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## A Transcendental Phenomenology into How Teacher Educators Address Social and Psychological Elements of Teachers' Professional Identity

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## A Transcendental Phenomenology into How Teacher Educators Address Social and Psychological Elements of Teachers' Professional Identity

### Abstract

Addressing social and psychological elements of teachers' professional identities is crucially important to develop teachers' knowledge and practice concerning social and psychological issues in their classes. Thus, this study was an attempt to investigate how Iranian EFL teacher educators addressed social and psychological elements in teacher education programs to develop teachers' professional identities. To that end, a series of phenomenological interviews were conducted with four EFL teacher educators to delve into their past, current, and future practices. Moreover, the syllabi covered by the EFL teacher educators were analyzed as a verification of the data obtained through phenomenological interviews. Explicitation of data was done through using Moustakas's (1994) systematic approach to analyze the interviews. The thematic analysis of phenomenological interviews indicated that EFL teacher educators addressed the social elements in teacher education programs by introducing sociolinguistics, collaborative activities, social negotiation, social awareness-raising, and social and cultural engagement. Moreover, the findings indicated that teacher educators addressed EFL teachers' psychological elements through action research, critical thinking, autonomy-enhancing aids, and helping teachers understand emotional work values. It can be concluded that Iranian EFL teacher educators address social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identities through various approaches which have been discussed in the current study. Using approaches that can affect psychological and social elements of professional identity simultaneously is the implication of the current study that should be followed by the EFL teacher educators.

### Keywords

professional identity, transcendental phenomenology, phenomenological interviews, social and psychological elements, EFL teacher educators

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### Acknowledgements

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# A Transcendental Phenomenology into How Teacher Educators Address Social and Psychological Elements of Teachers' Professional Identity

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Addressing social and psychological elements of teachers' professional identities is crucially important to develop teachers' knowledge and practice concerning social and psychological issues in their classes. Thus, this study was an attempt to investigate how Iranian EFL teacher educators addressed social and psychological elements in teacher education programs to develop teachers' professional identities. To that end, a series of phenomenological interviews were conducted with four EFL teacher educators to delve into their past, current, and future practices. Moreover, the syllabi covered by the EFL teacher educators were analyzed as a verification of the data obtained through phenomenological interviews. Explicitation of data was done through using Moustakas's (1994) systematic approach to analyze the interviews. The thematic analysis of phenomenological interviews indicated that EFL teacher educators addressed the social elements in teacher education programs by introducing sociolinguistics, collaborative activities, social negotiation, social awareness-raising, and social and cultural engagement. Moreover, the findings indicated that teacher educators addressed EFL teachers' psychological elements through action research, critical thinking, autonomy-enhancing aids, and helping teachers understand emotional work values. It can be concluded that Iranian EFL teacher educators address social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identities through various approaches which have been discussed in the current study. Using approaches that can affect psychological and social elements of professional identity simultaneously is the implication of the current study that should be followed by the EFL teacher educators.

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## Introduction

Professional identity is a dynamic concept that is subject to changes and is impacted by a series of external and internal elements (Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; Zembylas, 2003), calling social and psychological elements, respectively (Meijer, 2017). Addressing social and psychological elements in language teachers' professional identity development is crucial since language teachers' schema of the teaching profession is not the same worldwide (Richardson & Watt, 2018). Hence, it will be necessary to understand these elements and how language teacher educators apply them while designing language teacher education programs. The language teacher educators' ignorance of the social and psychological elements when

developing professional identity in language teacher education programs may cause language teachers to be unaware of what happens inside and outside the classrooms.

According to Meijer (2017), the influence of the social elements, also known as the external elements, on teachers' professional learning mirrors the role of teachers' environments in their professional identity development. This directly relates to teacher learning, which is "a long-term, complex developmental process that is the result of participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching" (Johnson, 2009, p. 10). Teachers are experiencing different learning contexts during their lives, from their school time to their participation in teacher education programs (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Consequently, the diversity of social norms and stereotypes influences how teacher educators design and prepare teacher education programs to address teachers' professional identity development associated with social elements. Such programs should help teachers develop their competence to align with the changes of the society (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992).

Moreover, the psychological elements play a critical role in developing language teachers' identities. The psychological elements of language teachers' professional identities include teacher motivation, teacher emotion, and teacher autonomy. Teacher motivation is described as a concept that is multidimensional, complex, and responsive to the context (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Roth, 2014). There is a relationship between teacher motivation and teacher identity in that teacher identity impacts what teachers may be motivated to do or not do. Moreover, teacher emotion is a sort of psychic energy that teachers invest in their practices to shape their professional identities (Harding & Pribram, 2004). By understanding the classroom's emotional messages, teachers can choose different practices based on their professional identities to respond to those messages appropriately. Teacher autonomy, moreover, is another psychological element contributing to the teachers' initiative in their teaching, meaning that the autonomous teachers are self-dependent on their teaching approaches. Thus, as a whole, not addressing teacher motivation, emotion, and autonomy in language teacher education programs can be detrimental to language teachers' professional identity development.

Not paying attention to the social elements in teacher education programs may lead to teachers' inability to foster their students' language socialization (Hornberger, 2008), which causes various problems such as students' inability to fulfill communications with individuals of different social and cultural varieties (Hall, 2008). Moreover, if teachers cannot address psychological elements, such as motivation, emotion, and autonomy in their classrooms (Mercer, 2018), they fail to conquer the psychological problems in their classrooms. Hence, teachers' inability to address social and psychological elements can negatively affect learners (Meijer, 2017). Furthermore, there is a chain of effect from EFL teachers to EFL learners concerning social and psychological elements (Dörnyei, 2018). Thus, it is crucial to understand how EFL teacher educators prepare EFL teachers to address these elements. That is, if teachers' professional identities are not developed regarding the social and psychological elements, some problems may hinder EFL teachers from using their optimum teaching professionalism (Johnson, 2009). Hence, EFL teacher education programs should be investigated to see how EFL teacher educators address the social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identities. By so doing, the ground for future research to examine the strengths and weaknesses of EFL teacher education programs can be approached to develop prosperous EFL teacher education programs. The current study aimed to investigate how Iranian EFL teacher educators addressed social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identities.

## Literature Review

### Social Elements and Professional Identity

Language is defined as a social practice in anthropology, critical social theory, cognitive psychology, and applied linguistics (Johnson, 2009). Hence, language can be considered the medium through which individuals can share their experiences with others in the society and creating communities of practice. The social activities gain their meaning from the social structures, not from grammar or vocabulary. Given that, the importance of social practices needs to be addressed in language teacher education programs when language teacher educators aim to develop language teachers' professional identities. The social elements of professional identity development include a number of concepts encompassing cultural, historical, political, and economic aspects of teaching. As Johnson (2009) stated, language teachers need to become consciously aware of the social issues. However, this is not an easy task for language teachers due to the ever-changing essence of cultural, historical, political, and economic issues.

A concept proposed by Agar (1994) as *languaculture* captures the social practice of language teaching. According to *languaculture*, language teachers should be conscious of the symbolic resources related to the society they teach. By doing so, as Johnson (2009, p. 46) stated, the language teachers "enact socially situated identities while simultaneously engaging in a socially situated activity." Consequently, it will be essential for the language teacher education programs to develop teachers' *languaculture* competence so that the teachers can socially construct their identities. These teachers will be able to figure out the inevitable changes in schools, societies, and communities of practice.

More critical than including social elements in the language teacher education programs is how to apply them in language teacher education programs. The principles proposed by Kumaravadivelu (2012), including the principle of particularity and principle of possibility, are conducive in how to address social elements in language teacher education programs. The principle of particularity focuses on the situations or social contexts in which the language teachers are teaching. According to Kumaravadivelu (2001), language teacher education programs should be sensitive toward particular groups of language teachers who are supposed to teach particular groups of learners. Kumaravadivelu (2012) believed that language teacher educators should include local resources and constraints into teacher education programs to address this principle.

The parameter of possibility has roots in critical pedagogy based on which "teachers in a critical pedagogy conduct research into these social and educational dynamics, design curricula around multiple macro-knowledges of education and the contexts" (Kincheloe, 2009, p. 34). By considering the parameter of possibility, language teacher educators can develop the professional identity of language teachers to establish teaching methodologies which can help them address the social realities in their classes. Accordingly, language teachers can be policy planners, textbook producers (Kumaravadivelu, 2012), reflectors, and action researchers (Yuan & Burns, 2017). Hence, including principle of possibility in teacher education programs can develop the teachers' professional identities.

### Psychological Element and Professional Identity: Motivation, Emotion, and Autonomy

In the current study, three concepts of motivation, emotion, and autonomy are categorized under the umbrella term of the psychological elements of language teachers' professional identity development. Oyserman et al. (2012, p. 70) stated that how "people are motivated to do, how they think, and make sense of themselves and others, the actions they

take, and their feelings and ability to control or regulate themselves" can be predicted by their identities. Hence, it can be said that the factors motivating a teacher to choose the teaching profession are in direct relation to that of teachers' professional identities. Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) is a model proposed by Richardson and Watt (2006) to seek the relationship between teacher motivation and identity development. The model dichotomizes teacher motivation into three levels: highly engaged persisters, who are the most motivated teachers, highly engaged switchers, whose motivation level is similar to the highly engaged persisters but do not want to continue teaching career for a long time (they are seeking new careers), and lower engaged desisters, who are lowly motivated by their teaching professions due to inappropriate practicum experiences. It is believed that by providing professional supporting contexts, the lower engaged desisters can put a step toward becoming highly engaged persisters. Furthermore, teachers can develop their professional identities when they find a context where they can practice what they are motivated to do (Roth, 2014).

Teacher emotion is an inseparable aspect of the teaching profession, which has an inevitable relationship with teachers' professional identity development (Day, 2018). Wróbel (2013) called teachers "emotional labor," meaning that teachers are responsible for creating a learning-friendly place for learners to learn, providing empathy for learners with special needs, and showing positive emotions toward every learner. The emotional activities which the teachers do during their teaching will create a part of their professional identities. If the emotional side of teacher education has received the deserved priority, this will help the teachers equip themselves with a "deep acting" tool that helps the teachers understand the classrooms' emotional requirements (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). By doing so, the teachers obtain the capacity for "professional empathy," meaning that teaching is "followed up by appropriate interventions by the teacher that provides enhanced learning opportunities for the student" (Day, 2018, p. 66). Given the importance of teacher emotion in teachers' professional identity development, it can be stated that the language teacher education programs need to help language teachers find the capacity for "deep acting" and "professional empathy" in their teaching. Consequently, they should not be ignorant of the emotional side of language classrooms.

Different researchers have addressed the concept of teacher autonomy with different definitions. Benson (2001, p. 174) referred to teacher autonomy as the "ideas of professional freedom and self-directed professional development." Smyth (1989) thought of teacher autonomy as the "critical reflection" capacity, which teachers can do in their classes. Moreover, Little (1995) believed that one of the characteristics of prosperous teachers is that they are autonomous in reflecting and analyzing their classrooms' affective and cognitive aspects. Accordingly, it will be of utmost importance for the teacher educators, including language teacher educators, to develop their autonomy. Teachers' professional identity development can help the development of teacher autonomy. Teacher reflections and the preceding activities that the teachers will do after their reflections need teacher professional action and reaction. This means that developing teachers' professional identities can develop teacher autonomy and vice-versa. The studies done on teacher autonomy showed that teacher research, action research, and reflective practices could develop teacher autonomy (Mello et al., 2008). Given that, language teacher education programs need to include activities to enhance language teachers' autonomy.

### **Authors' Context**

The whole story of doing this study dates back to the time I (Hussein) started my PhD at Shiraz University under the supervision of Professor Naser Rashidi, who guided me to address the topics related to teacher identity. After doing my PhD on EFL teachers' cultural

identity development, I understood that there are some related elements, including the social and psychological ones, which are influential in developing EFL teachers' professional identities. Therefore, after consulting the issues with Professor Rashidi, we decided to examine the social and psychological elements in the Iranian EFL teacher education programs. Addressing such elements in Iranian context was important for us because the context is a multicultural one (Meihami & Rashidi, 2020) and thus addressing or not addressing the social and psychological elements by teacher educators can have different effects on the professional identities of the EFL teachers. The topic was funded by Iranian National Elites Foundation. During eight months, we (Hussein Meihami and Naser Rashidi) investigated how Iranian EFL teacher educators address the social and psychological elements. We intended to find the approaches that EFL teacher educators used to address the elements.

## Methodology

### Design of the Study: Researchers' Role and Bracketing

This study used a qualitative research methodology to collect and analyze how EFL teacher educators address the social and psychological elements to develop EFL teachers' professional identities. To such an end, the researchers explored the EFL teacher educators' experiences through transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994), which aims to construct meaning out of the structure of experience by focusing less on the researchers' interpretation and more on participants' descriptions of the experiences. The critical concept in transcendental phenomenology is bracketing, proposed by Husserl (1962), "in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 126). Given that, in the current study, the researcher's role was "the primary instrument for data analysis and collection" (Merriam, 2009, p. 15) through implementing the concept of bracketing in which the researchers tried to obtain the reality of EFL teacher educators' experiences of addressing social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identities by analyzing teacher educators' current practices and future viewpoints. Thus, to design the study, the researchers went through the procedures for conducting transcendental phenomenology proposed by Moustakas (1994). The three steps to establish a transcendental phenomenology were extracted from Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 128):

- ***Determine if the research problem is best examined by using a psychological phenomenological approach:*** since the purpose of the study was to delve into the experiences of EFL teacher educators, transcendental phenomenology was an appropriate research design
- ***Identify a phenomenon of interest to study:*** the phenomenon under study was the way EFL teacher educators address social and psychological elements of teacher education programs
- ***Collect data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews:*** data were collected through multiple phenomenological interviews with four EFL teacher educators. Furthermore, their syllabi were well-scrutinized to find the (mis)matches between what participants mentioned in the interviews and their real practices

## Participants

This study's participants were four male EFL teacher educators involved in EFL teacher education programs at different universities in Iran. They were also teaching different courses of TEFL at different educational levels. Two of the participants (Ali and Ahmad, both pseudonyms) were professors of applied linguistics, one of the participants (Kamal, pseudonym) was an associate professor of applied linguistics, and one of the participants (Mehdi, pseudonym) was an assistant professor of applied linguistics. Their teaching experiences were between 12 to 28 years. However, they had different years of experience in EFL teacher education from 8 to 18 years. Table 1 shows information about the participants of the study. It is highly important to note that the four participants were EFL teacher educators.

**Table 1**

*Information about the Participants of the Study*

Pseudonyms	Educational affiliation	Years of teaching experiences	Years of experiences in EFL teacher education programs
Ali	Professor of applied linguistics	28	18
Ahmad	Professor of applied linguistics	25	15
Kamal	Associate professor of applied linguistics	18	12
Mehdi	Assistant professor of applied linguistics	15	8

## Data Collection

**Phenomenological interviewing.** To investigate how EFL teacher educators addressed EFL teacher education programs' social and psychological elements to develop EFL teachers' professional identities, the researchers conducted a series of phenomenological interviewing with the four EFL teacher educators. According to Ary et al. (2014, p. 471), phenomenological interviewing "attempts to examine lived experience through three in-depth interviews, with the first focused on the past, the second on the present, and the third on connecting the previous two to understand the essential experience."

**EFL teacher education syllabi.** The researchers also asked for the syllabi that the EFL teacher educators used for their teacher education programs during different time intervals, from their early stage of involvement in teacher education programs until their most recent program. By doing so, the materials, projects, etc. of EFL teacher education programs, which were important for the teacher educators, were obtained, and then they were compared to the findings of the phenomenological interviewing.

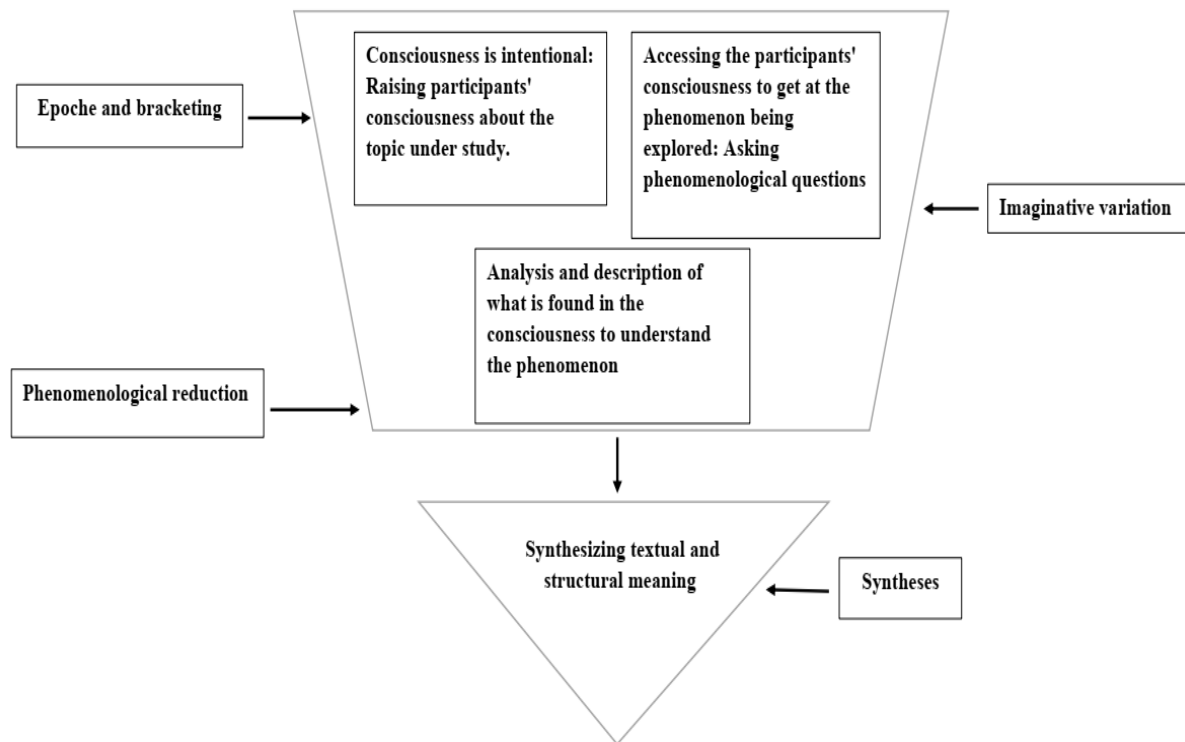
## Explication of Data

While doing a transcendental phenomenology, using the term 'explication of data' is more appropriate since, as Hycner (1985, p. 300) stated, the notion of data analysis "usually means a breaking into parts and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon... [However, 'explication' means] ...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole." To address explication of data, the researchers used Moustakas's (1994) systematic approach to the elicitation of data in the transcendental phenomenology. These procedures are mentioned below (see Figure 1):



**Figure 1**

Elicitation of Data in Phenomenological Studies: Moustakas's (1994) Systematic Approach (Extracted from Edmonds and Kennedy, 2016, p. 171)



The researchers obtained the findings by focusing on the above-mentioned procedures. MAXQDA 20 was used to elicit the themes of the phenomenological interviews. To do so, the researchers codified the significant parts of the interviews revealing a specific theme. In such a thematic analysis, the researchers concentrated on the theoretical and operational definitions to obtain the main themes and sub-themes.

**Rigor of the Study**

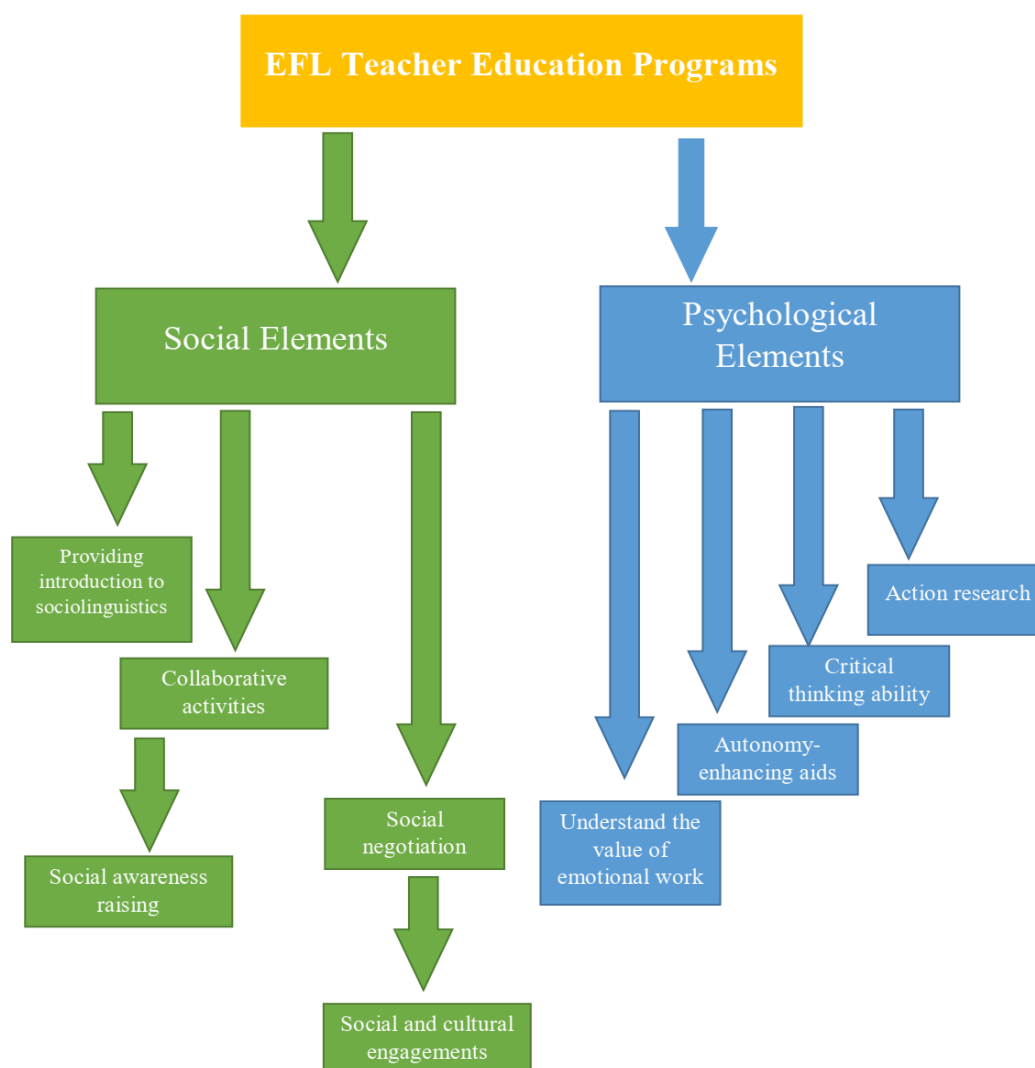
Addressing the rigor of the study in qualitative research is a crucial issue. In the current study, different approaches were used to address the rigor of the study. First, the credibility of the study was approached using structural corroboration, which is defined as "means through which multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs" (Eisner, 1998; p. 110). To do so, the researchers collected data by conducting phenomenological interviews and scrutinizing the teacher educators' syllabi. Furthermore, through member checking, the researchers tried to enhance the credibility of the study. Consequently, whenever something new emerged in the interviews, the researchers delved into it by asking for clarification. Second, to address the dependability of the study, the researchers asked another coder to codify the interviews. Hence, the coding agreement was examined between the two coders. The coding agreement result was satisfying since the two coders consulted the way they address the interviews with each other before starting to codify the interviews.

## Findings

In this section of the study, the findings are represented based on the two main categories: social and psychological elements related to the EFL teachers' professional identity development, as addressed by the EFL teacher educators. As stated earlier in this study, by addressing these elements, the researchers attempted to obtain the past and current experiences and future practices of Iranian EFL teacher educators in this regard. Figure 2 shows the themes and sub-themes obtained through thematic analysis.

**Figure 2**

Addressing Social and Psychological Elements Related to the EFL Teachers' Professional Identity Development



### Social Elements of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity Development in Teacher Education Programs

The thematic analysis of the phenomenological interviews conducted with the EFL teacher educators revealed that these teacher educators considered social elements of EFL teachers' professional identity development in their teacher education programs. Based on the thematic analysis, three themes (providing an introduction to sociolinguistics, collaborative

activities, and social negotiation) and two sub-themes (social awareness-raising and social and cultural engagement) have been found by the researchers concerning the social elements of teacher education programs asserted by the teacher educators.

### ***Theme One: Providing an Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Excerpt 1)***

When asked by the lead researcher about how Ali addressed social aspects in teacher education programs in the past, he asserted that when he started his career as a language educator, he tried to familiarize the EFL teachers and student-teachers with the social elements by introducing sociolinguistics and its related notions to language teaching. The bold-italic parts are showing the theme.

[1]

... since I thought that ***social contexts are the crucial parts of teaching*** any language, in the early years, I ***taught sociolinguistics aspects*** of language teaching ...

Ali (excerpt 1) believed that teaching "*sociolinguistics aspects of language teaching*" can be facilitative to address the "*social contexts [which] are the crucial parts of teaching.*" That is, if teachers' knowledge about sociolinguistics aspects of language teaching will be addressed in teacher education programs, they can develop their practices regarding social elements of language teaching.

### ***Theme Two: Collaborative Activities (Excerpts 2, 3, and 4)***

The thematic analysis findings indicated that EFL teacher educators tended to use collaborative activities to address social elements in teacher education programs. Ali pointed out that he used collaboration activities in his teacher education syllabus to encourage the EFL teachers to consider the social context in their teaching profession.

[2]

... I am constantly encouraging EFL teachers to do ***collaborative activities***... such ***collaborations may happen in the communities*** established by the EFL teachers ... ***teacher collaboration*** helped them understand ***the diversity of society*** ...

Ali (excerpt 2) encouraged the teachers "*to do collaborative activities*" which "*may happen in the communities*" and help them "*to understand the diversity of society.*" Teachers can develop their knowledge about the diversity of the society through participating in collaborative activities.

Ahmad, another EFL teacher educator, considered collaborative activities a critical way to develop the EFL teachers' professional identities when social elements are focused. Unlike Ali, Ahmad used collaborative activities in his earlier years of teaching.

[3]

... one way to develop teachers' awareness about ***society is to create the context of collaboration*** among them through ***collaborative activities such as solving socially related problems in a group*** ...

Ahmad focused on the context of teacher collaboration to make teachers aware of society and social issues by putting them in a context in which "*collaborative activities such as solving socially related problems in a group.*" Moreover, Ahmad indicated that he still used collaborative activities.

[4]

...**still, collaborative practices on social aspects of real classrooms** are part of my syllabus when **preparing student-teachers** to teach at schools ...

The bold-italic parts show theme two: collaborative activities. The excerpts (2-4) clarify that the two teacher educators tended to use collaborative activities during a different time of their careers.

### ***Sub-theme One: Social Awareness Raising (Excerpt 5)***

One of the sub-themes mentioned by the teacher educators that they tried to fulfill through collaborative activities was social awareness-raising activities. Ahmad believed that EFL teacher education programs should make EFL teachers aware of social issues. He pointed out that he would try to put a special effort into his EFL teacher education programs in the future to discuss and debate social issues.

[5]

... I think it will be beneficial if *in the future* we can **discuss social issues in discussions and debates** classes with the teachers to **develop their understanding of their society** in which they want to teach ... such a development can be **obtained through collaborations** ...

What Ahmad talked about can be categorized as raising the EFL teachers' social awareness in which the EFL teachers will be familiarized with the status quo of the social issues in the society by "*discuss[ing] social issues in discussions and debates*" in which they can develop their professional identity. Ahmad believed that "*such a development can be obtained through collaborations.*"

### ***Theme Three: Social Negotiation (Excerpts 6 and 7)***

Thematic analysis of the phenomenological interviews conducted by the lead researcher with Kamal indicated that he addressed the social elements of EFL teachers' professional identity through social negotiation. Kamal stated that he prepared the prerequisites for negotiating social issues in the teacher education programs. Excerpt 6 is part of the interview with Kamal showing the theme.

[6]

... for the time being, I provide a place for the EFL teachers to **talk** [negotiate] **about the social issues from their perspectives** ... the output of such talks should be **agreements on social issues** ... they can talk about their ideas and discuss every word of their opinions ...

The bold-italic parts of excerpt 6 show that Kamal meant negotiation and not the mere interaction. Specifically, when stating "*agreements on social issues,*" Kamal implied

negotiating social issues in which the teachers need to reach agreements. The notion of social negotiation was evident in Mehdi's interview, which can be seen in excerpt 7.

[7]

... teachers need to *pre-practice* how to address *social issues* of the classroom before entering the real classrooms, ... [thus] they should *discuss social issues to find agreed-upon solutions* for those issues in teacher education programs... the results of such pre-practice can be *successful practice in real classes* ...

Mehdi believed that social negotiation could develop the professional identity of the teachers. When he asserted "*discuss social issues to find agreed-upon solutions*," he meant the concept of social negotiation. Then, he associates such "*pre-practices*" as a way to help teachers' "*successful practice in real classes*." Using the word "*successful*" by Mehdi can refer to a teacher whose professional identity concerning social issues has been developed by participating in social negotiation practices.

### ***Sub-Theme Two: Social and Cultural Engagements (Excerpts 8 and 9)***

One of the main sub-themes obtained in this study and associated with social negotiation was social and cultural engagements. Mehdi believed in involving EFL teachers in different social and cultural issues. He pointed out that such involvement could be either in real society or in the form of role plays. The key concept in the definition of engagement is acknowledging individuals' differences in negotiation. This was implied in the following excerpt (8) by Mehdi.

[8]

...we need to *involve our teachers in the real social and cultural situation* before they encounter those situations in their classes ... they can practice the situations before they really act them ... in such *situations, the differences are negotiated* ...

Mehdi asserted that involving teachers in "*real social and cultural situation[s]*" can lead to "*the differences [to be] negotiated*." This is what Kamal mentioned in parts of his interview shown in excerpt 9.

[9]

... *individuals' cultural differences* can be *negotiated* if teachers of different cultures can *join together* in different *activities*...

### **Psychological Elements of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity Development in Teacher Education Programs**

The thematic analysis of the phenomenological interviews conducted with the EFL teacher educators showed that they addressed the psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identity development in the teacher education programs. The thematic analysis showed four themes in the teacher educators' interview data: action research, critical thinking, autonomy-enhancing aids, and helping teachers understand the values of emotional work. Teacher educators addressed psychological elements of teacher education programs through these themes.

### **Theme One: Action Research (Excerpts 10 and 11)**

When asked by the lead researcher about how teacher educators addressed psychological elements of teachers' professional identities, Ali stated that he used the principles of action research to address the psychological elements of teachers' professional identities by asking them to do action research to address the emotional and motivational problems which might happen in their classes. The bold-italic parts in excerpt 10 show this theme.

[10]

... I, now, help the EFL teachers *to learn about how to do action research* in their classes to find *solutions for the students' low motivation* or even *understand their emotions* ... they will learn *how to solve classrooms' problems* ...

Ali explicitly mentioned (excerpt 10) that he instructed EFL teachers "to do action research" to "solve classrooms' problems", especially "students' low motivation" and "their emotions." Ahmad also mentioned that action research could be "a booster" to develop EFL teachers' professional identities concerning psychological elements. Excerpt 11 shows parts of his interviews in this regard.

[11]

... *action research*, in my opinion, is *a booster* to *develop EFL teachers' capacity* to address *classroom problems* such as what you [the lead researcher asked about psychological elements] mentioned ... *motivation ... emotion* ...

The metaphor of "booster" is illustrative in showing how Ahmad's critical view about the role of action research in "develop[ing] EFL teachers' capacity" to "address classroom problems" associated with "motivation ... [and] emotion."

### **Theme Two: Critical Thinking Ability (Excerpts 12, 13 and 14)**

Critical thinking was another main theme found in the interviews of teacher educators. Ahmad paid great attention to the EFL teachers' critical thinking development to give them a "critical view" to address psychological issues, including their students' motivational and emotional issues.

[12]

... teachers' *critical thinking abilities* need to have a place in the teacher education programs ... the *critical view* is necessary for teachers to help them *recognize the psychological issues* in their classes...

Ahmad believed that "critical thinking abilities" originated from the "critical view" to help EFL teachers "recognize the psychological issues." Accordingly, Ahmad thought by developing critical thinking concerning psychological elements of teacher education programs, EFL teachers can develop their professional identity.

Kamal also mentioned developing teachers' critical thinking as crucial for developing psychological elements concerning teachers' professional identity. Excerpt 13 shows how Kamal referred to this theme.

[13]

...*to develop psychological elements* [motivation, autonomy, and emotion] I tried to provide *a critical lens* for the teachers ... *critical thinking development* can *help* them [EFL teachers] *draw critical solutions* for the *psychological problems* in the classrooms ...

Kamal's use of the "*critical lens*" to "*draw critical solution*" for motivation, autonomy, and emotion showed that he believed in developing critical thinking to develop the EFL teachers' professional identities. Moreover, Mehdi pointed out a process, namely problem-thinking-solution, which can be applied to psychological elements through developing teachers' critical thinking. Excerpt 14 shows Mehdi's experience.

[14]

... I believe that if teacher education programs want to prepare our teachers for *facing psychological issues* in their classrooms, they should *develop teachers' critical thinking* ... they can *detect problems*.... *Think about the problems* ... *reach solutions* ...

Mehdi mentioned the problem-thinking-solution process by which teachers can "*detect problems*" thoroughly, "*think about the problem*" profoundly, and "*reach solutions*" can develop the professional identities of the teachers and let them address psychological issues in their classes. The process can be developed in the teachers through developing their critical thinking.

### **Theme Three: Autonomy-Enhancing Aids (Excerpts 15 and 16)**

Another theme obtained from the participants' interview data was autonomy-enhancing aids to address psychological elements of teachers' professional identities in teacher education programs. Autonomy-enhancing aids are whatever instructional and pedagogical tools that can help teachers' autonomy development. Having this description in mind, the researchers found that Ahmad mentioned autonomy-enhancing aids for his future directions of addressing psychological elements. He pointed out that in the future, he would support the EFL teachers participating in the EFL teacher education program in a way to enhance their autonomy.

[15]

... In the future, two or three years later, I want *to support the teachers* with *tools to enhance their autonomy* ... [these tools can be] reflective practices ... I think since *autonomy is a psychological element*, enhancing it can *help teachers to address psychological elements* in their classes...

Ahmad believed that psychological elements of teacher education programs could be supported "*with tools to enhance their autonomy*" since "*autonomy is a psychological element*," and by developing teachers' autonomy, they will be able to "*address psychological elements in their classes*." Similarly, Mehdi asserted that autonomous teachers are more capable of addressing psychological elements in their classes. Excerpt 16 shows what Mehdi stated in this regard.

[16]

...we need to *develop the autonomy of teachers* to help them create *their teaching methodology* when they want to *address psychological elements* of their classes, such as *motivational problems* ...

As can be seen in excerpt 16, Mehdi thought that by "*develop[ing] autonomy of teachers*," it will be possible for teachers to "*address psychological elements*" and the related problems such as "*motivational problems*" by "*their teaching methodology*." That is, if teachers' autonomy develops, they will find new methodologies to address psychological elements. It has a direct association with their professional identities.

#### ***Theme Four: Helping Teachers to Understand the Value of Emotional Work (Excerpt 17)***

Helping teachers to understand the emotional work was another theme referred to by Kamal, one of the teacher educators. He mentioned that he used materials (including papers, motivating clips, etc.) to help the EFL teachers understand the value of emotional work. The key concept determining this theme is understanding others. Kamal believed that one of his main responsibilities in EFL teacher education programs was to raise the EFL teachers' understanding of the importance of recognizing their learners' emotions. Excerpt 17 is what Kamal stated in this regard.

[17]

... currently, I am showing some motivating clips of the teachers who have done great things for their students *to help EFL teachers recognize their unbelievable position in developing the emotions of their students*...

Kamal thought that by helping teachers understand the value of emotional work, he could "*help EFL teachers recognize their unbelievable position in developing the emotions of their students*." Thus, teacher education programs developing teachers' understandings of emotional work values will be conducive to developing their professional identities to address classrooms' emotional aspects.

### **Discussion**

This study was an attempt to explore how Iranian EFL teacher educators addressed social and psychological elements of EFL teachers in the teacher education programs. The thematic analysis of phenomenological interviews indicated that EFL teacher educators addressed the social elements in teacher education programs by providing an introduction to sociolinguistics, collaborative activities, social negotiation, social awareness-raising, and social and cultural engagement. Moreover, the findings indicated that EFL teacher educators addressed EFL teachers' psychological elements through action research, critical thinking, autonomy-enhancing aids, and helping teachers understand emotional work values. The findings are in line with the previous studies (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Meijer, 2017; Mello et al., 2008; Mercer, 2018; Richardson & Watt, 2006) in that the importance of social and psychological elements of teacher education programs is emphasized.

The findings highlighted teacher educators' preferences to address social elements of teacher education programs by providing an introduction to sociolinguistics. According to Wardhaugh (2010), sociolinguistics concentrates on "the relationship between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication" (p. 12). Sociolinguistics has different aspects such as



dialects, bilingualism, multilingualism, language variations, etc., addressing the relationships between the languages and the societies. Ali (excerpt 1) asserted that addressing "*sociolinguistics aspects of language teaching*" can be helpful to understand the "*social contexts [which] are the crucial parts of teaching.*" Thus, the EFL teachers can approach the sociolinguistics variations in their classrooms through their knowledge in sociolinguistics. Given that, it can be stated that developing EFL teachers' knowledge about the relations between society and language was the way to develop these teachers' professional identities. By developing EFL teachers' knowledge about sociolinguistics, they can enhance their understanding of the factors affecting the structure of language in their classroom communication.

The current study is in line with Meihami (2019) in that the findings indicated that collaborations among EFL teachers can lead to EFL teachers' (professional) identity development. It can be stated that the EFL teacher educators of this study were on the right path in saying that teacher collaboration can help them develop a syllabus to include the learners' diverse needs (Weiss & Pellegrino, 2016). Hence, participating in collaborative activities should be embedded in teacher education programs to help teachers foster their abilities to understand the social diversities. Teachers' collaborations develop their interpersonal abilities to experience new visions of teaching and learning (Pratt, 2014). Collaborative activities, thus, can help EFL teachers to join in a knowledge-based community to foster their knowledge about the society around them in which they teach English.

Social negotiation and social and cultural engagements were among the approaches through which teacher educators addressed social elements of teacher education programs. Strauss (1978, p. 11) stated that negotiation is "getting things accomplished" in which there is an agreement upon the negotiated issues. Kamal (excerpt 6) mentioned "*the output of such talks [negotiations] should be agreements on social issues,*" and Mehdi (excerpt 7) mentioned "*they [EFL teachers] should discuss social issues to find agreed-upon solutions,*" which needs various negotiation skills to reach an agreement. Negotiation, thus, is a means of identity development. By this token, it can be stated that if negotiation about social issues will be made among the EFL teachers and teacher educators, the results may be social identity development of the EFL teachers since they need to develop their skills concerning appropriate negotiation. Moreover, engagement is one of the main modes of belonging based on Wenger (1998), referring to the communities in which different individuals participate in mutually negotiated activities. Engagement is one of the requirements for identity development. Mehdi (extract 8) pointed out that involving teachers in "*real social and cultural situation*" can lead to "*the differences [to be] negotiated.*" Given that, it can be argued that if social and cultural engagement (Wenger, 1998) will be addressed in the EFL teacher education programs, the results can be the identity (including professional identity) development of these teachers (Meijer, 2017).

Action research was one of the themes mentioned by the teacher educators to address psychological elements of teacher education programs. Teachers can do action research to address the problems of their classrooms. Ax et al. (2008, p. 56) described action research as a kind of research conducted by the teachers "to reflect on their own practice and the situation in which they are practicing ...[and] to understand and improve their practice and the situation in which they are practicing." That said, it has a direct contribution to teachers' "independent professionalism" (Leung, 2009). The notion of "independent professionalism" is related to teacher autonomy, which Ali (excerpt 10) asserted can be conducive to "*solve classrooms' problems,*" especially "*students' low motivation*" and "*their emotions.*" That is, by doing action research, the teachers can be autonomous (Dikilitaş & Yaylı, 2018; Yuan & Burns, 2017) in identifying the problems of their classes and providing probable solutions for them. On top of

that, action research can provide a space where the teachers can reflect upon their students' motivational and emotional issues and try to solve them.

The findings indicated teacher educators' preferences to use critical thinking to address psychological elements of teacher education programs. Critical thinking helps individuals, including teachers, to "identify questions worth pursuing, ... to pursue one's questions through self-directed search and interrogation of knowledge, a sense that knowledge is contestable and being able to present evidence to support one's arguments" (Pithers & Soden, 2000, p. 238). Moreover, as López-Facal and Jiménez Aleixandre (2009) stated, critical thinking abilities can help teachers participate in different discourses. In the current study, EFL teacher educators called critical thinking a tool to provide a "*critical view*" (Ahmad, excerpt 11) and "*critical lens*" (Kamal, excerpt 12), which can "*detect a problem*" thoroughly, "*think about the problem*" profoundly, and "*reach solutions*" (Mehdi, excerpt 13) for their classroom problems. Thus, it can be argued that by developing the EFL teachers' critical thinking abilities, they can be self-directed in addressing the motivational and emotional issues of their students. Moreover, similar to action research, developing critical thinking abilities can help EFL teachers be autonomous and train autonomous learners.

This study's findings indicated that enhancing teachers' autonomy is an approach done by the teacher educators to address psychological elements of teacher education programs. There are different approaches to develop teacher autonomy. The first approach is action research, which has already been discussed above. Researchers (e.g., Hopkins, 1993; Zeichner, 2003) stated that action research could help teachers be self-directive and have more control over their professional practices. Ahmad (excerpt 12) indicated that psychological elements of teacher education programs can be developed "*with tools to enhance their autonomy*" since "*autonomy is a psychological element.*" Thus, an autonomous teacher can "*address psychological elements in their classes.*" One more approach to developing teacher autonomy can be supporting programs that help the teachers reflect on their practice, leading to teacher openness toward changes and enhancing their autonomy to try new methodologies in their classes. Moreover, teacher collaboration can lead to developing teacher autonomy in that it enhances teacher creativity and professionalism (Pineda & Frodden, 2008). That said, addressing teacher autonomy can develop EFL teachers' professional identities. This claim can be made since developing teachers' autonomy through practices such as reflective practices, and action research will develop their professional identity (Mello et al., 2008). Hence, it can be stated that since the EFL teachers participate in such practices, their professional identities will develop.

## Conclusions and Implications

This study attempted to investigate the approaches through which Iranian EFL teacher educators consider the social and psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identity development in the EFL teacher education programs. The findings indicated that Iranian EFL teacher educators used different teaching approaches to address social and psychological elements. The thematic analysis of phenomenological interviews indicated that EFL teacher educators addressed the social elements in teacher education programs by introducing sociolinguistics, collaborative activities, social negotiation, social awareness-raising, and social and cultural engagement. Moreover, the findings indicated that teacher educators addressed EFL teachers' psychological elements through action research, critical thinking, autonomy-enhancing aids, and helping teachers understand emotional work values.

The findings showed that teacher educators' syllabi included social elements. This is highly important since if EFL teachers understand the fact that "meaning does not reside in the language, but instead it is situated in and emerges out of the social group's use of the language"

(Johnson, 2009, p. 60), they can help their learners to use the language in a way that the real society asks them to have real and prosperous communication. This requires the EFL teacher education programs to help EFL teachers become consciously aware of the underlying concepts embedded in how language use expresses meanings and recognize meaning as situated in specific social and cultural practices. Thereby, they can understand language use, which is transformed continuously. Moreover, they understand language as fluid, dynamic, and unstable, and finally, conceptualize language as about making choices about how to be in the L2 world (Johnson, 2009, p. 61).

Furthermore, the findings indicated the importance of addressing psychological elements of EFL teachers' professional identity development in that all of the EFL teacher educators who participated in this study had their approaches to do something in this regard. There are interrelationships among the three main psychological elements of teacher education, including autonomy, motivation, and emotion (Reio, 2005) since each of them can influence the others, and at the same time, it can be influenced by the others. Hence, teacher educators should think of approaches such as action research, which can simultaneously affect two or all of them. For instance, action research develops the teachers' autonomy and, at the same time, helps them develop their motivation as an autonomous teacher (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). If the issue of doing action research is an emotional one, it can be stated that the EFL teachers' emotional aspects can also be developed.

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