



**International  
Journal of Society, Culture & Language  
IJSCL**

Journal homepage: [www.ijscL.net](http://www.ijscL.net)  
ISSN 2323-2210 (online)

## **EFL Teachers' Identity Construction through a Reflection Consciousness-Raising Interactive Workshop**

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### **ARTICLE HISTORY:**

Received June 2019

Received in revised form August 2019

Accepted August 2019

Available online September 2019

### **KEYWORDS:**

Reflective teaching

Reflective journal writing

Consciousness-raising interactive workshop

Iranian EFL teachers

Professional identity construction

### **Abstract**

As part of a large-scale project, the current qualitative study investigated the possible contribution of a consciousness-raising interactive workshop (as a form of professional development activity) to 30 (22 female and 8 male) Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity construction. Thirty Iranian EFL teachers were asked to write two reflective journals (one individually and one collectively) before and two others after they attended an eight-session interactive workshop on Reflective Journal Writing (RJW). The workshop aimed at raising their consciousness of RJW based on the framework proposed by Richards (1995) and the journal content guide developed by Soodmand Afshar (in press). Subsequently, in order to demonstrate how the consciousness-raising interactive workshop contributed to the participants' professional identity construction, interviews were conducted with them. The data collected were analyzed through the grounded-theory approach and qualitative content analysis. The results indicated that the workshop contributed to the participants' professional identity construction in various ways which are discussed at length in the paper.

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## 1. Introduction

The current educational system demands teachers' leading roles for which teachers' active collaboration is of crucial importance. Teachers should thus go beyond isolation in their profession and cooperate with other colleagues (Mitchell, 1997) to grow professionally and to construct their professional identity. Such active co-operations and interactions on the side of teachers form social and cultural structures in and outside the classroom environment. In addition, since reflection means "peeling back the layers of our own daily work, looking under the surface of our own teaching", and "looking at the wider contexts that affect our teaching— issues of social justice, of school structure, of leadership" (McEntee, 2003, p. XIII), reflection in general, and Reflective Journal Writing (RJW) in particular, can be considered as tools for teachers' collaboration in their professional community.

What individuals believe and how they think in their professional realms is shaped by the help of structures formed through collaboration (Wertsch, Tulviste, & Hagstrom, 1993). To put it simply, what teachers believe and how they think in their professional contexts could be interpreted as *professional identity*, which refers to the beliefs that teachers hold about themselves as teachers and about their colleagues (Mitchell, 1997).

Therefore, there is a mutual relationship between teachers' professional identity and their participation in professional communities. That is, on the one hand, participation in different communities seems to be the source of professional identity construction (Wenger, 1998). On the other hand, teachers' professional identity construction seems to be widely influential in their willingness to participate in collaborative activities. In other words, unless teachers recognize their colleagues' professional integrity, they will not collaborate with them (Mitchell, 1997).

Moreover, in an interconnected global world (Gee, 2001), teachers interpret these cooperative relations differently in order to model the nature of their teaching which might lead to a profound understanding or awareness of their professional identity (Carter & Doyle, 1996). It is worthwhile to add that teachers need a tool to

collaborate and become aware of what is going on in their professions. It is RJW, as a collaborative tool (Vásquez, 2011), which provides an opportunity for teachers to cooperate with each other in their professional community.

Education is recently believed to link the smallest unit (i.e., class) to the broadest unit (i.e., society). At both narrowest and broadest levels, teachers engage in different activities such as social interaction wherein their identity is constructed via their social involvement and their activity in language systems (Cross & Gearon, 2007). Also, at both levels, reflective teaching helps teachers improve in their profession (Lee, 2013) considering the pivotal role identity can play in teachers' daily practices (Yuan & Mak, 2018).

To facilitate this professional development, teachers need to participate in professional communities and take part in different professional activities such as peer coaching, action research, observation and reflection, case discussions, etc. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Reflection in general and RJW in particular, as indispensable parts to educational process, push teachers to develop into professionals (Edwards & Thomas, 2010) who inevitably carry with themselves professional identities. Also, reflection and RJW provide teachers with collaborative context, within which they are more likely to interact and try new techniques to catch up with the newest movements in their profession (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Accordingly, reflection acts as an imagination which facilitates teachers' creating novel images of themselves and of the world around them resorting to their pre-existing experiences (Xu & Connelly, 2009). In other words, this imagination or reflection contributes to the teachers' identity construction which justifies the need for the conduct of research on how teachers' professional identity construction takes place in a reflection-based context, especially after attending a consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection in general, and RJW in particular. The possible effectiveness of these seems to have been little investigated in the EFL context of Iran.

However, since analyzing the participants' RJW per se might not explicitly show what has

contributed to their professional identity construction (Muchnik-Rozanov & Tsybulsky, 2019), a semi-structured interview was developed and conducted to find out more about the possible contribution of the consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW to the teachers' professional identity construction. Therefore, to achieve the purpose of the current study, the following research question was postulated:

In what ways does the consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW contribute to Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity construction?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Reflection and RJW

Dewey (1933) defines reflection as thoughtful and consistent consideration of any belief or knowledge form with due attention paid to its supporting grounds and bases. Houston (1988, as cited in Ahmed, 2019) considers reflection as a process occurring in an interactive context wherein one's cognition and socio-cultural factors meet. Houston (1988) also highlights the role of reflection in writing (i.e., RJW), which is at the crux of the current study. Reflective journal, defined as "a sequential, dated chronicle of events and ideas", includes "the personal responses and reflections of the writer on those events and ideas" (Stevens & Cooper, 2009, pp. 5-7). Additionally, there is a self-understanding in RJW whereby teachers move from the level of action to the level of underlying beliefs. Such self-understanding shows the fundamental nature of reflectivity in addition to its broadness of content (Kelchtermans, 2009).

Moreover, as Shavit and Moshe (2019) maintain, RJW is a log in which teachers archive:

what they do and do not know; the extent of their understanding, weaknesses, and strengths; the knowledge and strategies they used; the goals they set for themselves and their pupils and the extent to which the goals were met; and their overall feelings regarding the lesson and their teaching methods. (p. 2)

In addition, as Shavit and Moshe (2019) maintain, RJW paves the way to think about the

problems faced in educational settings and the consequences thereof. In a nutshell, keeping RJW helps teachers follow their development (Silverman, 2005) in terms of different aspects of their profession over time and have a comprehensive picture of their professional roles in their community (Power, 2017).

### 2.2. Teachers' Professional Identity

Identity, a fundamental prerequisite for professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), has been tapped into in various fields such as philosophy, psychology, and teacher education (Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018), which shows its fundamental role in various disciplines and its complex construction. In other words, "identity is constructed in social, cultural, religious, and political contexts" (Atay & Ece, 2009, p. 25). Moreover, identity has different forms through which people understand the world around them and give feedback to it. Identity is thus comprised of several elements through which a person defines himself/herself (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), denoting its multi-dimensional nature. In addition, identity, as Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) maintain, is a dynamic and ongoing process which relates to one's interpretation of self and larger society's interpretation of self. In the same vein, Wenger (1998) holds that identity is (re)constructed through "tension between our investment in the various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (p. 188). These definitions and conceptualizations of identity clearly show its context- and culture-specific nature as well as its being dynamic and subject to change.

Identity has been looked upon or classified from different angles. Gee (2000), for instance, perceives identity from four various perspectives including nature-identity, discourse-identity, institution-identity and affinity-identity. Nature-identity is developed based on one's inherent nature, that is, "we are what we are primarily because of our natures" (Gee, 2000, p. 101). Discourse-identity is developed in the discourse of a rational individual. That is, "we are what we are primarily because of our individual accomplishments as they are interactionally recognized by others" (Gee, 2000, p. 101). Institution identity is recognized by authorities in institutions. In other words, "we are what we are primarily because of the

positions we occupy in society” (Gee, 2000, p. 101). Finally, affinity-identity is the one formed in affinity groups which entails “we are what we are because of the experiences we have had within certain sorts of affinity groups” (Gee, 2000, p. 101). Gee (2000) maintains that these four forms of identity are closely related to each other. What is important here is the third type of identity labeled as ‘I-identity’. I-identity refers to the institutional position whereby one can answer ‘who am I?’ in relation to the institution where one works. A university professor, for instance, is an institutional position whose source of power is neither nature nor his/her own ability; rather, this position comes from his/her institution.

As Wenger (1999) rightly maintains, identity is developed through participating in different day-to-day group activities. Such groups are called “*communities of practice*”. They are groups of people who have various issues in common, such as their problems, their passions about topics, and their expertise in an area. Wenger’s (1999) argument shows the dynamic nature of identity, because even groups with similar identities interact and trigger changes to their identities. Such interactions and changes which shape their identities in their professional realm is called professional identity, referring to the individuals’ images of themselves as professionals, as well as others’ expectations of them based on which their behaviors are shaped (Lasky, 2005).

Considering these contextual and individualistic factors, professional identity is primarily viewed as both a multifaceted phenomenon and a personal construct. Corroborating this, Goodson and Cole (1994) maintain that teachers’ professional identity development originates from both professional aspects and personal facets. Therefore, in forming a professional identity, not only the places in which the teachers work, but also time plays a part, simply because identity grows over time, which could be the answer to the question of ‘who am I at this moment?’ (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). The answer to this question brings about various interpretations in the given context (Gee, 2001). As a result, teachers’ professional identity is shaped through exposure to various discourses inside and outside the class (Johnson & Golombek, 2016)

alongside the dialogical interaction with teachers, educators, and peers (Alsup, 2006).

Additionally, language teachers as one of the *community practices* (Wenger, 1999) and language teaching as one of the disciplines in which identity is rooted, create important situations for identity negotiation and construction (Atay & Ece, 2009). This kind of identity, called ‘teacher professional identity’ refers to “how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). Being a part of professional self (Ball & Goodson, 1985), teacher professional identity seems to be shaped by school, institute or university where the teachers work (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005).

Moreover, teacher professional identity is defined as “how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others” (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). The issue of dynamism in this regard is referred to as *agency* in the related literature, which shows a change from a fixed deterministic individual to a dynamic intentional individual. Similarly, Abednia, Hovassapian, Teimournezhad, and Ghanbari (2013) point out that this dynamism is due to individuals’ interactions with others. In other words, when individuals interact with others of different identities, they would be influenced by such identities which cause a change in their own identities over time.

In addition, considering this dynamicity issue as stated beforehand, one can relate identity to the concept of self (Mead, 1934, cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). In social interactions, self can be developed by controlling our roles and other people’s roles (Mead, 1934, cited in Beijaard et al., 2004). Being a teacher thus means how the person sees herself/himself and how others see the person which shows that identity is a socially, culturally and contextually constructed phenomenon (Beijaard et al., 2004). Therefore, the dynamic nature of identity indicates teachers’ development in a long-lasting process addressing not only ‘who am I?’, but also ‘who do I want to be in the future?’ (Beijaard et al., 2004). It is believed that teachers’ professional identity includes some sub-identities which involve both individuals and their contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004). The sub-identities may be either in harmony or in contrast with other sub-identities, which in the case of teachers’ professional identity are in

contrast with each other (Beijaard et al., 2004). Therefore, teachers' professional identity is complex and fluctuates between their academic roles and their social roles (Willemse, Boei, & Pillen, 2016).

Thus, it could be argued that teaching should be understood through considering teachers' "individual, political, cultural, social and professional identities" (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). Moreover, teaching is deemed to be a complicated personal and social activity because it involves the whole person of the teacher (Cochran & Smith, 2005). Due to this fact, teachers build and rebuild the image of themselves; the image that shows who they are in their career. This constructed and reconstructed image is manifested through teachers' professional identity (Farrell, 2011). That is why teachers and their teaching are considered to be both *being and doing* in Barrett's (2008) terms. *Beings* refers to teachers' self-image of themselves, the person at a given time which is subject to change from time to time and from place to place (Gee, 2001). Gee (2001) holds that this identity is the person's core identity. *Doing*, on the other hand, refers to the act of teaching and what is available in existent educational contexts. To put it another way, *doing*, is teachers' identity in their professional context when they are teaching, which is manifested in their actual practices in classroom (Coldron & Smith, 1999). Both identities (i.e., being and doing) are intricate and multifaceted, which develop gradually as a result of the interactions provided by stakeholders in teachers' educational contexts (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994).

Accordingly, teachers construct their professional identity through their interactions with others (Schultz & Ravitch, 2013). In other words, constructing professional identity is not an isolated matter; rather, it embraces social contexts and interactions. In addition, teachers' professional identity construction is often deeply rooted in their relations and interactions with their students, colleagues, and families (Schultz & Ravitch, 2013) and within their community of practice (Wenger, 1999). Also, some of these interactions are originally formed in the existent social structures, but others are developed or selected by the teachers individually. Such interactions, which lead to

teachers' professional identity construction, should be available (Coldron & Smith, 1999). In simple terms, the contexts in which the teachers' professional identity is constructed, should be provided by educators and stakeholders due to the fact that the educational community is the sole context in which teachers' professional identity is developed by an active role (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Additionally, drawing upon the multidimensionality nature of identity mentioned earlier in the current study, identity construction seems to revolve around and achieved through reflection. That is, as Beauchamp (2014, p. 124) holds, one of the main themes of reflection includes "situating the self within the particular context in which reflection happens", which shows that identity and reflection are inextricably intertwined. In other words, 'situating the self within a position' (i.e., who am I?) shows that identity is constructed and reconstructed dynamically and diologically within a reflective context. However, teacher identity construction seems to be challenging due to the emotional aspects of identity development and unfamiliar aspects of reflection (Beauchamp, 2014). This complexity might be due to the multidimensionality nature of both reflection and identity, which has been extended to professional teacher identity as an inseparable part of professional learning, growth, and practice (Yazan, 2018).

Several studies have been conducted on (EFL/ESL) teacher identity construction especially as related to reflection. For one, Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) investigated future-oriented and reflection-oriented talk produced by 16 novice ESL teachers during a number of meetings intended to lead to professional identity construction. The data consisted of two sets of spoken data transcribed by the researchers. The findings revealed that the talks were used for description, and prediction and planning corresponding to the reflection-*on*-action and *-for*-action, respectively. Moreover, the talks provided opportunities for teachers to reflect upon their existing experiences with a view towards the future.

In a similar vein, Schultz and Ravitch (2013), conducted a study in which the participants wrote narratives about their teaching during an academic year. All teachers were asked to share what they had written during the academic year.

The data were sorted by person, program, and types of school. An inductive coding analysis was utilized to analyze the data collected. The findings indicated that teachers' professional identities were formed by being involved in different activities and various communities such as narrative writing groups, which could be regarded as a kind of reflective writing activity.

More recently, Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018) examined how Iranian EFL teachers' identity construction took place in different communities adopting the history approach as it involves the whole life of the people. Three male Iranian EFL teachers within the age range of 29 to 33 participated in the study. The data collection lasted for nearly six months and included critical entries, interviews and observations. The findings showed that teachers' identity was shaped through being involved in various communities and that they developed a type of teacher identity that challenged hegemonic structures which previously limited their agency.

Moreover, Yuan and Mak (2018) examined 32 teachers' reflective learning using some tasks (e.g., collaborative lesson plans) in Hong Kong. The study utilized identity frameworks and endeavored to show how reflective teaching was developed and identity was constructed. The study involved both individual and group activities like joint lesson planning, group consultation, micro-teaching, and videoed reflection. Yuan and Mak (2018) concluded that the participants in their study indicated both identity formation and change through reflective pedagogy.

Furthermore, in a long-term attempt by Arslan (2019), the reflection of four (i.e., three female and one male) preservice teachers were examined using Korthagen's (2004) Onion model of reflection which includes missions, identity, beliefs, competencies, behavior and environment. The results of the deductive content analysis of the interviews showed that the participants gradually became aware of constructing deeper insights about positive changes in addition to enhancing their professional development.

Additionally, Muchnik-Rozanov and Tsybulsky (2019) investigated teachers' process of professional identity development by

using a Systemic-Functional Linguistics-based methodology to analyze the written reflections of 33 teachers. Three linguistic markers were observed in their journals including personal references forming group- and self-focused narratives; verbal phrases forming future-oriented narratives; and intensifications forming emotionally colored narratives. The results showed the development of teachers' concerns, expectations and hopes during the professional identity construction.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

The participants of the study comprised 30 EFL teachers teaching in private language institutes in the city of Sanandaj, situated in the west of the country. They included 22 females and 8 males who were selected, based on convenience sampling. The participants were asked to write individually-based and collective reflective journals. The participants held a B.A. ( $N = 21$ ) or an M.A. ( $N = 9$ ) in TEFL. They had experienced teaching English as a foreign language from three to nine years. After the participants attended an eight-session workshop, the effect of the reflection consciousness-raising interactive workshop on their professional identity construction was examined through semi-structured interviews. The informed consent of the participants was also obtained.

#### 3.2. Instruments

##### 3.2.1. Reflective Journal Writing

For data collection purposes, reflective journals were used in the present study, based on the framework proposed by Richards (1995) and the journal content guide presented by Soodmand Afshar (in press).

The journal content guide adopted includes such various aspects as class management issues, sociopolitical and affective factors in teaching, the instructional approaches and activities employed, teaching/learning materials, teacher-student relationships and interaction patterns, planning teaching, teachers' beliefs on teaching methods and assessment, students' learning problems, teaching problems and challenges, and teachers' feelings on their teaching and students' emotions on learning. Also, Richards'

(1995) framework comprises the three stages of *the event itself*, *recollection of the event* and *review and response to the event*. At the first stage of Richards' (1995) framework, the teaching episodes occur by the participants wherein there might also be some self-reflection. Then, at the second stage, there is an evaluation of what happened whereas at the third stage, the participants return to the event and review it more profoundly by asking some questions about the experience. Thus, to achieve the goals set for the present study, the participants were asked to write reflective journals individually in addition to writing journals collectively before and after the workshop. The collective reflective journals were materialized in the form of focus-group interviews.

### 3.2.2. *The Semi-Structured Individual Interview*

An expert-viewed semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants after they attended the workshop which intended to investigate how consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection in general and RJW in particular contributed to the participants' professional identity construction (see the Appendix).

### 3.2.3. *Focus-Group Interviews*

In addition to semi-structured interviews mentioned above, the participants sat a focus-group interview to put the collective RJW into effect. Like the semi-structured interviews, the focus-group interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and finally subjected to content analysis. The focus-group interview questions were the same as those of the semi-structured individual interview. The only difference was that, here the participants elaborated on each other's responses collaboratively, which after transcription acted as the participants' collective reflective journals.

## 3.3. Procedure

The current study enjoyed a qualitative design comprising journal writing, individual semi-structured interviews, and focus-group interviews. Thirty Iranian EFL teachers were selected based on the availability principle. First, they were asked to write one reflective journal individually and one collectively without adopting any preplanned framework or attending any consciousness-raising activity on

reflection. For the collective journal writing, the participants sat a focus-group interview altogether as mentioned earlier. Next, the participants attended an eight-session interactive workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to familiarize the participants with the concepts of reflection in general and RJW in particular, as well as professional identity. The RJW section was based on the framework proposed by Richards (1995) which includes the three stages of '*The event itself*', '*recollection of the event*', and '*review and response to the event*'. Also, the workshop focused on the journal content guide proposed by Soodmand Afshar (in press) comprising such aspects as instructional approaches and activities, classroom issues, class management and lesson planning issues, teaching materials, sociopolitical and affective factors in teaching, students' learning problems and challenges, teachers' challenges and problems in teaching, the nature of teacher-student relationships, and interaction patterns. Moreover, the concept of professional identity and the major principles of its construction were explained in the workshops.

The participants then wrote two other reflective journals, one individually and one collectively, based on what they had been presented in the workshop. Moreover, the participants sat a semi-structured interview which explored how consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW contributed to their professional identity construction.

## 3.4. Data Analysis

The required data for the research question were collected through the semi-structured interview, focus-group interview, and RJW and analyzed through a grounded-theory-approach and qualitative content analysis consisting of the three stages of 'open coding', 'axial coding', and 'selective coding' (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, the selected core categories were finally 'quantitized' (Dörnyei, 2007) and subjected to frequency analysis.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The research question of the present study was addressed mainly through a semi-structured interview with all the participants of the study. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Themes of the Participants' Responses on the Contribution of Reflection Consciousness-Raising Interactive Workshop to their Professional Identity Construction (PIC) Taken from the Interviews*

<b>Response</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>P</b>
Reflecting -on-, -in-, and -for action during the workshop was helpful and contributed to my PIC	27	90
Professional development activities like collegial support during the workshop contributed to my PIC	26	86.6
My becoming acquainted with self-assessment tools during the workshop helped me construct my professional identity	24	80
Becoming aware of my inner feelings during the workshop contributed to my PIC	24	80
Reflection workshop helped me become aware of "I" and "we" aspects of identity and helped me construct my professional identity	20	66.6
Becoming aware of my different roles as a teacher contributed to my PIC	19	63.3

*Note:* F= Frequency; P= Percentage.

As indicated in Table 1, a great majority of the participants (i.e., 90%) believed that reflection of any kind (on-, in-, and for-action) contributed to their PIC. Additionally, most of the participants (i.e., 86%) believed that 'awareness of such professional development activities as collegial support' was an important source of teachers' professional identity construction. Moreover, 80 % of the participants in their interviews asserted that *acquaintance with teacher self-assessment tools* and their *awareness of their inner feelings*, created through the consciousness-raising interactive workshop, equally helped them construct their professional identity. Nearly 67% of the participants' argued that the workshop made them aware of "I" and "We" aspects of identity. Finally, 63.3 % of the participants mentioned that the workshop helped them become *aware of their different roles as a teacher* which eventually contributed to their professional identity construction.

It is generally assumed that language teacher identity is impacted by such variables as reflecting on prior teaching and learning experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values or even by religion and gender (Cook, 2009, Varghese, 2017). Thus, as a part of a large-scale project, the study investigated the ways through

which consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW contributed to Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity construction for which they presented various reasons.

First, as the results showed, the majority of the participants stated that the workshop helped them reflect in-, on-, and for-action which finally contributed to their professional identity construction. This finding of the present study is consistent with the results of Arslan (2019) which showed that the participants gradually constructed their professional identity in addition to improving their teaching practices and enhancing their professional development. The results here could be attributed to the participants' contemplation and reflection occurring during the consciousness-raising workshop which might have led to their gradual awareness of their professional identity during the study.

This finding seems to be partially in line with those of Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) in that their study indicated that the participants' cognitive and professional dimensions developed during the study. This line of reasoning can be strengthened by the remarks of one of the participants' in the interview, "At the time that I wrote my

*reflective journals or even in the class that I simultaneously thought about my teaching, I understood 'who I am'. I saw myself as [a] teacher who is there in charge of a class. I was no longer my daddy's girl there; rather I was a real teacher responsible for all the events in that class. I think if I stick to reflective journal writing, I will get to know my identity much better than today".*

Also, another participant, agreeing with the role of reflection in professional identity construction, stated that, "... *I reflect on what I do, what I did and what I want to do. It is unbelievably helpful. It shows me my past and present pictures in my profession. Besides it helps me to rebuild my future picture based on the previous ones"*.

Moreover, as the results showed, most of the participants believed in 'collegial support' which we think is rooted in social aspects and relationships. In other words, at least part of the participants' professional identity construction took place during the workshop itself which can be regarded as a social activity wherein the teachers found the opportunity to exchange their views and ideas not only with the teacher educator, but also with their peers and colleagues. This line of argumentation can be corroborated with the findings of Yuan and Mak (2018), which indicated that reflective practice and identity are closely linked with sociocultural issues. Consequently, during such social activities as interactive workshops and collegial support groups, teachers can explore 'who they are' and 'who they are becoming'. It could thus be argued that, "teachers' collaborative reflective practice and identity formation are mediated by the sociocultural issues" (Yuan & Mak, 2018, p. 214).

Also, the results here are consistent with those of Mitchell (1997) which indicated that teachers' collaborations with other colleagues were among the key factors for teachers' professional identity construction. A rational justification for this finding could be the teachers' severe involvement in and persistence for receiving the others' ideas and points of views which might have led to their self-awareness and self-development (as a teacher). Corroborating this, Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) argued that, RJW is an effective means to practice reflectivity which often leads to "self-development, and self-awareness" (p.

234). Agreeing with the crucial role of the 'collegial support', one of the participants in her reflective journal stated, "*When I left the class, I headed to the teachers' room enthusiastically to share today's class experience with my colleagues. What a blessing to have them there. I really feel dramatic growth in my career when I talk to them...*".

A finding that we came up with in the current study was that reflecting -on, -in, and -for action could be a fruitful activity for teachers to gradually construct their identity. Similarly, Urzúa and Vásquez's (2008) findings revealed that their reflective interviews with the participants during their study provided good chances for them to reflect on their existing experience (i.e., their current identity) with a look to the future (i.e., their future identity). The results in this respect might also be justified by Flower and Hayes' (1980) argument that teachers contemplate during their reflective practice (e.g., RJW in the current study) which makes them have dialogue with themselves (Balgopal & Montplaiser, 2011) in order to explore who they are and who they wish to be.

This monologic conversation with the self during their reflective practice can make teachers aware of their past, present and future professional identities and of how their professional identity is developed and constructed over time. This argument could be corroborated by the assertions of Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Flores and Day (2006), who hold that the past (experiences) and the present are combined to construct teachers' professional identity.

In addition, during the collective RJW process of the participants of the study, they might have shared their ideas and received feedback from their colleagues leading to a collective professional identity construction process. In other words, the participants became aware of both "I" and "we" aspects of identity during individual and collective activities with which nearly 67 per cent of the participants in the study agreed. Corroborating this, one of the interview participants stated, "... *there is a big WE here in my mind next to I. I mean me and my colleagues always support each other. The workshop and those journals have proven [to] us that we are alone and not alone at the same time. I mean when I have problems I refer to the WE. I believe WE is always there beside I.*".

Moreover, the majority of the participants believed in the crucial role professional development could play in their professional identity construction, a finding which can partially be corroborated by those of Sutherland et al. (2010) who found that their participants' professional identity developed during the study as a result of participation in professional development activities.

Schultz and Ravitch's (2013) findings are also consistent with our results. They also concluded that teachers' professional identities were formed by being involved in different professional communities and different activities such as narrative writing groups. Likewise, Mirzaee and Aliakbari's (2018) findings are in line with those of the present study. They also revealed that teachers' identities were shaped through being involved in various professional communities and activities.

The findings of the study in this respect can be attributed to the interactive nature of the workshop on RJW. In other words, gaining acceptance and sympathy from their colleagues might have contributed to the participants' professional development. That is, the participants' colleagues might have helped them develop professionally which might eventually lead to their identity construction. Authenticating this, Flores and Day (2006) argue that teachers' interactive socializing factors might impact their teaching and their identity development as teachers. Put simply, since teachers need others' acceptance in their community, they give their primary attention to improving their skills and competencies. Accordingly, they develop in their profession which seems to eventually result in their professional identity construction with which the participants of the study mostly agreed (Vonk, 1989, as cited in Flores & Day, 2006). Supporting this line of reasoning, one of the participants in her reflective journal wrote, "... today in my last class I thought about the usefulness of the workshop I attended and the journals I have kept. They have helped me develop in my job and keep an open mind on how I have developed so far. Now I have a [different] role as a teacher".

Furthermore, teachers' professional development which they believed led to their professional identity construction can be related to their

awareness of self-assessment tools. Due to the participants' reflection upon themselves and their profession during the study, the participants might have become aware of themselves and their weaknesses in addition to their strengths. In other words, teachers' strengths and weaknesses obsessed them and gradually changed into their concerns, and hopes. These emotions are closely intertwined with teachers' awareness of their inner feelings as teachers which can be regarded as a factor of professional identity construction. Supporting this stance, Zimmerman (2000, as cited in Shavit & Moshe, 2019) argued that during reflective practice (i.e., RJW in the current study), some cognitive processes such as "self-evaluation, clarifying events, forming conclusions, and adopting changes to meet specific criteria" are generated (p. 2). In addition, the results here are in accordance with those of Muchnik-Rozanov and Tsybulsky (2019) who found that teachers' concerns, expectations and hopes developed during the professional identity construction. Supporting this argument, one of the participants wrote in his reflective journal that, "... now that I am busy writing my journal, I am correcting myself in the same way as I correct my students' exam sheets. I'm thinking about the weak and pleasant aspects of my personality in my classes. Thanks to the workshop and this journal, I'm fully aware of them and I do my best to work on them ...".

As mentioned earlier, 'becoming aware of one's inner feelings' was found in the study to be another source of professional identity construction. Corroborating this, one of the interview participants stated, "... It [i.e., the workshop] truly helped me to see my development in my profession. Umm, I mean not to hide my feelings and articulate them instead. Before taking part in the workshop, I had hidden my nasty feelings about my classes. So, the following sessions, a feelings of hatred grew on me and I could not be my real self. Luckily, the workshop and journals have persuaded me that my inner feelings in addition to my students' feelings are completely natural and they should not be ignored. It truly helped me to see my development in my profession ...".

The workshop on RJW was also found to make the participants aware of their different roles as a teacher which they thought contributed to

their PIC as stated earlier. Supporting this, one of the participants of the study wrote in her reflective journal that, "... today I was not just a sole teacher to teach what I have been told to. I was a consultant, a friend, a mother. Teacher is not there just to teach, she or he is there to help let the students' lives pass easier...".

## 5. Concluding Remarks

To achieve the goals of the present study, 30 EFL teachers were asked to write reflective journals before and after a consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW. They also sat semi-structured interviews. The results showed the primary sources of professional identity construction from the participants' points of view included reflection -on, -in, and -for action, such professional development activities as collegial support, awareness of both "I" and "we" aspects of identity, awareness of inner feelings, teachers' awareness of their self-assessment and their awareness of their different roles as a teacher.

Several implications seem to arise from the current study. For instance, because the results of the present study showed that the consciousness-raising interactive workshop on reflection and RJW played a crucial role in professional development and identity construction of the participants, language education policy makers, curriculum developers, teacher educators and trainers, and institute managers are recommended to incorporate reflective practices in their policies, curricula, materials, etc. and to train foreign language teachers on how to reflect through such professional development activities as interactive workshops. In addition, as 'collegial support' proved to be a source of teachers' professional identity construction, the institute managers should provide their teachers with interactive contexts and collective activities wherein they can exchange their views, ideas and concerns with each other to both grow professionally and construct their professional identity. That is, considering the importance of professional development from the participants' points of view as a source of professional identity construction, the stakeholders should provide teachers with various professional development activities assumed to contribute to their professional identity construction.

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**Appendix**

*Interview Questions*

1. How do you think the consciousness-raising interactive workshop and RJW

contributed, if ever, to your professional identity construction? Elaborate please.

2. Do you think the impact was positive? How? Why? Elaborate.