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## **Critical Thinking in Personal Narrative and Reflective Journal Writings by In-service EFL Teachers in Iran: Assessment of Reflective Writing**

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### **Abstract**

Recently, there is a need for fostering the critical reflective side of L2 teacher education. This study investigated the implications of personal narrative (PN) and reflective journal (RJ) writing for Iranian EFL teachers' reflective writing. Sixty (36 women and 24 men) in-service secondary school EFL teachers were selected based on the convenience sampling from Iran. L2 teachers equally divided into PN and RJ writing groups were provided with particular short stories. L2 teachers in the PN writing group engendered PN writings in response to themes of stories; however, L2 teachers in the RJ writing group had to write their reflections on stories in RJ writings. Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework was used for the content analysis of data. The quantitative analysis indicated that PN writings were lengthier than RJ writings. Also, there was a statistically significant difference between mean ranks of descriptive and critical reflection writing types signified in PN and RJ writings. However, no statistically significant difference was observed between mean ranks of descriptive reflection and dialogic reflection writing types. Moreover, PN and RJ writings were more descriptive, less descriptive reflective, less and less dialogic reflective, and still less critical reflective. The qualitative analysis revealed that EFL teachers' PN and RJ writings enjoyed dialogicity. Despite their unwillingness to express voice, findings indicated that Iranian English teachers adopted a more critical perspective through generating PN writings than via engendering RJ writings. In general, the English language teacher education domain in Iran needs a thinking renewal to foster critical L2 teaching.

*Keywords:* critical L2 teacher education, critical thinking, personal narrative writing, reflective journal writing

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EFL learners should master critical thinking (CT) skills in the L2 because “higher-order thinking skills” are necessary for succeeding in a “knowledge-based” society (Liaw, 2007, p. 51). Halpern (1999) acknowledged that most of various CT definitions share very similar underlying principles. According to Halpern (1999), CT skills in the cognitive psychology encompass the ability to modify “thinking in the default mode” (p. 73), “fostering dispositions of individuals for CT, and structure training” (p. 72). Metacognitive monitoring or “what we know about what we know,” as Halpern (1999) put forward, also guides thinking and learning (pp. 72-73).

Tang (2009), however, defined CT in terms of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and a critical awareness of each individual’s construal. The textual approach to CT involves demonstrating intertextuality, interpretation, and synthesis in writing. For Said (1983), the “critical consciousness” reveals what “political, social, and human values are entailed in the reading, production, and transmission of every text” (p. 26).

Similarly, Clark and Ivanič (1999) emphasized fostering “a critical awareness of language as a curriculum aim” to develop language conceptions emanated from Fairclough’s (1989) CDA in literacy practices to help ESL/EFL learners gain consciousness over how they use language and are situated by individuals’ language practices (p. 64). Predominantly, as a process of thinking, writing entails both the accurate use of language and the purposeful negotiation of meaning.

Critical L2 teaching has also addressed the sphere of L2 teacher education (e.g., Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006; Reagon & Osborn, 2002). Kumaravadivelu (2003) identified major transitions in the L2 teachers’ historical role. The “technicist” approach viewed L2 teachers as “passive technicians” while reflective teaching considered teachers as “reflective practitioners.” However, the idea of L2 teachers as “transformative intellectuals” is traced to the possibility parameter of postmethod pedagogy (p. 8). Critical L2 teacher education is deeply rooted in the Freirean philosophy of education (e.g., Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1992).

Drawing on Bakhtin (1981) and his concept of “a responsive understanding” (p. 280), Kumaravadivelu (2006) yielded a postmethodic L2 teacher education. He argued that within the framework of postmethod, the main task of L2 teacher educators is not to equip L2 teachers with “a borrowed voice, however enlightened it may be;” conversely, they should engage L2 teachers in the dialogical negotiation of meaning to bestow them an “identity” or “voice” (p. 182). Also, Hawkins and Norton (2009) considered critical awareness, critical self-reflection, and critical pedagogical relations essential to critical L2 teacher education. The focus on critical awareness involves raising L2 teacher students’ consciousness about how power relations influence education. Critical self-reflection makes L2 teacher trainees explore their identities and positions in society. Critical pedagogical relations deal with power relationships between L2 teacher educators and L2 teacher candidates.

A plethora of theoretical positions and research support the use of a variety of reflective practices including creating PN and RJ writings to foster the dialogicality and critical reflectivity of L2 teacher education (e.g., Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Reagon & Osborn, 2002). However, the researchers of the present study discovered that none of the previous studies have addressed the effects of using reflective practices on raising Iranian pre- and in-service English teachers’ critical consciousness via writing. Thus, the present study aimed to assess the quantitative and qualitative implications of creating PN and RJ writings for the Iranian in-service secondary school EFL teachers’ ability to apply CT in English writing. The reasons for selecting in-service teachers was first, their unwillingness to be exposed to different kinds of training and second, the effects of intrinsic factors such as teacher burnout or lack of motivation were less likely to affect their performance. Secondary school L2 teachers who participated in this study seemed to have a higher level of the English proficiency.

Accordingly, this study compared the length of PN and RJ writings composed by two groups of Iranian EFL teachers. Also, Hatton and Smith’s (1995) four-level reflection framework in writing was used to explore which type of reflective writing emerged in PN and RJ writings of

the English teachers and which task contributed to the promotion of higher levels of reflection. Moreover, this study examined the dialogicality of the L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings which could help L2 researchers and L2 teacher educators have more profound understanding regarding the status that reflectivity has in in-service L2 teacher education programs in Iran. Furthermore, the study set out to verify whether collected PN and RJ writings enjoyed dialogicity or simply signified monologic performances.

### Literature Review

Slattery (2006) suggested fostering teachers' and students' aesthetic engagement in the content of the curriculum to help them experience going through the hermeneutic sphere. Based on Slattery's (2006) conception of the curriculum development and text interpretation in schools and classrooms, aesthetic awareness is on a par with the moral accountability of a dialogical consciousness. Hence, the postmodern reconceptualization of the hermeneutic process of interpreting the curriculum must contain questioning forms that embrace switching positions among different stakeholders and intersections of challenging voices.

Accordingly, certain practices have been proposed to provide grounds for the L2 teachers' critical consciousness to forge ahead including generating PN and RJ writings. Several studies (Barkhuizen, 2011; Chan, 2012; Khordkhili & Mall-Amiri, 2015) underscored the significance of generating PN writings as a reflective practice in L2 teacher education. The order of narrative clauses in the narrative texts sequentially corresponds to the order of past events as they occurred. The events of a narrative of personal experience enter into the narrator's biography. Thus, sequences of actions in narratives are emotionally and socially evaluated (Labov, 1997).

In this regard, Chan (2012) explored the role of the narrative inquiry in developing pre-service teachers' experiences of learning, thinking, and self-reflection in Hong Kong education system and used narrating autobiographies and making self-inquires into stories to engage L2 teacher students in the active learning and knowledge reconstruction. During each autobiographic session, the L2 teacher brought an artifact to the class and

narrated an autobiography about its effects on her growth and development. Thus, L2 teacher trainees shared their stories and developed mutual understanding with their peers. Through making self-inquires into stories, they told narratives about what they had experienced through their childhood and youth that enhanced their perceptions of their identities. The findings of this investigation illustrated that using the narrative inquiry as a constructivist method changed pre-service L2 teachers' habits of learning. Likewise, Khordkhili and Mall-Amiri (2015) examined the relationship between the high school EFL teachers' narrative intelligence and pedagogical success in Iran and showed that the Persian and English narrative intelligence was a significant predictor of the L2 teachers' professional success.

In the same vein, several research projects have been conducted on the role of generating RJ writings in L2 teacher education at both pre- and in-service levels (Abednia, 2012; Abednia, Hovassapian, Teimournezhad, & Ghanbari, 2013; Lowe, Prout, & Murcia, 2013). Maarof (2007) asserted that such studies have illustrated the positive effects of RJ writing on teacher development. Lakshmi (2009) defined RJ writing as providing a tool for making reflections explicit and accessible through writing to explain an action. For example, Abednia (2012) examined the role of a critical pre-service EFL teacher education course in fostering the Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity. The analysis of critical pre- and post-course practices including interviews with seven L2 teachers, the RJ writings created by them, their class discussions, and the L2 teacher educator's RJ writings indicated major transitions in the L2 teacher students' professional identity from compliance with and romanticization of authorities' attitudes to critical autonomy. Also, there were shifts in L2 teacher learners' attitudes toward teaching from no orientation or an instrumentalist one to a critical and transformative stance. Moreover, the L2 teacher candidates' linguistic and technical view of their professional identity was substituted by an educational perspective on L2 education.

In another study, Abednia et al. (2013) analyzed six in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of the prospects and problems of generating RJ writings. The L2 teachers who had attended a Second Language Teaching

Methodology course expressed their perspectives on creating RJ writings in a focus group discussion conducted by the researchers. The thematic analysis of this discussion revealed L2 teachers' positive attitudes toward generating RJ writings considering it as a tool for enhancing their self-awareness and analytical thinking skills. Moreover, they believed that engendering RJ writings assisted them in comprehending matters related to ELT and establishing a dialogue with the L2 teacher educator.

### **The Present Study**

The review of the current literature on the role of creating PN and RJ writings in fostering nonnative English teachers' reflective thinking indicated the dearth of empirical research on this area of investigation at the in-service level of EFL teacher education in Iran. To fill this gap, the present study quantitatively and qualitatively assessed and compared the implications of generating PN and RJ writings for fostering Iranian in-service secondary school EFL teachers' reflective writing in English. Thus, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. Do Iranian in-service EFL teachers creating PN writings generate lengthier texts compared to their counterparts creating RJ writings?
2. Do Iranian in-service EFL teachers creating PN writings generate more descriptive and reflective writing types in their texts compared to their counterparts creating RJ writings?
3. What is the dialogicality principle of PN and RJ writings created by Iranian in-service EFL teachers?
4. How is dialogicality represented in PN and RJ writings created by Iranian in-service EFL teachers?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total number of 60 (36 women and 24 men) Iranian in-service secondary school EFL teachers were selected based on the convenience sampling. They ranged in age from 26 to 50 years and varied in their ELT experience from 4 to 29 years. Forty-three L2 teachers held a BA degree

in English. One of the L2 teachers was an MA student of TEFL who was complementing his thesis, nine held a Master of Arts (MA) degree in English, and two were Ph.D. candidates in TEFL. Two L2 teachers were MA students in Political Sciences and General Linguistics, two held an MA degree in Educational Management, and an L2 teacher held an MA degree in General Linguistics.

The L2 teachers were randomly assigned to two independent experimental groups in a way that L2 teachers with B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees were evenly distributed in the groups. That is, 48 L2 teachers who had a BA in English and the two L2 teachers who were Ph.D. candidates in TEFL were randomly assigned to PN and RJ writing groups. The nine L2 teachers who had an MA in TEFL and the only L2 teacher who was an MA student in TEFL were also distributed in PN and RJ writing groups through the random assignment.

The L2 teachers instructed to create PN writings were referred to as the PN writing group. However, those engaged in engendering RJ writings were named the RJ writing group. One of the researchers of this study who was a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL instructed the L2 teachers.

### **Instruments**

Several instruments were utilized in this study including five short stories and L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings. Story grammar questions and a framework for generating RJ writings were used to elicit PN and RJ writings, respectively. The researchers of this study designed the framework for generating RJ writings that comprised certain reflective questions to extract L2 teachers' free reflective responses. Also, Hatton and Smith's (1995) reflection framework was employed for the content analysis of L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings. The reasons for selecting Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework for structuring reflection was that it portrays one of the most well-recognized and robust categorizations of the different reflective writing types which has emerged from the content analysis of pre-service teachers' RJ writings. Therefore, the researchers presumed that this framework was more appropriate than the similar ones because the participants of this study were L2 teachers.

**PN and RJ writings.** In order to create PN writings, L2 teachers in the PN writing group identified themselves with the protagonist or the main character of short stories assigned to them. L2 teachers either recounted these stories from their own perspectives or related the storylines to their personal life experiences. L2 teachers participating in the RJ writing group wrote their reflections on the content and theme of each short story in RJ writings.

**Story grammar questions for PN writing.** At the onset of the study, one of the researchers that was a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL distributed worksheets among the L2 teachers in the PN writing group (Appendix A). The worksheets included guiding questions about the story grammar elements of the setting, characters, problem, action, resolution, and theme (Amer, 2003). Thus, L2 teachers developed primary drafts of narratives by giving answers to the question prompts.

**A framework for generating RJ writings.** Teachers, as Guzula (2011) stated, who are not acquainted with the genre of RJ writings find it difficult to write journal entries. Thus, some guidelines that helped L2 teachers to create RJ writings were given to them. Also, the researchers designed a framework to reinforce the L2 teachers' engagement in generating RJ writings (Appendix B). The content validity of the framework that included a set of open-ended questions was verified by two experienced ELT professors and was used to extract the L2 teachers' free reflective responses. The framework was derived from the combination of Johns' (1998, as cited in Brown, Matthew-Maich, & Royle, 2001) model of structured reflection, Allin and Turnock's (2007) set of reflective questions, and Hampton's (2010) guide for generating RJ writings. Thus, L2 teachers in the RJ writing group had to follow the three phases of description, reflection or interpretation, and outcome to engender their RJ writings. They filled in their journal entries by answering the reflective question prompts in the worksheets that one of the researchers distributed among them at the onset of the study.

**Hatton and Smith's (1995) reflection framework.** Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework was used for the content analysis of obtained PN and RJ writings. Hatton and Smith have selected four types of writing:



descriptive writing (DW), descriptive reflection (DR), dialogic reflection (DIR), and critical reflection (CR). Each writing type corresponds to a level of reflection. DW merely describes the sequences of actions without reference to the details; thus, absolutely, it is not reflective. DR, however, signifying the lowest reflection level involves making a degree of personal judgments on and giving justifications for events. Therefore, DR goes beyond proffering a report on the situation. DIR, on the other hand, representing the third level of reflection demonstrates a “stepping back” from sequences of events and mulling over circumstances based on rational judgments and multiple points of view (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 48). CR, in addition, demonstrates individuals’ awareness of rationales behind issues with regard to the broader historical, political, and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, CR signifies the highest level of reflection.

### Materials

The materials included five short stories, namely, *The story of an hour* (Chopin, 1894), *The last leaf* (O. Henry, 1907), *Confessions of a gallomaniac* (Colby, 1941), *Dead men’s path* (Achebe, 1953), and *Butterflies* (Grace, 1987). Colby’s, Achebe’s, and Grace’s short stories challenge issues related to the educational sphere. The reason for selecting these short stories was that they belong to the genre of narrative fiction and that they readily lend themselves to the literary analysis. Therefore, L2 teachers identified narrative elements of setting, characters, problem, action, resolution, and theme with no or little difficulty.

### Procedures

**PN writing group.** The collection of PN writings was carried out from August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to September 22<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and lasted for one and a half months. L2 teachers in the PN writing group took part in six weekly sessions with duration of 1 hour and 30 min for each session. The first session was a briefing one that was held on August 16<sup>th</sup>. The aim was to familiarize L2 teachers with the techniques and generic moves of generating PN writings. To this end, one of the researchers of the study

who was a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL distributed worksheets among L2 teachers that included story grammar questions. Moreover, the same researcher distributed 30 copies of each of the five short stories among L2 teachers in the same briefing session. L2 teachers were also informed that the minimum length for each of PN writings was 500 words. L2 teachers delivered final drafts of their narratives to the researcher on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The second session was held on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. L2 teachers had to create their PN writings about the short story of *Confessions of a gillomaniac* (Colby, 1941). This short story is about an old American man's experience of learning French as his second language. L2 teachers had to imagine themselves as the protagonist of the short story and recount the story events from his point of view. The researcher also recommended L2 teachers to relate the storyline to their own personal experiences of and difficulties with learning English as their L2 during their pre-service L2 teacher education in the Iranian EFL context.

The third session was held on August 30<sup>th</sup>. The short story of *Dead men's path* (Achebe, 1953) was explored by L2 teachers. The protagonist of this story is Michael Obi who is appointed as the headmaster of a secondary school. This short story recounts Obi's attempts at putting into practice his ideas and ideals of running a school. L2 teachers had to identify themselves with him and retell the sequences of events from his perspective. The researcher told L2 teachers to change the setting of the narrative and localize the plot of the story. Therefore, L2 teachers gained the opportunity of narrating their own real experiences, if any, of being a secondary school headmaster. Otherwise, L2 teachers could give an account of their colleagues' experiences of facing the problems and prospects of running a secondary school in Iran.

During the fourth session held on September 6<sup>th</sup>, the short story of *Butterflies* (Grace, 1987) was analyzed. The major character of this story is a little girl who writes a story about butterflies. L2 teachers had to look into the story events from the girl's perspective. Their narratives could be also an account of their own understanding of the teacher-student

relationship gained through their own schooling or teaching in the Iranian educational milieu.

In the fifth session on September 14<sup>th</sup>, L2 teachers had to generate PN writings based on the short story of *The last leaf* (O. Henry, 1907). This story narrates a young girl's struggles to stay alive after she gets sick. L2 teachers had to either provide a first person chronicle based on the plot of this short story or recount a comparable event happened in their own lives.

The sixth session was held on September 20<sup>th</sup>. L2 teachers had to engender their PN writings regarding the short story of *The story of an hour* (Chopin, 1894). The central character of this story is a woman who hears the news of her husband's death. L2 teachers had to consider themselves as the protagonist and narrate this story from the first person point of view. The researcher recommended L2 teachers to try to write autobiographies in response to the theme of this narrative.

**RJ writing group.** Collecting RJ writings was conducted from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 to November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and lasted for one and a half months. L2 teachers in the RJ writing group were firstly provided with the framework for generating RJ writings designed in this study during a briefing session held on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Based on Kok and Chabeli's (2002) guidelines for the efficient use of RJ writings, one of the researchers that was a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL recommended L2 teachers to feel free to reflect on their experiences thoughtfully and truthfully without the fear of any future judgments or reprisals. The researcher distributed 30 copies of each of the five short stories among L2 teachers in the briefing session. The short stories were explored during five assessment sessions, respectively. Each weekly session lasted for 1 hour and 30 mins. L2 teachers were told that each of RJ writings had a minimum word limit of 500.

In the second session held on October 7<sup>th</sup>, L2 teachers in the RJ writing group wrote their reflections on the short story of *Confessions of a gallomaniac* (Colby, 1941). During the third session held on October 14<sup>th</sup>, L2 teachers explored the short story of *Dead men's path* (Achebe, 1953) to engender their RJ writings. L2 teachers generated their RJ writings regarding the short story of *Butterflies* (Grace, 1987) in the fourth session

on October 21<sup>st</sup>. L2 teachers engendered their RJ writings about the short story of *The last leaf* (O. Henry, 1907) and the short story of *The story of an hour* (Chopin, 1894) during the fifth and sixth sessions held on October 28<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively. L2 teachers delivered the final drafts of RJ writings at the end of the assessment sessions on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

### Data Analysis

The data comprising 100 PN writings and 121 RJ writings were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The data analysis was based on the content analysis of PN and RJ writings. One of the researchers of the study who was a Ph.D. candidate in TEFL analyzed the PN and RJ writings. To perform the quantitative analysis, the total score for the PN and RJ writing groups and relative loadings of each writing type in PN and RJ writings were calculated via the Mann-Whitney U test procedure because L2 teachers' scores on these writing types did not enjoy normality. Moreover, the dialogicality principle, to use Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) terminology, of L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings was explored to signify the current status of critical L2 teacher education in Iran. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 16) was utilized to accomplish the statistical analyses. The qualitative analysis of data aimed to present certain instances extracted from PN and RJ writings to demonstrate that both PN and RJ writings represent an orchestration of a variety of writing types to convey the L2 teachers' thoughts and feelings.

## Results

### Quantitative Analysis

**The first research question.** The quantitative analysis of PN and RJ writings initially intended to answer the first research question concerning whether PN writings were lengthier than RJ writings created by Iranian in-service L2 teachers. By employing Hatton and Smith's (1995) framework, one of the four DW, DR, DIR, and CR writing types was assigned to each clause. To obtain the total score for the PN writing group, all of DW, DR, DIR, and CR clauses in the whole set of PN writings were calculated. The

total score for the RJ writing group was computed from adding all of DW, DR, DIR, and CR clauses in RJ writings (Table 1).

Table 1

*Total Score Mean Ranks for PN & RJ Writing Groups*

Group	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
PN	35	1069
RJ	25	760

The Mann-Whitney U test statistics indicated a statistically significant difference between the total score mean ranks of the PN and RJ writing groups ( $U = 295$ ,  $Z = -2.28$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). The total score of the PN writing group was significantly bigger than the total score of the RJ writing group. That is, PN writings were lengthier than RJ writings ( $p < 0.05$ ). Consequently, the researchers overlooked the uneven number of PN and RJ writings by the L2 teachers.

**The second research question.** The second research question examined whether Iranian in-service L2 teachers engendering PN writings utilized more descriptive and reflective writing types in their PN writings compared to their counterparts generating RJ writings. To answer this question, the mean rank of each type of reflective writing in PN writings was measured against the mean rank of the same reflective writing type in RJ writings via the Mann-Whitney U test procedure. Table 2 presents DW, DR, DIR, and CR mean ranks for the PN and RJ writing groups.

Table 2

*PN & RJ Writing Groups' Mean Ranks of DW, DR, DIR, & CR*

Group	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
<b>PN DW</b>	37	1132
<b>RJ DW</b>	23	698
<b>PN DR</b>	30	905
<b>RJ DR</b>	30	925
<b>PN DIR</b>	30	922
<b>RJ DIR</b>	30	907
<b>PN CR</b>	34	1046
<b>RJ CR</b>	26	783

Table 3 shows the Mann-Whitney U test statistics for the PN and RJ writing groups' mean ranks of DW, DR, DIR, and CR writing types. The statistical results revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean rank of the DW type of writing ( $U = 233$ ,  $Z = -3.21$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and the mean rank of the CR type of writing ( $U = 318$ ,  $Z = -1.98$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ) used in PN and RJ writings. Therefore, PN writings were both more descriptive and critical reflective than RJ writings ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, there was no statistically significant difference between the mean rank of the DR type of writing ( $U = 440$ ,  $Z = -0.14$ ,  $p = 0.88$ ) and the mean rank of the DIR type of writing ( $U = 422$ ,  $Z = -0.11$ ,  $p = 0.91$ ) for the PN and RJ writing groups ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 3

*Mann-Whitney U Test, Statistics for DW, DR, DIR, & CR*

Test Statistics	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asym.sig (2-tailed)
DW	233	398	-3.21	0.00*
DR	440	905	-.14	0.88
DIR	422	907	-.11	0.91
CR	318	783	-1.98	0.04*

**The third research question.** The quantitative analysis of data also intended to examine the third research question concerning the overall dialogicality principle of PN and RJ writings generated by in-service English teachers in Iran. Thus, L2 teachers' mean scores on the four reflective writing types were compared to signify the dialogicality principle of their PN and RJ writings. Table 4 illustrates the PN and RJ writing groups' descriptive statistics for DW, DR, DIR, and CR.

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics of PN & RJ Writing Groups' Scores on Reflective Writing Types*

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
PN DW	83.20	70.21
RJ DW	31.20	38.02

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>PN DR</b>	28.86	28.50
<b>RJ DR</b>	29.26	27.83
<b>PN DIR</b>	8.03	8.05
<b>RJ DIR</b>	6.96	5.70
<b>PN CR</b>	5.96	6.32
<b>RJ CR</b>	2.76	3.52

The deconstruction of PN and RJ writings demonstrated that the dominant type of writing in both PN and RJ writings was pure description. The sum of DW clauses ( $M = 83.20$ ,  $SD = 70.21$ ) was larger than the average of DR clauses ( $M = 28.86$ ,  $SD = 28.50$ ), DIR clause mean scores ( $M = 8.03$ ,  $SD = 8.05$ ), and the total number of CR clauses ( $M = 5.96$ ,  $SD = 6.32$ ) for the PN writing group, respectively. Likewise, the number of DW clauses ( $M = 31.20$ ,  $SD = 38.02$ ) was larger than the sum of DR clauses ( $M = 29.26$ ,  $SD = 27.83$ ), the average of DIR clauses ( $M = 6.96$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ), and the mean score of CR clauses ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 3.52$ ) for the RJ writing group, respectively. Therefore, the dialogicality principle of PN and RJ writings based on which the Iranian EFL teachers expressed their thoughts and emotions in English was put as  $DW > DR > DIR > CR$  (Figures 1&2). This outcome demonstrated Iranian L2 teachers' reserve in echoing their voices. Thus, L2 teacher education in Iran needs a shift in its focus of attention away from the technicist approach to embrace a further critical reflective perspective.

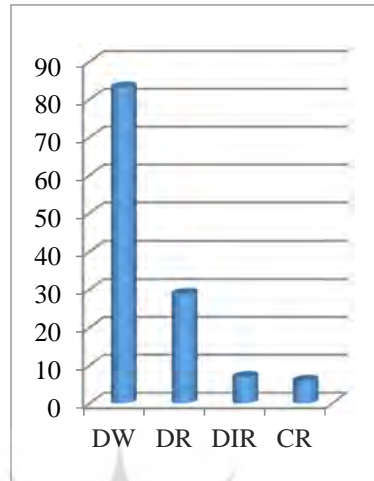


Figure 1. The dialogicality principle of PN writings by EFL teachers

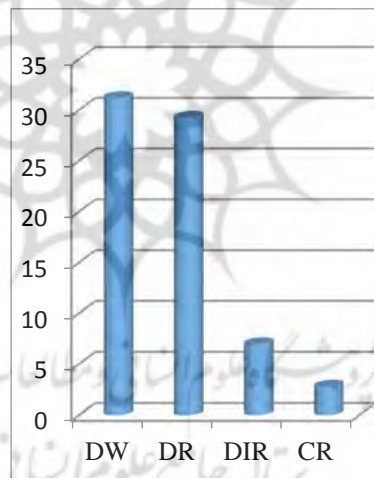


Figure 2. The dialogicality principle of RJ writings by EFL teachers

### Qualitative Analysis

**The fourth research question.** The qualitative analysis of data investigated the fourth research question of this study to find out how the dialogicality principle is represented in PN and RJ writings engendered by Iranian in-service English teachers. To this end, excerpts from PN and RJ writings are presented to demonstrate that the L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings enjoy dialogicity. These extracts signify L2 teacher's shift from



one reflective writing pattern to another to express their thoughts and feelings. Excerpt 1 from *The story of an hour* including seven DW clauses represents a purely descriptive account of event sequences; that is, the L2 teacher's comments are mute lacking color and reflectivity. The next two DR clauses that are underlined indicate the L2 teacher's personal perspective on events.

Excerpt # 1

... I gazed at their eyes. Then my tears fell down on my cheeks. My sister embraced me. I went upstairs to my own room and shut the door. I lay down on my bed and closed my eyes. There were a lot of loud noises in my mind. They were more than sounds. ...

Fragment 2 extracted from a narrative based on the theme of *Confessions of a gallomaniac* explains the L2 teacher's own experience of EFL learning. The L2 teacher drew on the DIR reflective writing type. Dialogical reflections that are italicized reveal the L2 teacher's current judgments on events via quantifying intensifiers of "really" and "very" (Koven, 2002).

Excerpt # 2

... I cannot speak in English to an English native speaker because I think *my listening is very weak. I have started English learning really late. I must have begun it very early in my childhood.* ... (2)

Passage 3 was taken from an L2 teacher's autobiography written in response to *Butterflies*. It contains CR clauses that are boldfaced and illustrate the L2 teacher's critical focalization on the story plot with respect to the wider sociocultural context. The CR type of reflective writing is observed to reveal the society circumstances in which the L2 teacher's identity has been constructed.

Excerpt # 3

... I just know that my grandparents, my teacher, and I couldn't understand each other's worlds. **I could really feel the lack of**

**mutual understanding in our course of life. As the time passes, I see this gap between children and adults more and more. ... (3)**

Extract 4 indicates an L2 teacher's reflections on the content and theme of *Dead men's path*. The RJ writing segment represents an orchestration of different reflective writing types. The L2 teacher moved from the nonreflective level in the DW to the lowest reflection level in the DR and to the highest reflection level in the CR.

Excerpt # 4

... Mr. Obi became the headmaster of a school in a village. This young teacher has the ambition of changing the situation of education in that region. **In fact, the conflict between established thoughts and new and more realistic ones is a challenge for all societies. ... (4)**

Passage 5 presents an L2 teacher's RJ writing entry based on *The last leaf*. The L2 teacher juxtaposed the DW and DR writing types to explain the theme of the short story. As mentioned previously, the DR type of writing conveys the L2 teacher's personal perspective on sequences of events.

Excerpt # 5

... The most important idea of this story is the bilateral view to life. A person was waiting for death, but she survived with the whole feeling of someone else's strong love for her who died himself. ... (5)

### Discussion

The positive answer to the first research question concerning whether Iranian in-service EFL teachers creating PN writings yielded lengthier writings compared to their counterparts generating RJ writings signified that PN writings were longer than RJ writings. The second research question examined the frequency of the occurrence of the four writing

types in PN and RJ writings. Results of the quantitative analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between PN and RJ writing groups' DW and CR mean ranks. However, no statistically significant difference was observed between the PN and RJ writing groups' mean ranks of DR and DIR writing types.

In light of this, creating PN and RJ writings extracted the same amounts of DR and DIR writing types from the L2 teachers. However, L2 teachers in the PN writing group further drew on the DW and CR writing types to express their ideas and emotions than L2 teachers in the RJ writing group. Thus, the statistically significant difference between the length of PN and RJ writings was due to the discrepancy in the amount of DW clauses used in PN and RJ writings.

The finding of this study concerning the larger number of CR clauses in PN writings in comparison with the number of CR clauses used in RJ writings was theoretically in line with Marsh's (2004) debate. Marsh (2004) argued that the autobiographical reflection encourages individuals to think critically about veiled or overlooked assumptions, to question and challenge linear descriptions, and to make reflections on events and the way they open new horizons to the future. This outcome of the investigation was also compatible with Labov's (2010) argument based on which reframing the causal network in narrative involves praising and blaming significant occurrences and their consequences. Furthermore, the result supported the findings by Shokouhi, Daram, and Sabah (2011) who concluded that recounting personal experience narratives enhanced the Iranian pre-service EFL teachers' "critical focalization" (p. 446). Shokouhi et al. (2011) reported that this task evoked L2 teachers' personal and aesthetic responses to narrative fictions assigned to them as they attained "a spirit of dialogical engagement in order to echo their voices" (p. 446).

The third research question investigated the overall dialogicality principle of PN and RJ writings by Iranian in-service English teachers to delve into the current reflectivity side of EFL teacher education programs in Iran. Descriptive statistics for the PN and RJ writing groups' mean

scores on DW, DR, DIR, and CR writing types revealed the dialogicality principle of both PN and RJ writings to be more descriptive, less descriptive reflective, less and less dialogic reflective, and still less critical reflective. The dominant perspective in L2 teacher's PN and RJ writings was descriptive writing, and there was an apparent lack of critical reflectivity in elicited PN and RJ writings. That is, Iranian in-service L2 teachers showed unwillingness to express their reflections and emotions in English writing. In descriptive writings, to resort to Freire's (1970) debate, words evacuated of their "concreteness" become the void "verbosity" (p. 71).

The lack of reflectivity in L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings was in accordance with Akbari's (2007) critique leveled against the deficiency of the criticality side of the contemporary reflective models of L2 teacher education. This outcome was also congruent with Karimvand, Hessamy, and Hemmati (2014) that informed on the lack of the postmethodic TEFL conceptualization and the prevalence of the lecture-based mode of teacher education in Iran. L2 teachers referred to this teaching style as the "Iranian style" considering it to be "traditional" and "teacher trainer-fronted" in which their role has been reduced to note-taking based on what their educators prescribe to them (p. 71).

The fourth research question explored the problem of dialogicity in EFL PN and RJ writings by Iranian in-service L2 teachers. As shown in segments from PN and RJ writings extracted from L2 teachers, EFL teachers, to draw on Koven's (2002) terminology, were observed to keep various writing types in dialogue with each other to express their thoughts and feelings in English. That is, their PN and RJ writings representing a heteroglossia of various role perspectives signified dialogized writings although the dominant perspective in both PN and RJ writings was descriptive writing. The plurality of reflective writing types in PN and RJ writings aligned with Bakhtin's (1981) debate that "heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever forms of its incorporation), is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (p. 324). The conflict between the

descriptive nonreflective writing type and other decentralizing reflective writing types used in L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings embodied the struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces of language, respectively.

The dialogicity of L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings was also in accordance with Maynard's (2007) argument asserting that although Bakhtin (1981) primarily concentrates on the novelistic discourse, heteroglossia is pertinent to the phenomena of communication as a whole. Through manipulating and profiting from this potential in language, individuals exert linguistic creativity to exhibit their own voices. This double-voicing results in the reconstruction of individuals' own meanings to be shared with others.

### Conclusions

The present investigation, first and foremost, indicated that generating PN writings further encouraged Iranian L2 teachers to echo their critical voices than engendering RJ writings. Moreover, the results of this study revealed the dominance of the nonreflective writing type in L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings. Lack of reflection in in-service L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings indicated their reserve in expressing thoughts and feelings through the L2 medium. Thus, the L2 teacher education domain in Iran demands a thinking renewal to foster critical L2 teaching. To this end, critical reflective practices such as creating PN and RJ writings should be embedded in courses delivered to Iranian L2 teachers at both pre- and in-service levels. Raising L2 teachers' critical consciousness through the application of reflective practices further prepares them to deal with challenges of teaching EFL in the third millennium. It is also suggested to insert a course module entitled reflective writing into both pre- and in-service teacher education programs to push L2 teachers to master reflective writing.

This study had certain limitations. Basically, collecting data was not feasible because Iranian in-service high school L2 teachers were reserved in expressing reflections and emotions in their writings. Furthermore, the

research findings regarding the dialogicality principle of L2 teachers' PN and RJ writings lack generalizability due to the miscellany of in-service L2 teachers' academic backgrounds.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A.

#### Amer's Story Grammar Questions for PN Writing (Adapted from Cooper, 1986, as cited in Amer, 2003, p. 65)

##### 1. Setting

- 1.1 Where did the story happen?
- 1.2 When did the story happen?

##### 2. Characters

- 2.1 Who was the story about?
- 2.2 Who were the people in the story?
- 2.3 Who was the most important person in the story?

##### 3. Problem

- 3.1 Did the people have a problem?
- 3.2 What was the big problem that the story was about?

##### 4. Action

- 4.1 What did the people do to solve the problem?
- 4.2 What were the important things that happened in the story?

##### 5. Resolution:

- 5.1 How did the people solve the problem?
- 5.2 How did the story end?

##### 6. Theme:

- 6.1 What lesson could we learn from the story?

### Appendix B: The RJ Writing Framework

#### 1. Description:

- 1.1 What happened? Write a description of the experience.

#### 2. Reflection:

- 2.1 How did you feel about this experience when it was happening?
- 2.2 How is this experience similar to your other experiences?
- 2.3 How is this experience different from your other experiences?

#### 3. Outcome:

- 3.1 What does this experience mean for your future?
- 3.2 Has this experience changed the way in which you will do things in the future?