and chunks. Secondly, they were labeled and coded based on their frequency of occurrence and importance used by the interviewee during the interview. Thirdly, several codes/themes were brought together, and their degree of relevance was identified along with their theme. Then, the most important categories or themes were discovered and labeled/underlined related to the purpose(s) of the current study. In addition, the likely connection between them was investigated, the repetitive words or labels were omitted, the extracted categories were arranged, and their summaries were drawn by data display. The emerging themes were compressed to the most important categories later in the course of the analysis, based on their relevance to the research topic and questions. Finally, salient unearthed categories were presented and interpreted as unbiased as possible by the researcher.

## Results

Usually, Self-efficacy refers to our beliefs about capabilities in certain areas or related to certain tasks (William & Burden, 1997). Self-efficacy involves a prediction about capabilities specific to particular tasks. It discusses whether you can do the task, not how well you do it compared to another person. The sources of self-efficacy, according to Bandura, are mastery experience, physiological and emotional arousal, vicarious experiences, and social experiences (Woolfolk et al., 2003).

Based on the analyses described above, this study was to explore which factor helped the teachers empower their language learning and teaching. What follows were the main factors that the Iranian language teachers tried to show the role of each program on their educational empowerment. The following factors related to self-efficacy:



### *Trusting on progression*

What the participant teachers revealed about the most enjoyable thing they found in such classes was their trust in progression. They mentioned that they saw themselves as learners and this was the source of their passion for the profession.

In response to the question about the role of the in-service programs on their self-efficacy, most of the interviewees agreed that the Traditional classes had a greater impact on their abilities than the other classes (E-learning & the two). Such classes could help them to trust in their progression from the first step coming into the classes to the end. The majority of the teacher (70%) claimed that through taking part in class-based programs, they could find some touchable promotion in their teaching methodology. They always desired to have such classes announced by educational centers. They expressed that they could expand their trust in progression via interaction with other colleagues within the Traditional class and exchange their knowledge. They added that we could not have such opportunity and progression in other classes (E-learning & the two). See table1.

### *Valuing teaching and learning*

Teaching and learning are usually two main factors which interwoven with every language teacher. Learning is the most interesting thing and every teacher is interested in learning because he could learn something new from other instructors and even their learners. Hence, via analyzing teachers' responses to the question related to self-efficacy, they expressed that Traditional classes, in comparison with the two classes, could help them to open a new wide horizon toward teaching and learning. Through content analysis, 90% of the teachers expressed that Traditional classes created a very

Flexible environment, therefore teachers created democratic societies/environments in which every language learner and the instructor could share his idea via discussion and finally reach a rational conclusion regarding the purpose(s) of the session. They could understand religion and cultural differences and lifestyles among them which lent to respect each other. In other classes (e-learning & the blended ones), these categories ranged from 40% to 70%. See table1

### *Expressing freely in society & cooperating with teachers and parents*

While the researcher was analyzing the contents of the first interviewees related to the Traditional classes, he noticed that about (7 out of 10, 70%) believed that such classes could help them to expand and enforce their capabilities in societies. In such classes, the teachers could express their viewpoints freely in the class and they could receive real feedback to check their responses in the subject matter. They could feel and touch a type of cooperation among themselves and it facilitated the path to communicate freely with more motivation and excitement. Again, they expressed that there was a sense of working together within the school and even out of the school in society. This caused them to work with students and created a friendly situation among their learners and even with learners' parents. 90% of the respondents indicated that Traditional classes gave them more opportunities to engage with learners' parents

than the other two classes. On the contrary, a minority of respondents liked to take part in E-learning classes, and the two classes (ranged from 30% to 60%). See table1

### ***Managing class, Increasing qualifications, and performance***

One of the features of a qualified teacher is to control and manage a class. This needs to have a lot of experience and cooperation with other colleagues to learn mutually how to manage classes. Classroom management means performance and being active within a class. Without sharing knowledge with other colleagues, teachers could not exchange the data they learn and apply it in their teaching processes. So, based on the content analysis, most teachers (80%) showed that through class-based in-service programs they could get the points and could direct their classes well. Most of the teachers indicated that through such classes; we could learn how to manage our classroom in the schools and what type of techniques we should use to cope and cooperate with our students. So, most teachers (80%) expressed that most Traditional classes gave them a good chance to increase their performance and increase their qualification as EFL teachers. See table1

To confirm the above factors, some of the teachers' statements are presented here:

#### **Teacher#3:**

*In class-based classes, we are provided with lots of exercises, sample questions discussion, interactions, and many other activities. As a result, we can feel happy and communicate with each other. So, the classes become valuable and interesting and we can believe in our abilities.*

#### **Teacher#6:**

*Traditional classes usually force us to cooperate with students and even with their parents since we learn such interactions within the classes. The professor usually teaches and guides us on how to express our views freely and with confidence and how to manage the classroom system. I love such classes because I feel at home among other EFL teachers. (Translated by the researcher)*

In addition, the content analysis of the second group of our research- E-learning training- showed that 4 of 10-40% -of teachers indicated positively toward such classes. They declared that such a class could enforce teachers to be effective members within the teaching process and they valued their duty through engaging in these classes. Somehow, they cooperated when all the facilities were available. They expressed that such classes by themselves could expand teachers' knowledge and valued their progression. Hence, the majority of them (6 out of 10-60%) expressed that there were little cooperation and interaction with other teachers since they could only load some clips and PDF sources to listen to and read by themselves without any interaction with others. they were not able to show their abilities as language teachers for the presenters how to direct a class except through taking some tests and this was the end of the period. There was no feedback, no discussion, no interaction, no enforcement to occur to value the course, and other pitfalls were seen via analyzing the contents of such group.

Some of the claims are presented in the following part:

**Teacher#1:**

*As a teacher, you do not have enough authority to make decisions about what to do and how to cooperate with other teachers. The contents are available through the net and you are like a robot to accept what has been sent to you. You follow the rules step by step if you wanted to be successful and get a good mark. Such classes are interested in me although I must obey the rules.*

**Teacher#8:**

*Such classes need a lot of patients and endurance since the net usually is weak and it makes me angry and this had a bad effect on my self-efficacy. I want to learn some new knowledge and expand my experiences and abilities through interaction with other teachers; unfortunately, such classes do not provide such expectations.*

In comparison with others, half of the teachers (5 out of 10-50%) expressed that Traditional classes and E-learning ones were necessary for each teacher during the teaching and learning processes. These classes could increase teachers' qualifications and performances if they ran along with each other. Mostly, the teachers lent to Traditional ones although they indicated the E-learning ones complicated the other class -Tradition. Via analyzing the contents, we observed that most teachers indicated that if all the electronic devices were available and had some diversity within the contents and the clips, the Traditional and E-learning would be useful and effective. If not, the qualifications would be low and this caused the teacher to be less effective and less valued regarding teaching methodology.

To elaborate, some excerpts are used here:

**Teacher#3:**

*Most of the different techniques and methods to teach English can be found in such classes. But what matters is that I'm almost selective when it comes to using them. I try to make a selection between these two classes and use them appropriately and in different contexts. I strongly believe in taking part in Traditional classes because I feel happy and can express my feelings freely. I can trust in my progression since the two classes complete each other. (Translated by the researcher)*

**Teacher#6:**

*I think the Class-based context is more interesting than the E-learning one, but as a matter of fact, the two classes are very useful if all devices and tools are provided by educational centers. E-learning class usually controls us not to do, just do what the presenters say via the clips or videos. Within the two classes, I cannot trust my abilities and cannot express my viewpoints freely because each one has some advantages and disadvantages. I don't know what procedures I should use to be an effective teacher! (Translated by the researcher)*

In sum, within the self-efficacy, the teachers indicated some factors(themes) which were presented in the following chart, each of which with frequency and percent.

**Table 1.** Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy in-service training classes

Main factors	Traditional Cl.		E-Learning Cl. Tr. & E-learning Cl.		Tr. & E-learning Cl.	
	Frequency	percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Trusting on progression	7	70%	5	50%	6	60%
Valuing teaching and learning	9	90%	4	40%	7	70%
Expressing freely in society	9	90%	3	30%	6	60%
Managing class	8	80%	4	40%	5	50%
Cooperating with teachers and parents	9	90%	3	30%	6	60%
Increasing qualifications and performance	8	80%	4	40%	6	60%

Again, based on the analyses, what follows were the main factors that the Iranian language teachers tried to show the role of each program on their educational empowerment. The factors related to innovation and creativity:

#### *Having new challenge at work, facing a new problem, and taking a new risk*

Generally, teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task, particularly when it is done in places where English serves a very limited purpose and has a few native speakers. When a non-native speaker wanted to learn a new language, he faced many problems and should challenge well, to cope with a problem. One solution to such a problem is taking a risk. Taking a risk which is an internal factor is contributing factor to make language learning and teaching more successful, interesting, and wondering. This factor drives learners to be able to gamble a bit, to be willing to try out hunches about the language, and take the risk of being wrong. Through content analysis of the teachers' responses, 90% of the teachers expressed that via Traditional classes; they could be gambit and make more trail and errors than the other two classes. They added that they were more inclined to take risks in using the FL in class. They might take risks more easily to interact with teachers and native speakers

Analyzing the responses of the participants revealed that more than half of them reported that they believed in the Traditional in-service class since it caused them to be active practically and to be as a researcher during their teaching methodology. They indicated that such a class gave them a chance to attend with the previous study because most of the time the presenter (professor) wanted them to involve in language teaching and learning and asked them to present some new ideas within the class. Such classes helped them to take some risks in their work to be able to find some new ways for problem solutions and presenting. Besides, the teachers declared that they tried to face new problems to find new solutions.

Besides, all respondents expressed that Traditional classes had a positive effect on their innovation and creativity since there was a close connection with the presenter and other

teachers coming from different long distances. These situations imposed the teachers to be active and to face new challenges at work to search and create some new ideas to be discussed and presented within educational settings.

### *Involving in language learning & affecting one's creativity and innovation*

Interaction usually refers to a type of conversation between instructor and learners as well as among learners in which active participation and learning of the group become vital. This conversation is a part of the sociocultural activity of a society. Hence, by content analysis of the current study, most participants (90%) expressed that this mutual interaction and cooperation was experienced through Traditional in-service programs rather than the E-learning (50%) and the two classes (60%). Also, they indicated that through such a situation, they could practice interactive learning and teaching by:

- classroom discussions to develop a conceptual understanding based on a close reading of text materials/ some research papers/workshops
- individual and group presentation in real situations
- debates and discussions mutually
- interaction face-to-face
- group learning and sharing knowledge
- peer learning
- workshops/seminars/ project work/writing some experiences

They added that through such activities and interactions, they could involve their mind in different natural situations. As a result, the above techniques caused them to be innovators and creators. See figures 1

To elaborate, some excerpts are presented here:

#### **Teacher#4:**

*When I want to attend the class, I should be ready for any question asked by the presenter/other teachers. Discussion is one of the basic features of this class among teachers and this makes them and me be ready and find some new solutions for discussing. (Translated by the researcher)*

#### **Teacher#7:**

*Creativity and innovations are key factors that every language teacher should arm with. Via such classes, we could have peer and group learning. These cause us to have self-study and try to present some seminars and project work.*

The content analysis of the second group- E-learning- showed that less than half of the teachers (4 out 10-40%) agreed that such classes had a positive effect on their creativity and innovation within their duty as EFL teachers. In some cases, where all the electronic facilities were available and the net was ok, we could interact just by headphones and found some solutions for the discussed problems. But, most of them claimed that we didn't have any close relationship with each other. We just listened to a presenter via some loaded clips and PDFs, without any connection, posing a question, or any other classwork to have close relationships

with other teachers. They added that innovation needed some practice, some projects, some peer learning activities, some group presentations, and other activities. Unfortunately, such classes didn't provide such requirements.

Some of the claims are presented in the following part:

**Teacher#1:**

*E-learning classes need a lot of practice and language teachers should know how to work with nets and educational websites. I just study the provided and available resources sent by some educational centers. I should follow the rules and the routes; therefore, there is no creativity and innovation. In fact, I should obey what the loaded clips are to order. (Translated by the researcher)*

**Teacher#3:**

*I don't meet most of my needs by taking part in the E-learning in-service training. They last for a long time to be covered and taught by some clips and other documents. I should study and follow the rules step by step. There is no clear shortcut to innovate and create a new way to finish and enjoy the process. There is no peer learning and sharing our knowledge in such classes. Such classes may be useful to save our time and punctuate the time. But, in general, they are not good for me. (Translated by the researcher)*

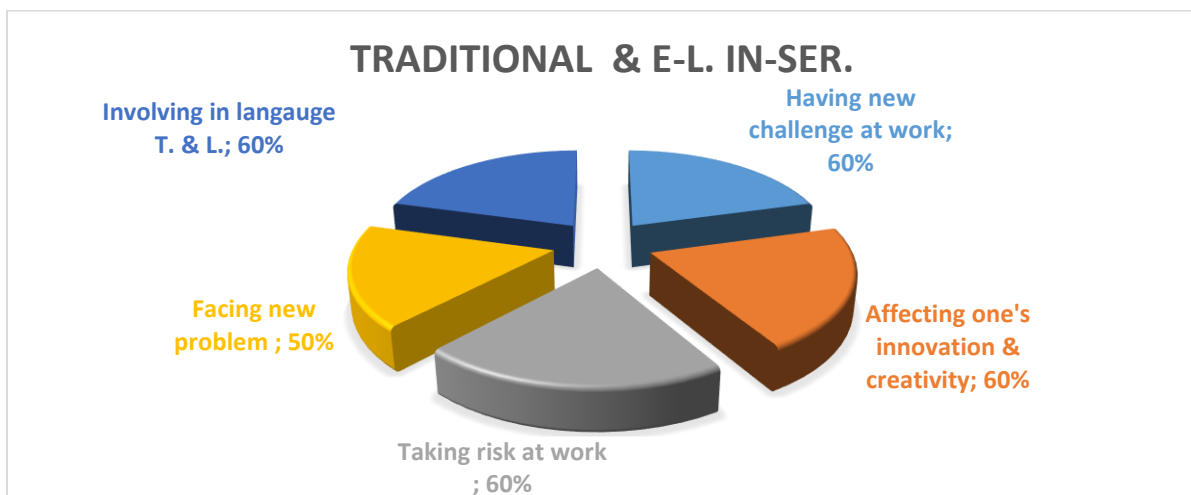
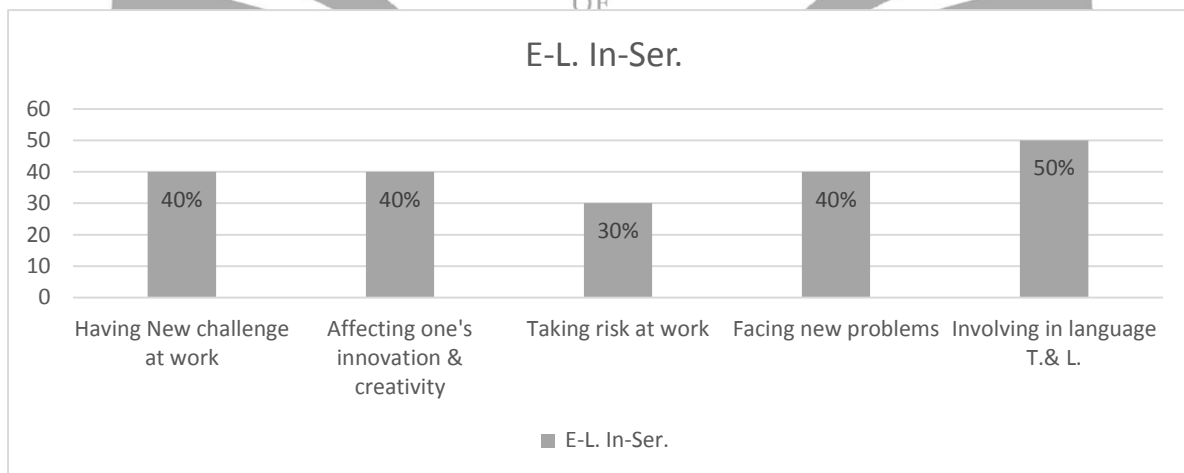
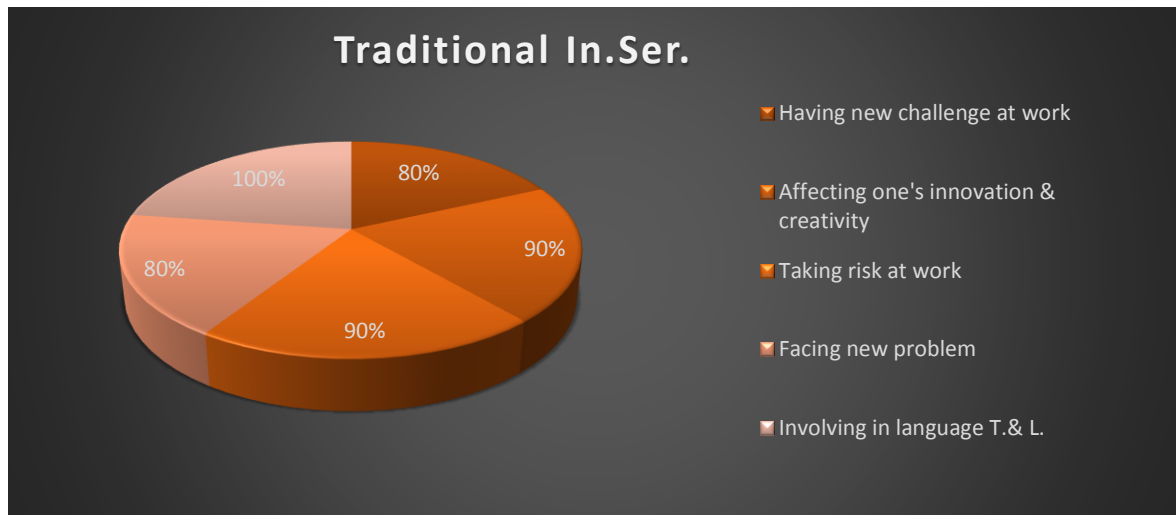
Through analyzing the content analysis of the third group- those who took part in Traditional and E-learning classes- it was indicated that most of the teachers (6 out of 10-60%) preferred Traditional classes to E-learning ones. However, they claimed that through taking part in both classes, we could experience many new ways and learn a lot. Most of the time, we could have somehow peer learning and group learning, but the class-based ones were more tangible classes to catch our plan than the E-learning ones. Most of the teachers (6 out of 10-60%) agreed that the two classes, side by side, could help us to create and find some new ways for discussing and sharing our knowledge, both practically and virtually, but it made us tired and frustrated.

One excerpt is presented in the following part:

**Teacher#1:**

*I, as an English language teacher, during 24 years of experience in learning, always take part in Traditional in-service training classes and enjoy meeting our colleagues and sharing our knowledge. Recently, we have seen a new type of in-service class have appeared. I also participate in such classes, but I see no interpretation of my activities, no group presentation, no peer correction, no new personal way of teaching, and these make me bored and unhappy. I experienced the two classes, but the two sometimes confused me about how to teach and what to do to be a creator teacher. (Translated by the researcher)*

Figures 1. Iranian EFL teachers' innovation and creativity in-service training classes



**Discussion**

The present mixed-methods and exploratory research tried to explore the effect of two known in-service training classes –Traditional and E-Learning- on developing teachers' empowerment in language teaching and learning.

Regarding the findings and the research questions on the role of in-service training classes on expanding EFL teachers' empowerment, there appeared an array of opinions in the interviews held with the 30 respondents. Analyzing the interview data through content analysis, it was indicated that the perception of Iranian EFL instructors about the impact of these classes on their developing empowerment was to a great extent positive as they maintained that their methodology and class behavior had been changed in teaching and learning settings. They specifically argued that their methodology and behaviors became in-service training-oriented since they had to take part in such classes to achieve most of their personal and educational purposes as language teachers.

The results showed that EFL teachers' attitudes were mostly correlated with the Traditional in-service training evaluated and reported in the study. About 80% of the teachers agreed that Traditional classes had more positive effects than the E-learning and the blended ones since through taking part in the class-based training, the teachers could develop all language skills and powers during their duty as a teacher. By taking part in class-based programs, language teachers could understand the inner meaning of communication, interaction, and a sense of cooperation and even appreciation. Although some of the teachers' time may be wasted because of commuting, they could interact mutually and enjoy the presentation. Meanwhile, they emphasized that Traditional classes helped them to expand their knowledge, meet their personal needs, fortify their belief in learning, and do well in their teaching methodology. This fact was also found in De Jong, O, 2012; Ganjnia et al. 2013; and Pettis, 2002. The current findings of the study were on the contrary of the studies claiming Traditional classes could change only one aspect of teachers' perceptions and awareness (Alfaidi & Elhassan, 2020). We saw that by Traditional classes, our teachers could expand their knowledge, perception, educational viewpoints, trust in their abilities, etc.

The findings also showed, somehow, a low positive relation between expanding educational empowerment and E-learning in-service programs despite development in the current e-learning programs held in different educational settings around the world, especially in the present Coronavirus period. The teachers expressed that E-learning classes were not real and natural ones since there was no real communication with each other and this caused the teachers to be uninterested and tired in their job. Every language teacher had some personal and educational aims in his/her language learning and teaching which such classes would not arm the teachers with such goals. Despite the worldwide progression in technological interaction and communication, these classes (E-learning) could not satisfy teachers' expectations from the points of psychological points, social manners, personal aims, interaction, and meeting their needs. Surly, as language teachers, we experienced these happenings through the current time (Covid-19). We had lost a lost chain from the point of emotional matters. We wanted to see our colleagues, friends, students, professors, and others completing our educational duties. In addition, some of the teachers expressed that they encountered some problems in using e-learning techniques: technical issues, such as software /hardware malfunctions and problems; individual and cultural issues, such as emotional barriers and incorrect expectations about online training; pedagogical and methodological issues such as the unsuitability of the method to the learning objectives; social and environmental issues, such as limited access to technology and time or organizational constraints. Thus, it would be necessary to work with these teachers



to help them not only to improve their language empowerment and sense of appreciation but also their awareness of the currently available tools and strategies that can help them to improve their teaching methods, practices, as well as motivation. The findings approved most of the scholars' statements such as David & Shortall, 2011; Gilavand, 2017; Hervie & Winful, 2018; Pettis, 2002.

Meanwhile, the findings in the current exploratory study revealed that the majority of EFL teachers expressed they wanted to involve and engage in educational situations naturally not virtually. By their behaviors, EFL instructors indirectly showed that teaching means the process of meeting and attending to people's needs, experiences and feelings, and making specific interventions to help them learn particular things. So, they wanted to share their inner feelings and emotional willingness with their colleagues. Teachers were usually come together to teach, to learn, to assess their learners, and to add in some other things around the sort of outcomes they want to see. Regarding these, based on the participants' responses, Traditional classes could assist them to meet their inner needs and to help their learners to enhance their motivation, interests, competition, satisfaction, abilities, and self-efficacy in comparison with the other classes held by educational settings, namely E-learning and the blended in-service programs. The results could go in line with studies such as Ciesielkiewicz & Nocito, 2018; Fathi Vajargah, 1997; Ganjinia et al, 2013; Murray & Christison, 2012; Rod, 2008; Tzivinikou, 2015; Woolfolk et al., 2003. In contrast, based on a study done by Alfaidi and Elhassan (2020) revealed that most in-service training programs focused on a single side of teachers' development related to the teachers' specialization or profession. Such programs just consider one feature of instructors' progression without paying attention to other inner abilities of language teachers to be flourished through such program.

Besides the above results, the findings of the study indicated- in comparison with the other two classes (E-learning & the blended learning)- that most of the participants-80%- lent to Traditional classes because of affecting on their innovation and creativity. Such classes imposed the teachers to be active and to face new challenges at work to search and create some new ideas. Furthermore, via taking part in such situations, the teachers could have group learning, peer learning, doing some workshops/seminars/ projects work/writing some experiences to share. Although other classes, to some extent, may help them to meet their needs, they mostly tended to take part in class-based programs. Among the studies that had shown the usefulness of such in-service classes to help teachers be creative and innovative, we could refer to Ganjinia, H., Gilaninia, Sh., & Reza, P. M. S, 2013; Murray & Christison, 2012.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

All in all, the findings obtained from the current qualitative research questions indicated the importance and the necessity of in-service programs in language learning centers. These classes, in any form, could help language teachers to verify and update their knowledge to be effective teachers although most of the teachers preferred the Traditional class over the E-learning one and the two. To maximize teachers' knowledge, innovation, self-efficacy, and many other personal factors, every novice teacher and even experienced ones should take part in such classes. Thus, state and private educational centers should know this importance and necessity in language base and do their best to perform and to provide main facilities for

providing and conducting these classes. In addition, we can claim that well planned in-service education programs with clearly defined objectives growth and improvement of instruction and leadership skills should be provided to catch the educational targets, in-service education should be considered as part of institutional or organizational activities designed by the government for employees development and innovation, organizers of in-service education should pay attention to the job-related tasks that are real, practical oriented and relevant to the participants, and attempts should be directed to help the subjects to work in small groups and learn from each other rather than focusing on information dissemination that is not applicable in a practical classroom setting or environment.

The findings of the present study will be benefited curriculum planners, teachers, and any employees by coming up with practical insights about the teaching/learning through the modes. The findings could assist the teacher training institutions and universities to improve practice and guide policymakers in coming up with available in-service training programs for their staff. Besides, it should be noted that the search to explore answers to how the instruction might influence the ecology of the classroom is beyond the scope of this study, as it exclusively makes an effort to investigate and examine the severity of such impacts on teachers' empowerment in terms of creativity and innovation, motivation and self-efficacy. Meanwhile, the current study will probably be helpful research in Iran regarding in-service programs. The least, but not the last, this type of study, with the comparison between the three in-service training programs, has barely been done and even not been done, reported, and practiced in such a comprehensive comparison in Iran.

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