



## **EFL Teacher Educators and EFL teachers' Perspectives on Identity-Oriented Teacher Education Programs**

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### **Abstract**

Different aspects of identity have been investigated across various educational fields. Although many studies have been done to investigate different aspects of EFL teachers' identity development, there is a paucity of research on identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs. Hence, the purpose of the current study was to investigate EFL teacher educators' and EFL teachers' perspectives about identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs to probe where the commonality of perspectives lies between the two groups in order to see how to run identity-oriented teacher education programs. To that end, three EFL teacher educators and five EFL teachers who were recruited based on convenience sampling were interviewed. Each participant was interviewed two times. The interviews were analyzed using grounded theory. The findings revealed that both EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers believed that an EFL teacher education program would be an identity-oriented one when 1) addressing reflective pedagogy, 2) bridging the gap between theory and practice, 3) involving EFL teachers in action research, 4) emphasizing sociocultural aspects of EFL teacher education, and 5) developing EFL teacher awareness about the varieties. Thus, it can be concluded that through including the mentioned features in the teacher education program, teacher educators can achieve identity-oriented teacher education programs.

**Keywords:** Action Research, EFL Teacher Educators, Identity-Oriented Teacher Education, Reflective Pedagogy

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## **Introduction**

There is growing support showing that, since the last two decades, teacher education research has been devoted to teacher identity development as a representation of understanding teachers' professional aspects (e.g., Norton & De Costa, 2018; Steadman, Kayi-Aydar & Vogel, 2018; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). The focus of teacher education research has changed from the cognitive-related studies to the socially-focused studies whose main aims are to understand teaching and teacher learning through addressing teachers' identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016). When taking identity into consideration in the field of language teacher education, one can note such an "explosion of interest" can be observed among the language teacher educators' research studies. The research studies in the field of teacher education opt for addressing teacher professional identity (e.g. Miller, 2009; Oslen & Buchanan, 2017; Zeichner & Gore, 1990), teacher identity and teacher motivation (e.g. Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012; Richardson & Watt, 2006), teacher identity and teacher emotion (e.g. Day, 2018; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009), teacher cultural identity (Fichtner & Chapman, 2011; Rashidi & Meihami 2017), and teacher identity and teacher reflexivity (e.g. Xu, 2012). However, there is a paucity of research on teacher identity-oriented teacher education practices in language teacher education (Meihami, 2019).

Since identity is not a unidirectional concept, but a dynamic one, it is not easy to define it. The varied definitions for identity originate from the varied perspectives about this concept. There is a continuum from the biological to ecological perspectives toward identity. The biological perspective about identity asserts that identity is a genetically transferred characteristic of human beings, which is fix and immutable. Later on, the social-structuralist approach to identity emphasizes the role of the social factors in identity construction. There is a commonality between the biological perspective and the social-structuralist in that both of them believe that identity is predetermined by the previous formation either in one's genes or society (Block, 2007). One more perspective about identity is the post-structural one, which points out that identity is not something fix, yet it is mutable in different social contexts. Based on a post-structuralist view about identity, the way one understands his/her society with all its features is very important in his/her identity construction. Hence, individuals are in a constant process of balanced and unbalanced identity construction (Delanty, 2003). Finally, the ending edge of the continuum is the ecological perspective, which focuses on the sociocultural aspects of identity. In this perspective, the way an individual self conceptualizes his/her relationships with society is perceived as highly important (Edwards & Burns, 2016). Given the important relationship between self and the society in the ecological perspective about identity, van Lier (2004, p. 115) points out that self is considered as "an ongoing project of establishing one's place in the world." Considering these perspectives about identity, one can state that identity construction involves an individual's related issues in society. That said, Norton (2013, p. 45) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future." Consequently, the relationships which an individual creates with the society around him/herself and

the way that individual perceives such relationships can have the utmost effect on one's identity development.

Language teacher identity is influenced by different factors making it be “a vexing issue which cannot be considered as an innate attribute acquired once and forever” (Rashidi & Meihami, 2017, p. 21). This means that it can be associated with the teaching profession of language teachers. Language teachers put their steps in different communities; each of them has their practices. That said, if different communities have their own identity, language teachers, due to the nature of language teaching and learning, are in a stream of different identities that have different effects on their identity development. Moreover, language teachers are no more just the agent of teaching language, but they have different roles such as teacher-researcher (Borg, 2017), which pushes them to construct new identities.

Moreover, English language teaching is considered a cosmopolitan act (Stanton, 2006) which asks language teachers to act in different communities of practices to be able to come up with the complexities of the language classes. To put it in a nutshell, the language teachers need to do some practices based on the different communities of practices and arena of discourses which they inevitably need to act, leading them to construct new identity in different respects. This means that there is a bidirectional relationship, although a nuanced one, between the practices which the language teachers do and their identity. Based on such a relationship, language teachers' practices construct their identity; and their identity constructs their practices. This is important for the language teaching policymakers and language teacher educators to understand language teacher practices and their identities since this can help them to plan new programs to make the teaching profession better (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). This is where the pedagogical role of pre-service and in-service programs emerge to help the development of language teachers' identity. These programs can prepare the ground of identity negotiation for language teachers based on doing some practices to develop their identity in an identity-oriented teacher education program.

Preparing an EFL teacher education program that follows identity-oriented education is not an easy task for EFL teacher educators. One reason for that is the nature of identity negotiation which is closely related to negotiating self, meaning how individuals convey their values, beliefs, assumptions, and thoughts to the society and accept others' values, beliefs, assumptions (Heller, 1987). Strauss (1978) defines negotiation as a possible way to accomplish different things by taking into account the relationships among different individuals of society. Given that, knowing how to plan and administrate an identity-oriented EFL teacher education program in which language teachers can negotiate and develop their identities is of utmost importance. To do so, applied linguists researching on teacher education issues need to address how EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers see identity-oriented teacher education programs. This will help applied linguists and other decision-makers of the field to recognize the commonality and differences in the perspectives of teachers and teacher educators to find an eagle eye when designing identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs. Moreover, this allows the authors to compare and contrast the needs and desires of the two key stakeholders in language teacher education, and it would be

possible to draw some conclusions about what might be more relevant in identity-oriented programs to practicing teachers. To that end, the current study was an attempt to investigate the perspectives of EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers about identity-oriented teacher education programs to probe where the commonality of perspectives lies between the two groups.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants and Setting**

The current study was a qualitative one in which the researchers addressed the perspectives of EFL educators and EFL teachers about identity-oriented teacher education programs to probe where the commonality of perspectives lies between the two groups in order to help EFL teacher educators to design identity-oriented teacher education programs. To that end, a set of semi-structured interviews was conducted with three EFL teacher educators and five EFL teachers who were recruited based on convenience sampling. Each of them participated in two interviews. The EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers were from Iran. The EFL teacher educators are involved in language teacher education, helping EFL teachers to develop their teaching skills and knowledge. The EFL teachers are involved in teaching English as a foreign language in different language institutes in Iran.

Two of the EFL teacher educators were professors of Applied Linguistics, and one of them was an Associate Professor of applied linguistics teaching teacher education courses in three universities in Iran. They taught teacher education courses to the students of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Based on the TEFL curriculum proposed by the Iran Ministry of Education, TEFL students at Master's and Ph.D. degrees should participate in teacher education courses in which TEFL students learn about different issues of the teaching profession. There is an important point which should be mentioned about the number of participants in the study. The point is that the researchers went through different principles to select the participants. The two EFL teacher educators, as the EFL teachers, selected based on convenience sampling to participate in this study. Table 1 shows more information about the three EFL teacher educators who participated in the current study.

**Table 1.** Information about EFL Teacher Educators

| <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Academic Degree</b>                     | <b>Year-of-Teacher Education Experiences</b> | <b>Teaching to Students of MA/PhD</b> |
|------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Ali</b>       | Professor of Applied Linguistics           | 15 years                                     | MA/PhD                                |
| <b>Parsa</b>     | Professor of Applied Linguistics           | 10 years                                     | PhD                                   |
| <b>Sina</b>      | Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics | 7 years                                      | MA                                    |

Moreover, five EFL teachers participated in this study (four male teachers and one female teacher). These teachers were studying TEFL at different universities, and they had already passed the teacher education-related course. The four male teachers were Ph.D. students of TEFL, and the one female teacher was an MA graduate of TEFL. These teachers had involved in teaching English at different institutes to the EFL learners at different proficiency levels. Table 2 indicates more information about the five English teachers who participated in the current study.

**Table 2.** Information about English Teachers

| <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Academic Degree</b> | <b>Yea-of –Teaching Experiences</b> |
|------------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Radin</b>     | Male          | PhD candidate in TEFL  | 7 years                             |
| <b>Radman</b>    | Male          | PhD candidate in TEFL  | 6 years                             |
| <b>Shaho</b>     | Male          | PhD candidate in TEFL  | 6 years                             |
| <b>Saeed</b>     | Male          | PhD candidate in TEFL  | 5 years                             |
| <b>Fateme</b>    | Female        | MA graduate of TEFL    | 3 years                             |

The setting of the study was the EFL context of Iran. In the universities of Iran, TEFL students learn about language knowledge and teaching knowledge, meaning that TEFL graduates learn how to teach English as a foreign language to the English learners who have different purposes of learning English. Iran Ministry of Education proposes a curriculum for TEFL in which the language and linguistic knowledge and the related issues to teaching such as teaching methods, assessment types, psychological aspects, etc. are considered.

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures**

In the current study, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted to probe the perspectives of EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers about the way teacher education programs can be identity-oriented. To that end, and to obtain the internal voice of the interviewees who participated in the current study, the researchers went through the principles of phenomenological interviews. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorenson, and Walker (2014), there are three phases for a phenomenological interview, which should be followed meticulously to obtain the main perspectives of an individual about an issue. The three phases are investigating the past experiences and practices, examining current issues, and the connection between past experiences and practices and the current issues. The reason for going through these phases was to obtain the main voices of the participants about the purpose of the study.

The EFL teacher educators were interviewed for their experiences of developing identity-oriented teacher education programs. Then, the researchers probed their current experiences and practices. Finally, the researchers asked open-ended questions

about the link between the previous and current time and how they thought the teacher education programs would be in order to develop EFL teachers' identity. Moreover, the EFL teachers were also asked about their experiences in teacher education programs and the way they thought about the teacher education programs, which can lead to identity development.

In the current study, grounded theory was used to analyze the information obtained from the interviews. Owing to this, Strauss and Corbin (1998) systematic approach was followed to obtain the main themes. There are three coding levels which should be applied to the information, including open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The first coding level, open coding, helps to obtain the main categories. Then, in the second coding level, axial coding, the sub-categories are specified. Finally, the third coding level, the selective coding, helps the researchers to develop the propositions and hypotheses based on the categories, subcategories, and themes. Hence, wherever the perspectives of both groups referred to the same theme, the researchers considered the theme as the point of commonality in EFL teacher educators' and EFL teachers' perspectives about the required features of identity-oriented teacher education programs.

The systematic approach was approached by the help of MAXQDA 10 for the matter of correct data analysis. In the following examples, there are two extracts – one is from EFL teacher educators, and one is from EFL teachers – showing how the researchers of the current study went through the systematic approach to analyze the interviews.

| <b>Example # 1 (English language teacher educator)</b>  | <b>Open Coding</b>  | <b>Axial Coding</b>   | <b>Selective Coding</b>  |
|---|---|---|--|
| ... teacher trainers should also enable teachers to make spontaneous decisions about material selection, techniques, and methods geared into learners at different contexts<br>.... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity development</li> <li>• Reflective Pedagogy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional identity</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective teaching</li> <li>• Action research</li> </ul> |

The analysis of example # 1 which is part of an interview with an EFL teacher educator indicates that based on the perspective of this EFL teacher educator the professional identity is an important part of teacher education programs which should be approached through reflective teaching and action research. In an example, # 2, part of the interview with an EFL teacher has been analyzed based on the systematic approach.

| <b>Example # 2 (English teacher)</b>  | <b>Open Coding</b>  | <b>Axial Coding</b>  | <b>Selective Coding</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|
| ... I think the training must include both theoretical and practical concerns with regards to the actual settings of teaching and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identity development</li> <li>• Reflective Pedagogy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional identity</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective teaching</li> <li>• Autonomous teachers</li> </ul> |

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learning. The teachers must be trained to see themselves as autonomous teachers who can be flexible in different situations.

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Example # 2 shows that the EFL teacher thought of the instructions provided to the EFL teachers of utmost importance to train autonomous and reflective teachers. Through the analysis of the two examples (1 and 2), it can be understood that reflective teaching is a theme shared by EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers about identity-oriented EFL teacher education.

It is highly important to note that the rigor of the study as the correspondence of reliability and validity of data analysis in quantitative studies were taken into consideration in the current study. That said, the credibility of data analysis (equal to internal validity) was assured based on member checking. Accordingly, whenever the researchers found parts of the interviews vague to be addressed through the obtaining themes, they probed the opinions of the interviewees about those parts. Furthermore, the transferability of the data analysis (equal to external validity) was addressed using cross-case participants meaning that since the EFL teacher educators were of academic degrees (both Professors and Associate Professors) with different year-of-experience in teaching teacher education courses and the EFL teachers were MA and Ph.D., they were of different cases with different perspectives helping to enhance the transferability of the study. Finally, the dependability of data analysis was addressed by coding agreement. To do so, the researchers asked another coder to codify the interviews based on a systematic approach. MAXQDA 10 helped the coders to know about the degree of the agreement made between them. The results of the coding agreement showed high agreement between the two coders (around 80%), which can be due to the practices and discussions the coders had on a systematic approach based on which they analyzed the interviews.

### **Findings and Discussion**

In the current section, the findings obtained from the analysis of interviews made by EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers are presented. The following themes are those declared by both EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers. The related discussion, then, will be made on the findings.

#### **Addressing Reflective Pedagogy**

The analysis of the interviews made by the EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers who participated in this study indicated that they believed that the teacher education programs need to follow the reflective pedagogy to develop the instructional identity of the English teachers, as part of identity-oriented teacher education programs. The following excerpts (1 and 2) are parts of the interviews made by Ali and Shaho, the EFL teacher educator and the EFL teacher, respectively:

Excerpt # 1

... when language teachers participate in the teacher education programs, they need to reflect upon what they learn in the program and practice in their classroom ....

Excerpt # 2

... if the language teacher education programs involve the English teachers to discuss their classroom practices with their teacher educators and others ... the teachers should learn how to observe their practices ....

Reflective pedagogy, also known as constructive pedagogy (Falk, 2009), is to look at what teachers do in their classes by their reflection. Such a reflection upon their practices can help them to identify their beliefs about the teaching profession. According to Beck (2019, p. 95), reflective pedagogy is “a teaching approach that is dialogical, critical, inquiry-oriented, and inclusive.” Consequently, the essence of the co-construction of identity development can be the result of reflective pedagogy. That said, the instructional identity of teachers which can be defined as “the teacher’s classroom persona and the roles s/he enacts in carrying out acts of teaching, such as facilitator, disciplinarian, or subject-matter expert” (Pennington, 2015, p. 20) may be developed through taking into consideration the importance of doing reflection upon the teaching practices by the EFL teachers.

EFL teacher education programs should involve reflective pedagogy to improve teaching practices (Loughran, 2010). To do so, the EFL teacher educators can ask their students to self-study their teaching acts in their classrooms. Accordingly, the EFL teachers can improve their teaching practices through collaboration and critical friends approach (Beck & Kosnik, 2014). All in all, the instructions provided by the EFL teacher educators need to encompass instructions on reflectivity in the classrooms. Teacher education programs should prepare a context for idea sharing in which the EFL teachers can share the reports of their reflection practices with their friends and probe their opinions. Such negotiations that the EFL teachers have on their classroom practices based on the reflection which they have in their classes can improve their instructional identity. Moreover, negotiations about the reports of teaching reflections can lead to increased EFL teacher voice in that EFL teachers can debate and discuss different instructional issues.

### **Bridging Theory and Practice**

Through the course of analysis, it was revealed that both EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers believed that the relationship between theory and practice should be considered as crucial for identity-oriented teacher education programs. Excerpts 3 and 4 are related to this theme uttered by Parsa and Saeed, respectively.

Excerpt # 3

... one issue to be considered in such an identity-oriented program is theory and practice dilemma ... teacher educators should prepare programs in which English teachers can practice what they have learned theoretically ... the practices can develop new identities in teachers ....



#### Excerpt # 4

... they [English teachers] should learn to put theory into practice in different ways by the circumstances [through participating in teacher education programs] .... What makes a teacher a professional teacher is knowing and putting into practice the fact that their beliefs and methods are not absolute and may change in different situations to reach better outcome ....

The theory and practice connection is a dilemma in almost all professions (Kvernbekk, 2012). In teacher education programs, it is claimed that the relationship between theory and practice is a gap which should be overcome. Heggen and Smeby (2012) state that the dilemma of theory and practice originates from different epistemologies of teacher education from the perspectives of teacher educators and teachers. More often than not, the teachers who participate in the teacher education programs expect the teacher education programs in general and teacher educators in particular “to make visible the relevance of theory to practice or to illustrate the theory with practical examples” (Ulvik & Smith, 2019, p. 131). However, expecting this demand is not easy to be done by the teacher educators due to the diversity of teaching contexts which the teachers encounter in their real teaching profession. That said, teachers need to have an abstract understanding of the theories to be able to transfer them to different situations and make different experiences. Given that, one way to bridge the gap between theory and practice in language teacher education programs is to leave some room to the criticality of the language teachers during the theory instruction to have a different understanding of the theories for the future situations and contexts.

Based on the perspectives of EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers which like to have a teacher education program that bridges the gap between theory and practice, the policymakers in the field of EFL teacher education programs need to provide various educational discourses to help the EFL teachers to find a superior perspective toward the practices they have upon the theories which the teacher educators teach them (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015). Consequently, an EFL teacher education programs need to provide “a meta-perspective on education as a vital component in pre-service teacher education to be followed up in further professional development” (Ulvik & Smith, 2019, p. 132). As a whole, by facilitating the process of theory-practice connection, teacher education programs can develop the identity of the EFL teachers due to the specific and identity-oriented practices they do to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

#### **Involving EFL Teachers in Action Research**

The analysis of the interviews made by the EFL language teacher educators and EFL teachers showed that they considered involving EFL teachers in doing action research as an important part of identity-oriented EFL teacher education. The excerpts 5 and 6 are parts of interviews made by Sina and Fateme, respectively.

#### Excerpt # 5

... instructing teachers to do action research in addition to doing reflective teaching can help to develop their identity in many respects such as professional identity ....

Excerpt # 6

... to me action research is a very important part of any teacher education program which helps the teachers to make use of the theories to address their problems .... For me, doing action research helps me to do applied research and publish them ....

The EFL teacher educators and the EFL teachers had a positive perspective about including action research in the EFL teacher education programs. There is a nuance but important difference between action research and reflective practice, which, often, are considered to be identical. McMahan (1999) stated that the concept of strategic action is the point of difference between action research and reflective practice. According to McMahan (1999, p. 163), "strategic action is a deliberate and planned attempt to solve a particular problem or set of problems using a coherent, systematic and rigorous methodology." Action research brings the teacher a continuous and dynamic change in "self" (Goodnough, 2010). Doing action research by the teachers helps them to accept new roles such as decision-makers, consultants, curriculum developers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), leading the EFL teachers to accept new identities. Involving in action research by the EFL teachers means involving in a different community of practices (Wenger, 1998). Accordingly, EFL teachers can "develop shared forms of practice, and engage in identity construction and reconstruction" (Yuan & Burn, 2016, p. 5) through involvement in the action research community of practices. In the identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs, the EFL teacher educators should prepare such a venue for the teachers to conduct action research and share it in a different community of practices, which helps their identity development.

The inclusion of action research in EFL teacher education programs showed follow the internal and external supports (Yuan & Burns, 2017). This means that the teacher education programs should spare enough room for the EFL teachers to negotiate on their action research. Moreover, such programs should instruct the EFL teachers to be able to conduct action research. Given that, EFL teacher education programs can ask EFL teachers to do activities like "written reports, presentations, and demonstration lessons" (Yuan & Burns, 2017, p. 18) to develop the teachers' identity as a teacher-researcher. To fulfill such a purpose, the EFL teacher education programs should "promote research as a practical, feasible, locally relevant, and enjoyable undertaking" (Borg, 2017, p. 4) to help EFL teachers overcome the complexes which are in their way to accept the identity of a teacher-researcher. This needs full understanding and instruction of action research as an intervention of the current practices (*Action*) done by the EFL teachers and the systematic observation of those practices (*Research*) by the EFL teacher educators in the EFL teacher education programs.

### **Emphasizing Sociocultural Aspects of EFL Teacher Education**

It is revealed through the analysis of interviews that both EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers believed that the sociocultural aspects of EFL teaching should be injected into the EFL teacher education programs. The following excerpts (7 and 8) are parts of the interviews made by Ali and Radin.

#### Excerpt # 7

... teachers should take into consideration the fact that each learner is unique and should take advantage of unique techniques so teacher trainers should empower teachers to distinguish among learners ....

#### Excerpt # 8

... teacher education programs should consider the reality of English teaching in the community ... we have different cultures, ethnicities, etc. which have effects on the teaching profession in the future ....

Sociocultural aspects of English teacher education which lead to the sociocultural identity of English teachers are about “teacher’s applications of knowledge of sociocultural dimensions of the field and sociocultural factors that impact teaching and learning in the teacher’s practice” (Pennington, 2015, p. 27). Hence, the linguistic, gender, ethnic, and racial features are in association with sociocultural aspects of language teaching which the development of these features can develop teachers’ sociocultural identity. Given that, each of the mentioned features is different in different contexts (Morgan & Clarke, 2011), showing the importance of teaching based on the contexts in the process of the policymaking of EFL teacher education programs. The sociocultural identity of EFL teachers should be approached not only through instructions in EFL teacher education programs but also through a dialogic approach. Dialogism, according to Bakhtin (1990), is a two-way process based on which each action from an individual has a response sent out by others. Consequently, dialogism is the relationship between self and others establishing through actions and responses, leading to identity development. The EFL teacher education programs should take into account the diversity in the contexts of EFL teaching and enrich the EFL teachers to be able to make connections between self and others about different EFL teaching aspects including linguistic, gender, ethnic, and racial features.

It is believed that the sociocultural identity of teachers can be developed by EFL teacher education through *actions* and *reflections* (Pennington, 2015). Hence, through including a dialogic self to others’ actions and reflection practices in EFL teacher education programs, the EFL teacher educators can push their students to understand the teaching realities of different contexts they want to teach English.

### **Developing Teacher Awareness about English Teaching Varieties, Especially Cultural Ones**

The final theme, which was pointed out by both EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers, was developing teacher awareness about the varieties existing in English teaching, including cultural varieties. Excerpts 9 and 10 are parts of the interviews made by Sina and Radman, respectively.

#### **Excerpt # 9**

The concept of identity of any type, i.e. cultural identity, national identity, identity processing styles, aspects of identity, is an integral and indispensable component of ELT teaching and learning programs.

In this regard, teachers and learners' awareness about identity issues needs to be included in the ELT curriculums at the level of theory and practice in workshops and classroom settings ....

#### **Excerpt # 10**

... an issue in English teaching is that the English teachers are facing with differences in many respects; however, they are not aware of those differences, and this causes problems in the classrooms ....

It is believed that English language teaching is a cosmopolitan act (Stanton, 2006) which means that the differences in cultural varieties brought to the English teaching contexts by teachers, students, and other stakeholders will influence the cultural identity development of English teachers. According to Stanton (2006), there should be a continuum based on which the negotiation of cultural identity encompasses local, national, global, and transnational cultural variations. However, negotiating on such cultural variations needs awareness about them from different English teaching and learning stakeholders, including English teachers. Developing English teachers' awareness of cultural variations means that the teachers will be able to negotiate cultural issues existing in their classrooms to push the process of language teaching. Even though it is not easy to instruct all the cultural variations to the EFL teachers in the EFL teacher education programs, the EFL educators can address it through developing the critical thinking of their students. Meihami (2019) believed that developing critical thinking of the EFL teachers may lead to their cultural awareness development and, finally, their cultural identity development. Consequently, it will be of utmost importance for the EFL teacher educators to include critical thinking enrichment activities in their programs to help EFL teachers establish their methods to encounter the cultural variations in the classes.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This study was an attempt to investigate the perspectives of EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers about the features of identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs, aiming to examine where the commonality of perspectives lies between the

two groups. It was revealed through the course of interview analysis that the EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers believed that EFL teacher education programs need to include addressing reflective pedagogy, bridging the gap between theory and practice, involving EFL teachers in action research, emphasizing sociocultural aspects of EFL teacher education, and developing EFL teacher awareness about the varieties. Thus, it can be concluded from the findings that EFL teacher education policymakers can plan for an identity-oriented EFL teacher education program in line with the perspectives of EFL language teacher educators and EFL teachers.

Since the essence of EFL teacher identity development is a dynamic one (Henry, 2016; Rashidi & Meihami, 2017), the identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs need to address the dynamicity of English teachers' identity development. The common features asserted by the EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers for identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs can provide the ground for addressing dynamicity in identity development. The five common features of identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs, from reflective pedagogy to sociocultural aspects of teacher education, are dynamic asking the EFL teachers to follow dynamic and dialogic processes to develop teachers' identity development.

Moreover, the declared features of identity-oriented EFL teacher education programs by EFL teacher educators and EFL teachers emphasize the necessity of EFL teacher awareness about the different assumptions of English language teaching including cultural varieties (Siskin, 2007). Preparing a negotiating identity-oriented EFL teacher education program by the EFL policymakers can lead the English teachers to participate in such programs to be aware of the differences and varieties about teaching English as a second or foreign language. Hence, for instance, negotiating about cultural issues in identity-based EFL teacher education programs as a part of the sociocultural aspect of English learning and teaching can act as fuel for the critical reflection and critical thinking of English teachers and may lead to their identity development (Meihami, 2019).

The researchers believe that if an identity-based EFL teacher education program will be planned and run by the EFL language policymakers to include addressing reflective pedagogy, bridging the gap between theory and practice, involving EFL teachers in action research, emphasizing sociocultural aspects of English teacher education, and developing teacher awareness about the varieties, the development of EFL teachers critical stance, as an important factor in language teachers' professional development (Nuske, 2015; Trent, 2017), can be fulfilled. The critical stance of teachers "can serve as a lens through which to view what they learn about the nature, learning, and teaching of languages" (Yazan, 2019). Given that, English language teacher educators can develop English teachers' identity based on addressing these features and developing their critical stance about the teaching profession.

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