

An Investigation of the Effectiveness of English Teachers' In-Service Training on Iranian Third Grade High School Students' English Achievement

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Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate the effect of applying in-service trained teacher on the Iranian students' English achievement. Iranian students, lacking of a plausible and effective method to teach English, encounter with a lot of English using difficulties which influence their language abilities. To this end, 40 female students out of 60 at Danesh high school, Langarood, Iran, were selected based on solution placement test. The participants were 15-16 years old and were randomly assigned as experimental (20) and control (20) groups. An English test as pretest was administered to all participants, then the experimental group received Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method by an in-service trained teacher (one session a week, each for 45 minutes) from the beginning to the end of a school year, and the other 20 participants as the control group received placebo (the traditional method of English teaching commonly used in the Iran curriculum system). The data were analyzed using SPSS software, and the results obtained through descriptive statistics, a paired samples *t*-test, an independent samples *t*-test, eta squared and Levene's test represented a significant difference between two groups' performances which highlighted the significant effect of applying an in-service trained teacher (used CLT method) for the experimental group's English achievement compared to the control group. Thus, the effectiveness of the in-service training program is influenced by teachers' attitudes, needs analysis and strategies used in the in-service training program.

Keywords: In-service training program, EFL, CLT

INTRODUCTION

In-service training programs are intended to keep practicing teachers up-to-date and or to address the issues which occur in their practical teaching. Given the importance of this mandate and the time and budget put into these programs, it is necessary to

scrutinize these programs to determine whether they fulfill the objectives formulated for them in the first place. To this end, a number of EFL teachers who had attended these programs were interviewed and their interviews were transcribed verbatim. This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the in-service training programs in Iran from the viewpoint of language teachers attending these programs, as teachers themselves. The insufficiency of teachers training has been touched upon by a number of scholars (Chiang, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Mcmorrow, 2007).

In language teaching and learning, one of the main problems of Iranian students as EFL students is the problem of disabling to use English effectively in their communication. Most of students in public schools, from elementary level to advanced level, basically do not have adequate English language competence and performance to express themselves in different situations or contexts fluently and accurately. In other words, they cannot communicate in English. In some extent, it seems that it is partly due to the dominance of the traditional ways of teaching in the educational system (i.e., the textbooks, assessment system, teachers' methods and techniques). In spite of the importance of language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), they are neglected by language teachers and curriculum system. Otherwise, a big problem in language teaching which students encounter is the inadequate and incompatible tasks in their curriculum textbooks which do not give them enough practice in their language skills which they need in their future academic or occupational careers. In short, the textbooks somehow include a lack of communication tasks to motivate learners with a purpose for doing them eagerly.

It is important to highlight the role of in-service training program as a necessary response to the development of scientific literacy of students through experimental work practices of teachers in their classrooms (Madaleno, 2010; Reis & Santos, 2016). One of the most significant current discussion in applying in-service teacher training was to emphasize the difficult and complex responsibility of teachers, and the development of teachers' minds and skill because their contribution to education and the society's morals and values is particularly crucial. Therefore, to enhance teaching effectiveness, there is an essential need of upgrading the staff and teachers' skills and knowledge. The need for in-service training or staff development program for teachers plays an essential role in successful education reform. It also serves as a bridge between prospective and experienced educators to meet the new challenges of guiding students towards higher standards of learning and self-development. In developing the professionalism status of teachers, the training program such as in-service training should not run away from the reformation that occurs (Zulkifli Che Omer, 2014). Moreover, considering the emphasis and importance placed on in-service training program for teachers, the researcher of the present study felt the urge and need to investigate the Iranian teachers' education through finding an answer for the question: Do in-service training programs for teachers have any statistically significant impact on Iranian third-grade high school students' English achievement?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beyond doubt, this is an important consideration to be taken into account when designing the language module of in-service teacher training programs, as it demonstrates that the provision of large amounts of sheer knowledge about language (KAL), regardless of how broadly it might be defined, is inadequate as teachers may find it difficult to draw upon conscious knowledge of this kind in the actual act of teaching. For this reason, as Bartels (2009, p. 300) emphasizes:

Second language teacher education (SLTE) courses need to stop focusing on academic practices, such as reading studies and discussing theories. Instead, SLTE courses need to provide learning experiences in which (a) L2 teachers use (or develop) KAL and local knowledge to engage in teaching-like tasks, (b) language teachers link and abstract from the knowledge acquired by participating in such activities, and (c) teachers learn to design and carry out deliberate practice activities that help them acquire the KAL that they feel they need.

In this regard, Ozer (2004) conducted a research on "*In-service training of teachers in Turkey at the beginning of the 2000s*". He believed that today, primary education is compulsory for all citizens. Education at the other levels is optional. In addition to formal education, which is offered face to face, people are also provided primary, secondary and higher education through distance education. The results of his findings indicated that it is rather difficult to provide continuous and face-to-face in-service training for all teachers because there are a great number of teachers at schools, and financial means for the in-service training of teachers are insufficient. According to him, 4292 in-service training activities were held locally as well as centrally. A total of 213,444 teachers attended these activities. However, in a survey, it was found that although most of the teachers stated they needed professional development, only a small number of teachers attended in-service training programs willingly.

Furthermore, Chenari, Heydari and Sohrabmanesh (2016) studied the effect of in-service training on empowerment of the school principal in Tehran, Iran. Their investigation was through conducting a questionnaire, and the results showed that there is a significant relationship between in-service training and empowerment of principals in public high schools in Tehran. According to their findings, it was recommended that Education pays more attention to the empowerment of managers and by using different methods that increase the motivation of the principals such as encouragement to continue their studies, creating the suitable environment to continue their education, giving bonuses based on performance, flexibility in meeting their needs and so on increase the motivation of principals. In addition, managers to improve their school performance should intrinsic motivation of their staff, because lack of attention to boosting employees' motivation would make efforts to improve schools in impact. The theoretical framework of in-service training based on the significance of in-service training for teachers, the place of teachers in in-service training program, the goals of

in-service training, and the link between in-service training program for teachers and students' achievement are elaborately presented in the following parts.

The Significance of In-Service Training Program for Teachers

The need for in-service training in schools is getting more attention for teachers to equip with new knowledge and skills for them to face new challenges and reforms in education. In-service training can enhance the professionalism of teachers who can contribute to the organization to achieve its goals. In-service training is a professional and personal educational activity for teachers to improve their efficiency, ability, knowledge and motivation in their professional work (Chenari, et al., 2016). In-service training offers one of the most promising roads to the improvement of instruction. It includes goal and content, the training process and the context. According to Ong (1993), In-service training is the totality of educational and personal experiences that contribute toward an individual being more competent and satisfied in an assigned professional role. The primary purpose of in-service training is to enable teachers to acquire new understanding and instructional skills. It focuses on creating learning environments which enable teachers to develop their effectiveness in the classroom (Chenari et al., 2016). According to Kazmi, Pervez and Mumtaz (2011), in-service training for teachers enables the teachers to be more systematic and logical in their teaching style. In-service training is a planned process whereby the effectiveness of teachers collectively or individually is enhanced in response to new knowledge, new ideas and changing circumstances in order to improve, directly or indirectly the quality of pupils' education.

Accordingly, the significance of in-service training should be looked in various perspectives. It promotes a very flexible environment and allow teachers to adapt with the working situation and it is also one form of motivation for employees or employers and it will continue to increase creativity in teaching and learning process. It also enables teachers to acquire new understanding and instructional skills to develop their effectiveness in the classroom (Frederick & Stephen, 2010).

The Place of Teachers in In-Service Training Program

In-service training places teachers at the center of any improvement effort and assumes that the work of the teacher and the visions that teachers have about improving their work. According to Owen, "the positive aspect concerning professional development of teachers are that the program will make sure that learning activities is planned and concentrated on empowering teachers to correct policies, curriculum development, teaching and views on how to achieve high productivity and students' performance" (Owen, 1990, p. 175).

It is vital that the positive performance result from the students will bring profits to teachers themselves based on the additional recognition from colleagues at work place and the administration. In-service training for teachers will not only bring positive effect to the teacher, but also students and school because the changes that is expected

has a close relation between teachers, students and schools. Otherwise, the important factor in conducting in-service training for teachers is the effectiveness of the program. Many researchers stated that, an effective training program should be conducted in the school itself because the teachers will be involved in the planning and implementation of the training from the beginning to the end. Besides that, the effectiveness of the training program is very much related to the awareness of teachers for self-improvement and development. There are few factors that contribute towards the effectiveness of in-service training for teachers in school (Zulkifli Che Omer, 2014) which discusses at the following part. In this regard, teacher is surrounded by curriculum system, instructional strategies, students and classroom learning environment in an in-service training program which can be seen in Figure 1:

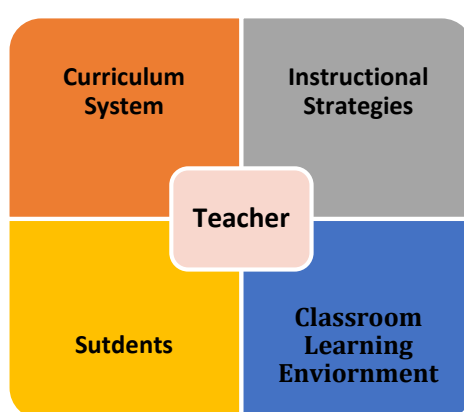


Figure 1. The place of teacher in an in-service training program (adopted from Zulkifli Che Omer, 2014)

According to Zulkifli Che Omer, (2014), there are few factors that contribute towards the effective of in-service training for teachers in school. The factors are: the role of administrator, attitudes toward in-service training, needs analysis for in-service training and strategies of in-service training. Ekpoh, Oswald and Victoria (2013) believed that in-service training must be proactive rather than reactive and its effectiveness depends on the extent to which it is personalized and based on positive constructs. In this aspect, in-service training in schools requires strong leadership. This leadership usually comes from the principal, but it is sometimes provided by an assistant principal. The effectiveness of in-service training in school is also related to the attitude of teachers in school. Teachers should have a positive attitude towards in-service training organized by their school. Teacher's attitude towards teaching philosophy, in-service training and educational reform can influence their response towards training that is conducted. Attitudes are reflections of employee's beliefs and opinions that support or inhibit behavior. "In a training context, we are concerned about employee's attitudes that are related to job performance" (Blanchard & Thacker, 2009, p. 199). Frederick and Stephen (2010) believed that in-service training shall be implemented according to a comprehensive and well organized plan than includes goals, objectives, strategies, activities, materials, assessment plan and program

evaluation procedures that are well defined and coordinated with each other. In making sure that the process of channeling knowledge becomes reality, the approaches used in presenting in-service training should be appropriate with the needs of the participants.

The Goals of In-Service Training for Teachers

The term in-service teacher training program connects any program provided to teachers already working in schools, with the explicit purpose of updating and renewing their knowledge, technical skills etc. for main training and/or enhancing their efficiency. In-service education would continually help effective teachers stay effective. The meaningful in-service education could be one way of maintaining them at least at the minimum level of efficiency (Deshmukh & Mishra, 2014). In this respect, the Education Commission (1964-66) supported the view that onus of in-service teacher education programs should be on the state and the state institute of education could undertake this task and proposed seven main goals for in-service teacher education and training as follows (Deshmukh & Mishra, 2014):

- To maintain the knowledge and skills of teachers.
- To give teachers the opportunity to enlarge and improve their knowledge and educational capacities in all fields of their work.
- To make teachers ready and able to understand and face in time new situations coming up in society and to prepare their students for the new economic, social and cultural challenges.
- To enable teachers to gain additional qualifications and to develop their special talents and dispositions.
- To raise the cultural and professional standard of the teaching force as a whole and strength its innovative vigor and creativity.
- Help teachers to stay effective otherwise their initial training wears off faster and over the years they become increasingly ineffective. Meaningful in-service education could be one way of maintaining them at least at the minimum level of efficiency.
- To enhance to motivation which lacks generally on the part of teachers by seeking their own useful avenues, and lack of appreciation by the administration of the value of in-service education.

Besides, Bolam (1982, p. 11) in his final report on in-service training program distinguished five main goals of continuing education for teachers:

- Improving the job performance skills of the whole school staff or of groups of staff (e.g. a school focused INSET program).
- Improving the job performance skills of an individual teacher (e.g. an induction program, for a beginning teacher).

- Extending the experience of an individual teacher for career development or promotion purposes (e.g. a leadership training course).
- Developing the professional knowledge and understanding of an individual teacher (e.g. a Master's degree in educational studies).
- Extending the personal or general education of an individual (e.g. a Master's degree not in education or a subject related to teaching).

However, it has been recognized that in all organizations the problem lies in the conflict between meeting the requirements and goals of the organization and of satisfying the needs for self fulfilments of the individual member of an organization. In sum, the importance and purpose of in-service teacher training highlights the beliefs that it has the potential for stimulating professional development of teachers, enhancing school development, and may assist in implementing social change (Kan, 1987).

The Link between In-Service Training Program for Teachers and Students' Achievement

In early work on teacher education through in-service training program, researchers estimated education production functions by regressing aggregate student achievement levels on measures of teacher training and various other controls using cross-sectional data (Sztejnberg, 2008). A subsequent generation of studies used student-level two-year test-score gains and richer sets of teacher training variables to evaluate the impact of teacher training on student achievement. The state of the literature through the year 2000 has been extensively reviewed by Rice (2003), Betts (2003). In this regard, Darling (2000) believed that the link between the effect of teachers' in-service training and the students' achievement appear to be additive and cumulative, and generally not compensatory. According to her, these issues have been the topic of much other research over the last 50 years. She continued that variables presumed to be indicative of teachers' competence which have been examined for their relationship to student learning include measures of academic ability, years of education, years of teaching experience, measures of subject matter and teaching knowledge, certification status, and teaching behaviors in the classroom. Otherwise, consistent with several existing models of effective teachers' professional development (in-service training program) on the students' achievement (Best, Fishman, Marx & Tal, 2003; Cohen & Hill, 2000), it is assumed that the effects of teacher in-service training program on student achievement are mediated by teacher knowledge and teaching in the classroom.

According to Duncan, Lee, Shapley and Yoon (2008), teachers' professional development affects student achievement through three steps. First, professional development enhances teacher knowledge, skills, and motivation. Second, better knowledge, skills, and motivation improve classroom teaching. Third, improved teaching raises student achievement. If one link is weak or missing, better student learning cannot be expected. If a teacher fails to apply new ideas from professional development to classroom instruction, for example, students will not benefit from the

teacher's professional development. In other words, the effect of teacher professional development on student learning is possible through two mediating outcomes: teachers' learning, and instruction in the classroom.

METHOD

The method and the design of this study were based on quantitative methods with practical objects. It particularly aimed at improving educational problems. A pretest, treatment, posttest method was used in this study based on a quasi-experimental study, and the participants of this study were selected via nonrandom selection of "convenience sampling" at Danesh High School in Langarood, Iran. First, Solution Placement Test (SPT) was administered, then 40 third-grade students out of 60 were selected based on the results of SPT. Next, they were divided randomly into an experimental group (20, instructed by an in-service trained teacher) and a control group (20, instructed by an in-service untrained teacher) in order to investigate the research hypothesis. Independent variable of this study was in-service training teacher which provided for the experimental group. Dependent variable of this study was the students' level of English achievement. Both groups (the experimental and the control) were investigated before and after the interventional effect (an in-service trained teacher and an in-service untrained teacher). The quantitative data were gathered through the assumed in-service trained teacher training plans to third grade students at high school.

Participants

The participants of this study were consisted of 40 students at Danesh High School, Langarood, Iran, who enrolled at third-grade. The age range of them was between 15 and 16 (the age and sex variables were not controlled). All the participants were female monolingual and native speakers of Persian language. They had received prior English instruction in Iran, but in different language institutes and schools. The treatment plans of this study begun in second week of October (at the beginning of school year) and ended in the last week of May (at the end of school year) once a week. The training time for each of the two groups was identical, each training session was held 45 minutes for each class. In order to homogenize the sample population and make sure they were at the same English proficiency level, SPT was administered to all learners in the groups, their papers were scored, the Mean and SD were calculated and eventually 40 students with the score of 1 SD above and below the mean ($1SD \pm \text{mean}$) were selected to participate in this research. Then, half of the participants were randomly assigned as the experimental group and received language teaching by an in-service trained teacher as training program (students' curriculum English textbook for language learning during the school year). The other 20 learners (classified as the control group) received language teaching by an in-service untrained teacher.

Materials

The materials used for conducting the research were instructional and testing materials. Instructional materials were consisted of an eight-month program of English language teaching during the regular school year by two teachers—an in-service trained teacher who used Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for the experimental group and an in-service untrained teacher who used the common traditional method in Iran curriculum system for the control group. Both teachers were female and BA holders in English Teaching with 12 and 15 years of experience in English teaching. Besides, in the testing material, three independent tests were administered. The first one was SPT for determining the participants' English proficiency level. The second one was "pretest" which was a standardized Language Test for third grade students. It consisted of 90 multiple-choice items for diagnosing the participants' potential problem in English vocabulary and grammar (their weaknesses and strengths). It was administered to both groups before treatment program. The third one was "the posttest" which was developed by two English teachers based on the content and the words of students' English textbook. The posttest consisted of different parts with 59 items including vocabulary, grammar, spelling, pronunciation and reading comprehension. It was administered when the experimental group completed their specified educational course of language teaching of school year—CLT used for the experimental group by an in-service trained teacher and Iran traditional common method by an in-service untrained teacher (after an eight-month period), and all learners of both groups participated in the posttest. The posttest assessed learners' English achievement.

Likewise, the time allotment for the pretest and the posttest were 45 minutes, and in order to have a numerical scale all responses were scored by objectivity procedure, i.e., normalized scoring method such as row score (a scale of 0 to 20) was considered. Raw scores, however, do not provide with enough information to describe the learners' performances. Hence, means and standard deviation of collected data obtained from experimental and control groups were computed, compared and interpreted.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection of the present study was based on a pretest-treatment-posttest design. There was no pretreatment for both groups before the pretest, but before the posttest, the experimental group received CLT by an in-service trained teacher; whereas, the control group received a traditional method (which is common in schools of Iran) by an in-service untrained teacher. The period for treatment included an entire period of school year (at the beginning of October to the end of May). The students' progress of the instruction was continually assessed during the treatment period through asking vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, grammar and reading comprehension by teacher questions which they responded orally and through achievement paper-and-pencil tests twice a week. For achieving the language teaching and learning goals, the treatment program for the experimental group was based on CLT through three major activities, namely, pre-reading, while-reading and post-

reading activities (for reading the texts of each lesson in the textbook). While, the control group received traditional way of teaching English book which is common in all schools of Iran based on curriculum system. Whereas, the procedures and activities for teaching students' English book in experimental class was different which are listed below:

- Teacher employed three reading activities (pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading),
- Learners worked in groups of three or four,
- Learners brainstormed in groups to write a summary of each text,
- Teacher asked guiding questions (to elicit the answer), asked students to describe the event where the event happened,
- Learners shared their responses with the whole class,
- Teacher assigned roles for learners and gave them time to do the role play,

Also, the data analysis of this study was based on quasi-experimental design through a paired samples *t*-test and an independent samples *t*-test (two parametric statistics). As the initial step in analyzing data for this study, based on descriptive statistics, numerical approach was used to describe, tabulate and summarize the characteristics of two sets of scores (the pretest and posttest) obtained from the experimental and control groups; hence, means, standard deviations and standard error of means of the quantitative data obtained from both tests were computed through SPSS software. Second, the dispersion of the scores or variability (SD, degree of freedom and Variances) was calculated in order to see how much variation there was from the mean. Finally, based on inferential statistics namely *t*-test, eta squared (η^2), and Levene's test, the differences between the means and variances of experimental and control groups were analyzed individually. Data analysis was utilized to compare the participants' mean scores as well as determining not only the possible differences between two groups, but also answering the research question and reject or retain the null hypothesis of this study.

RESULTS

The results are presented in two parts: The first part deals with pretest (pre-training), and the second part presents the posttest (post-training). As it was shown in Tables 1 and 2, it was revealed non-significant differences between the results obtained from two group scores in pretest before in-service training program. The subjects were nearly at similar level in terms of their English achievement.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of both groups for the pretest scores

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Exp.	20	5.385	1.210	1.139
Con.	20	5.325	1.067	1.465

As demonstrated in Table 1, the values of means and standard deviation in the pretest performance for the both groups were somehow small and identical. The results of the pretest showed that the mean of the control group ($M_{\text{control group}} = 5.325$) and the mean of the experimental group ($M_{\text{experimental group}} = 5.385$) did not differ statistically. In other words, the mean difference was not statistically significant for the pretest scores of students' language knowledge before initiating the specific treatments for the experimental group. Before accomplishing the analysis, the main supposition of independent samples *t*-test, namely, normality of the distributions was examined through running Levene's test which was not significant for the pretest scores: $F_{\text{pretest}}(1, 38) = .3135, p = .579$ —at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met for the sample. Table 2 displays the results of *t*-test for the pretest scores of students' English knowledge.

Table 2. Inferential analysis of an independent samples *t*-test results for the pretest scores

t-test for Equality of Means							
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
Groups	N	df.	SED	<i>t</i>	sig.(two-tailed)	Lower	Upper
Exp. & Con.	40	38	.3607	0.166	.869	-.79037	-.67037

According to Table 2, the results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in students' English knowledge on the pretest scores across the groups ($t = 0.166$ with $df = 38, p_{\text{vocabulary test}} .869 \geq .05$). The significance value of the probability (sig. two-tailed) in the *t*-test table was higher than alpha (.05) for the pretest scores of English knowledge. As a result, the non-significant *p* value revealed that the population means on test of English knowledge were similar at the beginning of the study. It implies that the average assessment scores of vocabulary ability were equal across the both groups at the beginning of the study. The descriptive statistics for the posttest data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of both groups for the posttest scores

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Variance
Exp.	20	7.100	1.336	1.068
Con.	20	5.880	0.9844	1.069

The results of the descriptive statistics for the posttest showed that the mean of the control group ($M_{\text{control group}} = 5.880$), and the mean of the experimental group ($M_{\text{experimental group}} = 7.100$) differed significantly. In addition, the result of Levene's test

(homogeneity of variances) for the posttest scores was also not significant: $F_{posttest}(1, 38) = .009$, $p = .927$ – at the .05 alpha level. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated for the posttest scores, as shown in Table 3.

Furthermore, for examining the uniformity of variance assumption and mean difference between groups for the posttest, an independent samples t -test was run to the results of the posttest, too. Table 4 displays the results of t -test for the posttest scores of students' English learning achievement.

Table 4. Inferential analysis of an independent samples t -test results for the posttest scores

T-test for Equality of Means							
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
Groups	N	df.	SED	t	sig.(two-tailed)	Lower	Upper
Exp. & Con.	40	38	.3191	3.822	.000	1.866	.573

The significance value of the *probability* in t -test table was less than alpha .05. Thus, the hypothesis that average assessment scores of the English learning achievement (the posttest) were equal across the two groups was rejected ($t = 3.822$, $df = 58$, $Sig. = .000 \leq .05$). Moreover, Figure 2 illustrates that the both groups were significantly different in terms of their performance on the posttest of students' achievement.

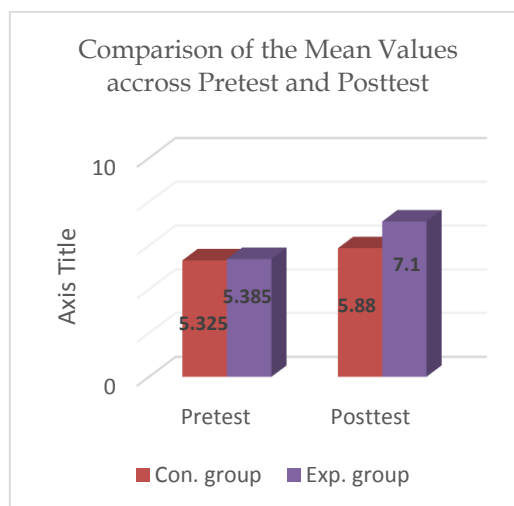


Figure 2. Comparison of the mean values of both groups in the pretest and posttest

According to Figure 2, the performance of the experimental group in the posttest was better than the control group. It represented that there was a significant difference between two groups mean values. In other words, the experimental group achieved an improvement after the treatment schedules.

In addition, in order to investigate the extent of the learners' progression within groups, two paired samples t -tests were run (one for the control group and one for the experimental group), which showed the subjects' progress from the pretest to the

posttest. Table 5 displays the results of two paired samples *t*-test for the pretest and posttest scores of experimental and control groups.

Table 5. Paired samples *t*-test for the pretest and the posttest scores of both groups

Groups		Paired Samples Statistics								
		Mean	N	df.	Std. Deviation	SEM	SED of Paired	Paired <i>t</i> -test	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Control group	Pair 1	Pretest	5.325	20	19	1.006	.890	1.1108	2.18	.152
		Posttest	5.880	20	19	.9844	.665			
Experimental group	Pair 1	Pretest	5.385	20	19	3.28	.970	1.1113	4.25	.000
		Posttest	7.100	20	19	1.84	.544			

According to Table 5, the mean scores of the control group improved from (5.325) in the pretest to (5.880) in the posttest. With respect to the performance of the participants in the experimental group, the mean score increased from (5.385) in the pretest to (7.100) in the posttest. As shown in Table 5, both groups progressed over time. Based on the results of paired samples *t*-test, this improvement was statistically significant simply for the experimental group ($p \leq 0.05$). In other words, the two groups made a substantial progress in the posttest of English learning achievement. However, this progress was not statistically significant for the control group ($p \geq 0.05$). These results also rejected the null hypothesis. Likewise, according to Gass and Mackey (2005), the most common measurement that can be used after a *t*-test is eta squared (expressed as η^2), which goes beyond the fact that there is a significant difference and gives an indication of how much of the variability is due to independent variable (instruction type). The formula for eta squared is as follows:

$$\text{eta squared } (\eta^2) = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)}$$

$$\eta^2 \text{ (for } t\text{-test)} = \frac{7.100^2}{7.100^2 + 38}$$

$$= \frac{50.41}{88.41} = 0.58$$

$$\text{eta squared } (\eta^2) = 0.58$$

It means that 58% of the variability in two groups' scores can be accounted by the instruction type and 42% can be accounted by other effects because the magnitude of differences in the means is large.

DISCUSSION

One of the problematic aspects of EFL teaching / learning, namely English teaching by in-service trained and in-service untrained teachers has been elaborated in the present

research. It investigated a direct relationship between in-service trained teacher and the students' English achievement. According to Zulkifli Che Omer (2014), in-service training is important for teachers to face new challenges and changes in the education world. Accordingly, this research found out applying in-service trained teacher is increasingly related to two main factors: *teachers' knowledge of language* and *teachers' motivation*. Because, from one side, teachers as conductors and the masters of the classroom can pave the pathway for students' achievement when they are competent and knowledgeable, and the other side, teachers' motivation acts as a main factor for achieving the goals of teaching effectively and affectively. This factor is highly related to the teachers' attitude to be updated teachers knowledgably, to have an effective rapport with their students in a cooperative and collaborative manner and to take the students affective filter low which for the first time was proposed by Krashen (1982).

According to Du (2009), Krashen argued that EFL / ESL learners acquire second languages only if they obtain comprehensible input and if their affective filters are low enough to allow the input 'in'. In his theory, affect includes motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. Likewise, comprehensible input may not be utilized by EFL / ESL acquirers if there is a "*mental block*" that prevents them from fully profiting from it. The affective filter acts as a barrier to acquisition. The filter is up when the acquirer is unmotivated, lacking in confidence, or concerned with failure. The filter is down when the acquirer is not anxious and is trying to become a member of the group speaking. So, it is the teachers' duty to pay attention to the role of the students' effect on L2 teaching in order to maximize the value of L2 teaching (Selinker, 2009). Besides, utilizing in-service trained teachers' methodology acts as a scaffolding tool and creates easily a bridge between teachers' language teaching method and learners' language learning approaches. Indeed, scaffolding is the kernel of Vygotsky's (1978) theory, it is the notion of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in every learner. According to him, ZPD is the distance between students' existing developmental state and their potential development level so that students can learn language in cooperation and collaboration with their peers and teachers interactively. In this respect, teacher's method of teaching acts as a mediation and intervention to the students' future progresses.

Moreover, this research found that applying in-service trained teachers in EFL classroom through utilizing an effective and dynamic method such CLT is a way towards revolutionizing language teaching and learning in Iran, particularly, it is an act to teacher-learner-centered approach rather than traditional teacher-centered one based on the learners' interest, needs and wants as well as the goals of teaching and learning. This study observed that applying an in-service trained teacher (using CLT) includes following psychological and educational advantages for students:

- ✓ Activates learners' mental activity,
- ✓ Motivates students,
- ✓ Provokes students' critical thinking abilities,

- ✓ Maximizes students' language learning development intellectually,
- ✓ Increases students' language fluency and accuracy,
- ✓ Fosters students' self-esteem, self-confidence and risk-taking,
- ✓ Minimizes learners' affective filter,
- ✓ Provides students opportunities to use language effectively and communicatively,
- ✓ Creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom,
- ✓ Facilitates language teaching and learning processes,
- ✓ Promote students' cooperative learning,
- ✓ Generates students autonomously,
- ✓ Integrates four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as well as language components (spelling, grammar, phonology and morphology).

To bring the discussion to an end, undoubtedly, an in-service trained teacher may improve EFL students' language learning process. However, in-service training program for teachers is a planned process whereby the effectiveness of teachers collectively or individually is enhanced in response to new knowledge, new ideas, particularly, it is a fundamental aspect for the enhancement of teachers proficiently related to their insights to improve the quality of their work. To elaborate on the pedagogical implications of this study, it can be argued that traditional English teaching method which is commonly used in Iran curriculum system seems inadequate to effectively educate a changing student population in the process of language learning because the results of the present study showed teaching English through CLT by an in-service trained teacher can have a positive effect on the students' language learning to gain achievement.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of in-service training on students' English achievement. The results obtained through an in-service trained teacher for improving third-grade students' language learning in this study demonstrated that students' receiving CLT (by three reading activities and different tasks) attained higher scores than those who did not, over their English language test (the posttest). It was proved that teaching English by an in-service trained teacher (used CLT) was more successful than the control group with an in-service untrained teacher (used traditional way of English teaching which is common in Iran curriculum system). It should be repeated that based on the findings and comparing the pretest and posttest scores in both the experimental and control groups, using CLT by an in-service trained teacher contributed to give the classroom a more meaningful and cohesive environment, and as an influential and beneficial skill in learners' attention, perception and comprehension

of language learning. It not only made the atmosphere of the experimental group's class be more fun and creative but also it could improve Iranian third-grade students' language achievement.

Consequently, providing in-service training for language teachers is a way towards the improvement of English educational system in public schools of Iran. This education for teachers may be an awareness to the sensitive aspect of education towards modernized and humanized methods in EFL context of language teaching (like Iran), particularly, compatible with the students' needs, goals and modern technical world. In addition, the effectiveness of in-service training is important to ensure that the training is suitable and brings positive effect to the teachers. The effectiveness of the in-service training is influenced by teachers' attitude, needs analysis and strategies used in the in-service training program.

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