Iranian EFL Teachers' Reflection and Resilience as a Predictor of Teachers Burn Out: A Structural Equating Model

Narges Seidi

English department Faculty of humanity, University of Guilan ,Iran

Abstract

Recently teachers have become more and more the centre of attention in education system .The crucial role of the teacher-related variables in affecting teachers' performances as well as students learning outcomes has been proved in the numerous studies in the various educational settings. Hence, the research in teacher variables has received attention in English as a Foreign Language context. To contribute this line of the research, the present study aims to investigate the role of the teacher reflective and resilience in predicting teacher burnout. The data were collected from 230 English teachers and three questionnaires .The results of the Structural Equation Modeling showed that teacher reflection demonstrated 18.1%of the burnout variance while teacher resilience showed 10.7% of the variance in teacher burnout. Additionally, although either of the two variables had a unique contribution to burnout, teacher reflection was stronger predictor of burnout than resilience. The findings of the study have significant implications for in both in-service and pre-service teacher preparation programs.

Key words: Teachers burnout. Resilience, Reflective practice

Introduction

Teacher education has always been under rigorous changes, however , the last two decades of the 21th century have experienced the utmost shifts in the orientation, in such a way that teachers tend to be "active, thinking decision makers" (Borg, 2003, p. 81).

Eminence of Post-method pedagogy had raised this shift in attention which was an alternative to compensate for the limitations of the method in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Crandall, 2000; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In the light of this new era, teacher educators could provide teachers with the practical strategies and techniques to develop their "personal practical knowledge" which is required to overcome the challenges in the classroom (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362).One of these practical strategies is reflection which is known as "the process of mirroring the environment none judgmentally or critically for the purpose of decision making" (Milrood, 1999, p. 10). Reflection on teaching practice empowers practitioners to gain a clear insight of contextual variables in the classroom and this will enhance teachers' awareness of the pragmatics of language instruction, thereby improving their competence in relating theoretical abstractions to practical applications in the classroom (Wallace, 1991).

One of the teacher-related variables is burnout which is defined as resulting from a long term occupational stress, particularly among human service workers, including teachers (Jennett, Harris, &Mesibov, 2003). Although, for the different reasons, teachers may experience stress in

their work at some points (Jennett et al., 2003), most of them cope successfully with such a stress. However, burnout may be the endpoint of coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress (Jennett et al., 2003).

Also teacher burnout often described as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Maslach and Jackson (1981) describe burnout as composed of three components: depersonalization refers to teachers' unwilling, indifferent and dispassionate feeling about his/her students or colleague that may further leads to sense of isolation and detachment. A reduced sense of personal accomplishment relates to the teachers who evaluate themselves as they feel that they are no longer doing a meaningful or worth full job. Emotional exhaustion is the feeling that characterized by low level of the energy and constant fatigue.

The significance of the burnout can be discussed in the different dimensions; although some teachers at some points may step out and quit their job, the unenthusiastic and unmotivated teachers will stay and continue their inefficient teaching that causes the irreversible and serious damages to the educational system.

Another variable of the present study is resilience ,as an ecological point of view, it is conceptualized as a number of behavioral manifestations which represent how persons interact with their contexts and what kind of opportunities they may have in order to grow and develop (Ungar, 2012) .

Teacher resilience is a quite new area of the research, and it seems as a multidimensional and developmental construct. It has been defined as a malleable, adaptive ''process of development that occurs overtime'' involving ''the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one's competence in the face of adverse conditions'' (Bobek, 2002, p.25).

Undoubtedly, teachers face various challenges during their profession which may put them at risk of burnout or attrition. Resilient teachers are those who equipped with the adequate competence to tackles their barrios in the difficult situations, manage the classroom properly, develop good relations with their students, hold positive perceptions, have a sense of satisfaction, and are more committed to their job (Howard & Johnson, 2004). It is also believed that the students of more resilient practitioners are more likely to have more effective learning outcomes (Day, 2008; Day & Gu, 2014).

Patterson, Collins and Abbott (2004)believed that resilient instructors are basically those individuals who, "use energy effectively despite adverse conditions" (p. 3).Similarly, Howard and Johnson (2002) argued that resilient teachers constantly demonstrated: a)" *A sense of agency, b)* Moral purpose, c) A strong support group and administrative support, and d) Competence and a sense of accomplishment (p. 11)."

In addition ,high moral was known as an another feature of resilient teachers , defined as, "a positive attitude, being enthusiastic about teaching, being involved in their work," and instructors who "are themselves" (Stanford, 2001, p. 76).Closely related to the concept of moral , Bobek (2002)saw sense of humor as an effective factor in promoting teacher resilience . Humor "is vital to strengthening an instructor's resilience. An instructor who promotes a sense of humor and the ability to laugh at their own errors has an excellent medium for releasing frustrations" (p. 204).

Literature Review

Recently research about teacher- related variables has received attention in the EFL context (Choi & Lee, 2016; Nishino, 2012; Fathi &Derakhshan, 2019; Fathi&Savadi Rostami, 2018). In a study Mahmoodi and Ghaslani (2014) examined the possible relationship among teachers' burnout, emotional intelligence, and reflection. A sample of 152 EFL teachers from different language institutes took part in this study. The results unfolded that emotional intelligence and reflection were inversely correlated with burnout, and both variables were significant predictors of the degree of burnout.

In the same vein, Košir, Tement, Licardo, and Habe (2015) studied the role of rumination and reflection in elementary school teachers' classroom stress and burnout. The results revealed that rumination was a significant predictor of stress and burnout; also, it was found that although reflection was not a direct predictor of stress and burnout, it mediated the relation between perceived job characteristics and stress.

Despite the importance of the concept of the resilience, the empirical studies on its causes and effects, development and correlate are rare. Partovi and Tafazoli (2016) in their study believed that EFL teachers with higher self-regulation were more resilient in their students' points of view. McKay and Barton (2018) investigated qualitatively the relationship between reflection and resilience and reported that art-based reflection can promote teachers' resilience.

In (2019) Parsi conducted a study in which he explored the relationship between teacher resilience and creativity, analyzing the data showed significant relationship between the variables and teachers' resilience was a significant predictor of their creativity.

Shirazizadeh, Taj and Amanzadeh (2019) explored the relationships among reflection, role stressors, and resilience. The results revealed there was a significant positive relation between reflection and resilience but the correlation between reflection and role stressors was found to be negative. Accordingly, some components of reflection (metacognitive and critical reflection) significantly predict role conflict and metacognitive and practical reflection were also found to be significant predictors of teachers' resilience.

Regarding the relationship between reflection and burnout, few empirical studies have been conducted; For example, Shirazizadeh and Karimpour (2019) investigated the relationships among perfectionism, reflection, and burnout among Iranian EFL teachers. The results uncovered that teachers' reflection was a significant correlate of their burnout with less reflective teachers experiencing more burnout.

Considering the significant role of the teacher reflection and resilience in the teachers' professional development and destructive role of the burnout on teachers performance, the present study seeks to answer following questions,

1- Does teacher reflective significantly predict burnout among EFL teachers?

2-Does teacher resilience significantly predict burnout among EFL teachers

3-Which variable is a stronger predictor of burnout among EFL teachers?

Methodology

Participants

In order to address the objectives of the study, a sample of 230 EFL teachers, 135 males and 95 females from two different provinces in Iran (Kermanshah, Hamedan,) and with various teaching experience and different educational degrees were chosen. Their teaching experience ranged from around 1 to 25 and their age varied from 23 to 52 years. All the respondents declare their consent to take part in the study.

Instrument

Teacher Burnout Scale

To measure teachers burnout, the educator version of the Maslach burnout scale (MBI-ES) which was validated by Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996) was manipulated .This inventory comprises 22 items, measure three burnout subscales: emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items), and reduced personal accomplishment (8 items).Responses were given on a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). The internal consistency indices for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment turned out to be 0.76, 0.63, and 0.73, respectively (Maslach, et al, 1996).

Reflective practice inventory

In order to assesses the respondents' reflective practices, English language teaching reflection Inventory designed by Akbari et al. (2010) was used. It comprises 29 items and measures participants' reflective practices in five subscales; practical reflection, cognitive reflection, affective reflection, metacognitive reflection, critical reflection. The inventory should be answered based on a 5-point Likert scale varying from (1) "never" to (5) "always".

Resilience Scale

To measure the resilience of teachers, the short version of the Connor- Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007) which includes 10 items were manipulated. Connor and Davidson (2003) developed and validated the 25-item version of this questionnaire as a multi-faceted measure of resilience. It modified, shortened, and revalidated by Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007).It is a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by 0 (not true at all) and 4 (true nearly all the time). The internal consistency of the 10-item CD-RISC was evaluated by calculating Cronbach's alpha.The alpha value of .85.

Findings

The data analysis of this study was conducted by using SPSS AMOS 20.Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to evaluated the predictive power of the independent on dependent variables and a number of goodness of fit indices were examined. These manipulated indices included: $\chi 2/df$ (chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI).

The values of these indices are acceptable if $\chi 2/\ df$ <3, TLI>.95, GFI>.95, RMSEA<.06, and CFI>.95 (Hu &Bentler, 1999).

Table 1.Overall Reliability of the construct and Factor Loading of Indicators

Construct	Indicators	Cranach's α/CR	Factor loadings	*t-value*
Teacher reflective	1. I have a file where I keep my accounts of my teaching for reviewing purposes.	0.83/0.83	0.81	12.985
	2. I talk about my classroom experiences with my colleagues and seek their advice/feedback.		0.77	11.258
	3.After each lesson, I write about the accomplishments/failures of that lesson or I talk about the lesson to a Colleague.		0.71	11.025
	4. I discuss practical/theoretical issues with my colleagues.		0.68	12.114
	5. I observe other teachers' classrooms to learn about their efficient practices.		0.75	10.361
	6. I ask my peers to observe my teaching and comment on my teaching performance.		0.88	11.256
	7. I read books/articles related to effective teaching to improve my classroom performance.		0.84	11.221
	8. I participate in workshops/conferences related to teaching/learning issues.		0.89	12.036
	9. I think of writing articles based on my classroom experiences.		0.77	12.740
	10. I look at journal articles or search the internet to see what the recent developments in my profession are.		0.79	12.951
	11. I carry out small scale research activities in my classes to become better informed of learning/teaching Processes.		0.84	10.144
	12. I think of classroom events as potential research topics and think of finding a method for investigating them.		0.84	12.756
	13. I talk to my students to learn about their learning styles and preferences.		0.89	12.336
	14. I talk to my students to learn about their family backgrounds, hobbies, interests, and abilities.		0.88	10.122
	15. I ask my students whether they like a teaching task or not.		0.77	12.714
	16. As a teacher, I think about my teaching philosophy and the way it is affecting my teaching.		0.84	10.854
	17. I think of the ways my biography or my background affects the way I define myself as a teacher.		0.78	12.754
	18. I think of the meaning or significance of my job as a teacher.		0.81	11.365

	19. I try to find out which aspects of my teaching provide me with a sense of satisfaction.		0.78	12.568
	20. I think about my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.		0.82	11.714
	21. I think of the positive/negative role models that I have had as a student and the way they have affected me in my practice.		0.82	11.752
	22. I think of inconsistencies and contradictions that occur in my classroom practice.		0.65	10.581
	23. I think about the instances of social injustice in my own surroundings and try to discuss them in my classes.		0.85	12.125
	24. I think of ways to enable my students to change their social lives in fighting poverty, discrimination, and Gender bias.		0.81	12.235
	25. In my teaching, I include less-discussed topics, such as old age, AIDS, discrimination against women and Minorities and poverty.		0.85	11.235
	26. I think about the political aspects of my teaching and the way I may affect my students' political views.		0.68	10.014
	27. I think of ways through which I can promote tolerance and democracy in my classes and in the society in general.		0.74	8.753
	28. I think about the ways gender, social class, and race influence my students' achievements.		0.79	11.752
	29. I think of outside social events that can influence my teaching inside the class.		0.77	10.235
Resilience	I am able to adapt when changes occur.	0.75/0.75	0.66	10.325
	I can deal with whatever comes my way.		0.75	11.214
	I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.		0.65	10.415
	Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.		0.88	12.912
	I tend to bounce back after illness, injury or other hardships.		0.88	12.210
	I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.		0.80	11.352
	Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.		0.79	11.851
	I am not easily discouraged by failure.		0.85	12.08
	I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.		0.78	11.28
	I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.		0.85	10.87

Burnout	I feel emotionally drained from my work	0.80/0.80	0.80	12.74
	I feel used up at the end of the workday.		0.82	11.98
	I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.		0.89	11.93
	Working with people all day is really a strain for me.		0.87	12.34
	I feel burned out from my work.		0.66	10.59
	I feel frustrated by my job.		0.64	10.21
	Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.		0.66	9.635
	I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.		0.75	12.012
	I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal subjects.		0.65	1.531
	I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.		0.99	12.456
	I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.		0.87	12.312
	I don't care what happens to some students.		0.67	10.258
	I feel students blame me for some of their problems.		0.72	11.245
	I can easily understand how my students feel about things.		0.67	10.021
	I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.		0.84	11.423
	I feel very energetic.		0.84	12.234
	I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.		0.79	11.912
	I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.		0.86	12.312
	I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.		0.64	11.021
	In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.		0.81	12.254

Table .2 the correlations and descriptive statistics between the constructs and their underlying sub-constructs.

	M(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1-Res	20.10(7.30)	1.00							
2-Pr	40.12(11.100)	.21*	1.00						
3-Cr	34.80(10.52)	.22*	.21*	1.00					
4-Ar	41.14(12.52)	.29*	.23*	.22*	1.00				
5-Mr	39.41(11.88)	.36*	.30*	.34*	.32**	1.00			
6-Cr	40.95(13.75)	.34*	.33*	.29*	.28**	.24**	1.00		
7-Total Ref	125.15(29.12)	.33*	.26**	.31* *	.33**	.32**	.34**	1.00	
8-Burnout	42.13(15.42)	-.37*	-.25*	-.29**	-.31**	-.33**	- .30**	-.47**	1.00

* P < .05.
** P < .01
RES=Resilience, Pr=Practical reflection, Cr=cognitive reflection, Ar=Affective reflection, Mr=Metacognitive reflection,Cr=critical reflection .
Total Ref=total reflective practice

As it clear, the correlation coefficient between total reflective practice and burnout(r=.47, p<.01) was greater than that between resilience and burnout(r=.37, p<.01).

As shown in table 1 two models were determined to analyze through Structural Equating Model (SEM).The two hypothetical models have a similar correlation, so both of them were statistically taken identical .In order to have a reliable statistical results ,models A and B were examined. Goodness of the fit indices was manipulated to investigate adequacy of the proposed model .The model evaluation showed a good fit to the data (Table 3).Based on the model A, the correlations among the three latent variables were significant. Teacher reflective practice and resilience had 7% of shared variance (R_2=.238). Teacher reflective practice and burnout showed 18.1% common variance (R_2=.429).In the same token, resilience and burnout shared 10.7 % of variance (R_2=.326).Hence, based on the above mentioned results, teacher reflective was a stronger predictor of burn out than resilience.

Afterward ,the unique impact of teacher reflective practice and resilience beyond and above each other ,R^2 increments were examined by comparing the percentage of variability in burnout depicted in models A and B .In model B, teacher reflective practice and resilience illustrated 25% variance in burnout. So, it can be stated that resilience explained for the extra amount of 5% of the variance of teacher burnout, beyond the single teacher reflective practice variable (ΔR^2=.25−.20=.05).Besides, the unique effect of the reflective practice in predicting teacher burn out was 16% (ΔR^2=.25−.11=.14).Also, it can be inferred that unique effect of teacher reflective practice was higher than resilience in predicting burnout.

Table 3.Goodness of Fit
Indices

	χ2	χ2/df	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	Δ χ2
Models A and B	4.75	1.31	.78	.77	.88	.06	
Model A1(β Res=0)	10.12	2.19	.77	.76	.87	.05	5.12
ModelA2(βTrp=0)	11.23	2.77	.76	.75	.86	.04	6.10

Note. Res= resilience; Trp= teacher reflective
practice* p <.05.

In the next step, in order to examine the unique contribution of resilience and teacher self-efficacy on burnout, every relevant beta weight limited to zero and then their χ2 differences were investigated in model B. Since constraining beta weights to zero leads to substantial reduction in χ2, the unique effect of every construct in predicting burnout is considered to be significant. As it clear in Table3 in model A1 (β resilience =0) as well as model A2 (β teacher reflective practice =0), the results yielded significant chi-square changes (model A1 (β resilience =0): Δχ2 (1, N=230 = 5.12, *p*<.05; model A2 (β teacher reflective practice =0): Δχ2 (1, N=230) = 6.10, *p*<.05). These results unfolded the significant unique contributions of resilience and teacher reflective practice as significant predictors of burnout.
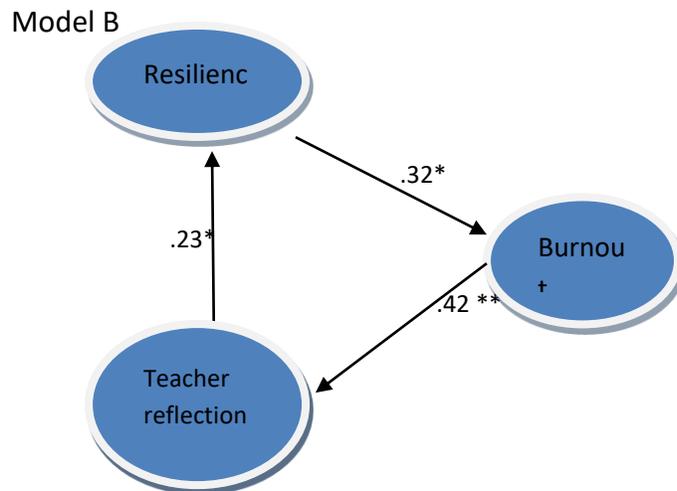
Model B
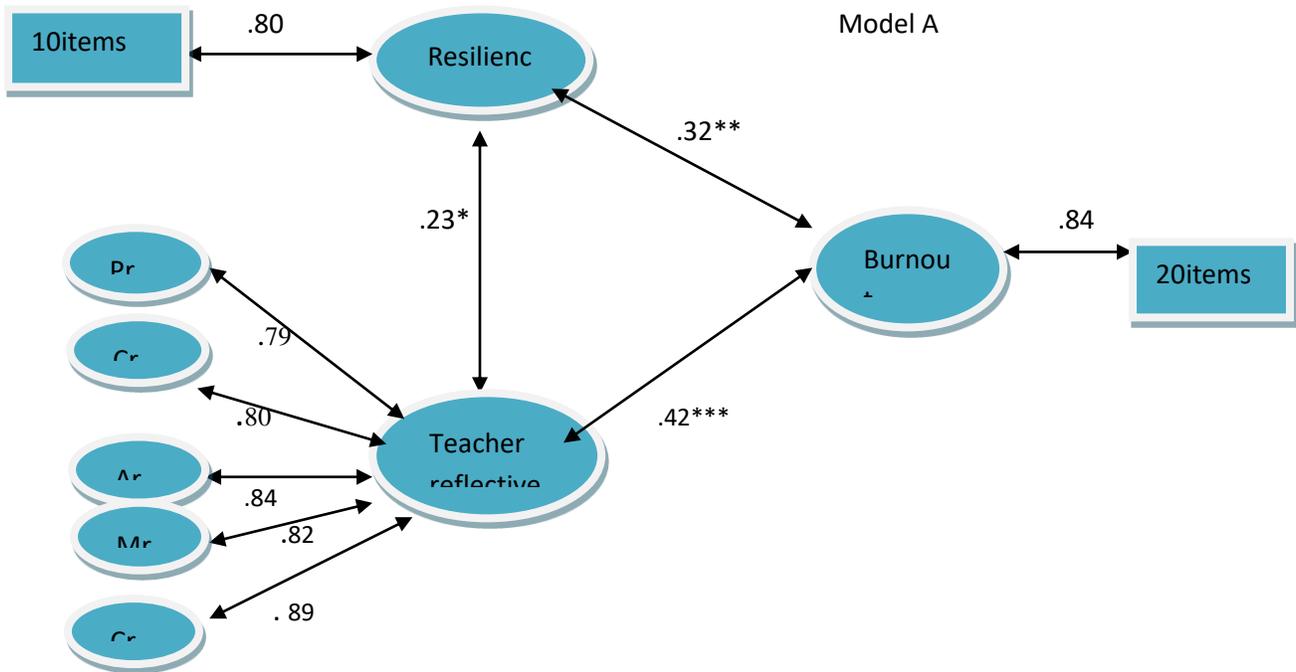
Figure1 .Resilience and teacher reflection as predictor of teacher burnout; teacher reflection: Pr=practical reflection, co=cognitive reflection, Ar=affective reflection, Mr=Metacognitive reflection, Cr=Critical reflection *p <.05.** p <.01. ***.p <.001.

Discussion

This study was set to explore the role of the resilience and teacher reflective in predicting teachers burnout among Iranian EFL teachers. According to the results of the Structural equating modeling, two constructs can predict teacher burnout; however, teacher reflective was a stronger predictor of burnout than resilience. This finding is in line with the study of Shirazizadeh ,Tajik and Amnzadeh (2019)in which they found high reflection is positively correlated with resilience Hence ,it can be stated that those teachers who are more willing to file their lesson reports ,take part in group discussion about their carrier (Practical reflection) ,consider their identity as a teacher and critical appraisal about their profession (Metacognition reflection) ,would have deeper understanding about their profession ,manipulate strategies to manage their stress and therefore are more resilience .

Additionally, the results of this study justified the findings the study by Shirazizadeh and Karimpour (2019) in which they argued that less reflective teachers experiencing more burnout. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) reported that teachers can develop their identity through interpretation and reinterpretation of who they are and who they wish to become, so it would be concluded that identity formation is also a reflection process which makes teachers more emotionally attached to their roles and influences their worldviews (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007).

Besides, it was revealed that resilience could significantly predict teaching burnout of EFL teachers. This findings support studies in which a negative relationship was observed between teacher resilience and burnout (e.g., Beckett, 2011, Dworkin, 2009; Hong, 2012; Karimi & Adam, 2018; Richards et al., 2016). The more resilient teachers have the capacity to handle the problems at workplace and feel less apprehension accordingly. Teachers who feel more resilience experience less vocational stress, leading to a less probability of feeling burnout (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

As aforementioned earlier, teacher reflection was a stronger predictor of the burnout than resilience, it is due to the effective role of the teacher reflection as an influential variable in teacher-related attribute. According to Farrell (1999) effective teaching takes place when teachers negotiate on the ground rules. Reflective practice provides teachers to detect their attitude, develop management skills, and encourage them to manipulate proper practice in classrooms.

In addition, reflective teachers are more active in putting their students' needs in priorities, tackles their problems in the language learning, so they feel positive about their job, in such an atmosphere they may feel less emotionally detached from their career or even be exhausted. Based on this, it can be stated that the stronger degrees of reflection can protect teachers against burnout and because high reflective teachers may possess stronger professional identity, emotional attachment, and self-efficacy, all of which protect teachers against burnout causes (El Helou, Nabhani, & Bahous, 2016).Besides, According to Richards (1998), "Every teacher has a professional responsibility to reflect and evaluate about their practices. As a result of this approach, reflective teachers will be able to identify how to improve their professional activity in order to improve the quality of pupils' learning".

That reflective teaching is stronger predictor of the burnout than resilient can be justified on the ground that reflective teaching motivate teachers to think, to notice and analyze their own teaching method in order to think about their experiences and to relate theory and practice. (Qing, 2009), reflection leads teachers to be more enthusiastic in achieving their professional goals by pave the way for their students to overcome the challenges of learning language . This higher attachment to their teacher role and their students would necessarily involve them in a wide range of metacognitive and affective reflective activities (Akbari et al., 2010)

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided empirical support for versatility of the reflection that is useful in the various professional developments. The findings showed high level of reflection protect teachers from burnout, so worth to receive attention in teacher education programs. These findings call for more attention to help teachers especially pre-service ones to promote their reflection, raising their awareness about worth of their thoughts .Therefore, teacher education programs need more investment on providing supporting systems for teachers to tackle their barriers, pursuing real goals, and eventually suppress burnout.

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