



Teachers' Praxis in EFL Classrooms: Insights from in Service and Retired Educators in Public and Private Schools

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Abstract

The present qualitative study examined the practices of in-service and retired English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in public and private schools to provide a comprehensive understanding of their pedagogical approaches. The researchers used a multi-faceted data collection strategy, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations, providing an in-depth exploration of the constructs that influence teaching practices. Forty EFL teachers from public schools and educational institutions participated in this study. All participants provided informed consent before their involvement in the study. The researchers used MAXQDA software 24 and thematic analysis to analyze the collected data. The findings highlighted the significance of promoting student agency, social transformation, cultural relevance, emotional ecology, critical reflection, ethical decision-making, collegiality and collaboration, and feedback and communication. These constructs collectively demonstrated how teachers provide supportive and engaging learning environments that empower students and promote active participation in their educational journeys. The findings have pedagogical implications for teachers, learners, curriculum designers, and policy makers.

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Introduction

Praxis pedagogy supports learners in developing practical and applied skills by connecting experiential learning with real-world contexts (Bruening, 2009). In recent years, this approach has re-emerged as an important framework for understanding how effective educational practices are formed and enacted in schools. Shakouri and Mirzaee (2016) defined praxis as both theorizing practice and practicing theory. From this perspective, praxis involves applying knowledge and skills in authentic contexts to enhance student learning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In education, teachers' ability to translate theoretical knowledge into classroom practice is essential for improving student learning outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This connection is particularly important in language education, where teachers are expected to adapt pedagogical principles to the immediate needs of their learners and classroom environments. Arnold and Mundy (2020), therefore, emphasized the importance of examining teachers' practices as a means of narrowing the persistent gap between educational theory and classroom practice.

Although scholars have encouraged teachers to become familiar with the principles of praxis pedagogy, teachers' beliefs, professional experiences, and working conditions may influence how these principles are understood and implemented. Previous research has also indicated that teachers may have a limited understanding of praxis and its relevance to their teaching practices (Creswell, 2013). Nevertheless, insufficient attention has been given to how EFL teachers apply praxis pedagogy in the Iranian educational context. In particular, little is known about whether teachers at different stages of their professional careers, including in-service and retired teachers, understand and enact praxis in similar or different ways. The literature also provides limited insight into how praxis pedagogy is implemented across public and private language-education settings.

The study was conducted in five cities—Mashhad, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Roshtkhwar, Khaf, and Sabzevar—located in Razavi Khorasan Province in northeastern Iran. These cities differ in population, educational resources, and opportunities for teachers' professional development; nevertheless, little is known about how EFL teachers working in these varied contexts understand and apply praxis pedagogy in public and private schools.

The originality of the present study lies in its examination of the common practices of both in-service and retired EFL teachers working in public and private schools across several cities in Razavi Khorasan Province. By including teachers with different professional backgrounds and experiences, the study extends the existing discussion of praxis beyond teachers' theoretical perceptions and focuses on how praxis is actually reflected in classroom practice. The findings may contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between pedagogical theory and practice and may also inform teacher-education programmes, professional-development initiatives, and institutional policies intended to support more reflective and context-responsive language teaching.

Accordingly, this qualitative study investigated the common practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers in implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms in public and private schools. The present study addressed the following research question:

What are the common practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers in implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms in public and private schools?

Literature Review

Praxis Pedagogy

According to Mahon et al. (2020), praxis pedagogy is the intentional and morally committed actions taken by individuals and collectives to act rightly. It is an action that is learned and morally committed rather than an action that is rule-following or only practical or instrumental. An initial definition of praxis pedagogy is “student-centered, critical thinking, which includes an ethical perspective and with a future aim of improving student outcomes” (Arnold & Mundy, 2020, 9).

Some scholars represent ‘praxis’ and ‘practice’ synonymously. However, others have used ‘praxis’ as a particular kind of practice (e.g., Kemmis & Smith, 2008; Smith, 2008). The theory of practice architectures states that practices are not merely shaped by the experiences, intentions, and actions of individuals. Practices are molded by practice architectures and circumstances beyond the individual (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008).

Constructs of Praxis Pedagogy

Previous research has tried to identify different constructs of praxis pedagogy:

1. *Student Agency*: Educational praxis involves something educational being done, not just intentions regarding the doing of something (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014).
2. *Social Transformation*: Socially transformative praxis positions education as a site of struggle where theory and action converge (Bradley et al., 2024)
3. *Historical and Cultural Relevance*: Individuals do not serve as the main sources of linguistic and cultural meanings; rather, their choices are shaped by the *cultural, social, and historical* contexts in which they are embedded (Andreotti, 2016).
4. *Emotional Ecology*: To bridge the theory-practice gap in teacher education, Chaleila (2025) examined the implementation of the "From Theory to Praxis" (FTTP) practicum model. This study advocates for globally adaptable, student-centered teacher education reforms grounded in socio-emotional principles.
5. *Critical Reflection*: Olin et al. (2020) explored the impact of incorporating *critical reflection* and action-oriented approaches on teachers' ability to critically analyze and transform their practice in the classroom.
6. *Ethical Decision Making*: Praxis is a “morally-committed educational action, is oriented and informed by (educational) theories and traditions” (Edwards-Groves & Gray, 2008, 83).

7. *Collegiality and Collaboration*: Praxis flourishes in environments that allow time for collaborative inquiry and relational trust (Mahon et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study is guided by the theory of practice architectures proposed by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008). The framework explains how educational practices are enabled or constrained by the conditions in which they occur. Rather than viewing teaching as an individual activity, it considers practice a socially situated process involving ways of understanding, acting, and relating to others (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Practice architectures consist of three interconnected dimensions: cultural-discursive, social-political, and material-economic arrangements (Mahon et al., 2017). The cultural-discursive dimension includes the beliefs, values, and professional language that shape teachers' understandings of teaching and praxis. The social-political dimension concerns relationships, power structures, institutional expectations, and teachers' professional autonomy. The material-economic dimension includes resources, technologies, workload, class size, and opportunities for professional development.

In the present study, this framework is used to examine how these three dimensions influence the ways in which in-service and retired EFL teachers understand and enact praxis pedagogy. It therefore provides a basis for identifying the conditions that support or restrict teachers' efforts to connect educational theory with classroom practice.

Related Studies

Research on praxis has approached the concept through critical pedagogy, professional learning, practitioner inquiry, and socially responsive teacher education. Collectively, this literature treats praxis not as the straightforward application of theory but as a reflective, ethical, and context-dependent process. However, most studies have examined specific professional groups, disciplines, or structured educational programs, leaving limited evidence about how praxis is understood and enacted by teachers across different career stages and institutional settings.

Magill and Salinas (2018) showed that teachers' engagement with critical pedagogy depended on their willingness to enter dialectical relationships and develop a critical ontological stance toward teaching. Their findings position praxis as a process shaped by reflection and professional interaction rather than as a fixed set of classroom techniques. Similarly, Kemmis (2024), through a critical review of ten studies, emphasized that praxis develops within environments characterized by relational trust, collective agency, and critical reflection. Together, these studies challenge individualistic interpretations of praxis by demonstrating that teachers' capacity to connect theory and practice is influenced by both personal dispositions and the social conditions of their work. Nevertheless, neither study sufficiently explains how teachers enact praxis in routine language classrooms outside formal critical-pedagogy or professional-learning initiatives.

The importance of institutional support is also evident in Bradley et al. (2024) and (Bruening, 2009). Bradley et al. (2024) demonstrated how Freirean and feminist pedagogies, mentoring, and supervised practice supported the professional formation of community and

youth workers in Ireland. (Bruening, 2009), in contrast, showed that teacher educators in Thailand sought to promote democracy, equity, and justice despite institutional constraints. Although both studies highlight the transformative potential of praxis, they also indicate that personal commitment cannot fully compensate for restrictive organizational structures. Their focus on professional preparation, teacher educators, and pre-service learners, however, provides limited insight into the experiences of practising teachers or those who have completed their professional careers.

Doecke and Yandell (2025) further demonstrated that practitioner inquiry can reshape English teachers' understandings of language and literacy by encouraging them to document and critically examine classroom experience. Their study is particularly valuable because it connects praxis to teachers' interpretation of learners' actual language use and challenges standardized views of literacy. Yet, the participants were already involved in reflective inquiry, raising the possibility that the findings may not represent teachers working in contexts where opportunities for systematic reflection, collaboration, or professional inquiry are limited.

Across these studies, critical reflection, dialogue, mentoring, collaboration, and institutional support emerge as central conditions for praxis. At the same time, the literature suggests that these conditions are increasingly weakened by standardized expectations, technical models of accountability, and policy environments that reduce teaching to measurable performance (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). Mahon et al., 2017 similarly argued that the conditions necessary for praxis have significantly diminished. The literature therefore presents a tension: praxis is widely valued as an ethical and transformative form of professional action, yet the institutional conditions required to sustain it are often absent. What remains insufficiently examined is how teachers themselves respond to this tension in their ordinary professional practice and whether their interpretations differ according to experience, employment status, and educational context.

A further limitation concerns context. Much of the available research has been conducted outside Iran and has focused on teacher education, professional-development programs, practitioner inquiry, or community-based education. These findings cannot be assumed to apply directly to Iranian EFL settings, where teachers may work under different cultural expectations, institutional regulations, resource conditions, and opportunities for professional learning. Research is especially limited concerning praxis across public and private schools and among teachers located in cities with different educational and socioeconomic characteristics.

The present study addresses these limitations by examining how in-service and retired EFL teachers in Mashhad, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Roshtkhwar, Khaf, and Sabzevar understand and enact praxis pedagogy. Its originality lies in comparing teachers at different career stages and investigating praxis in everyday teaching contexts rather than within formally organized inquiry or training programs. This comparison makes it possible to examine whether accumulated professional experience produces different understandings of the relationship between theory and practice and how institutional conditions facilitate or restrict its enactment. The findings may therefore contribute a context-sensitive account of praxis in Iranian EFL

education and provide implications for teacher education, professional development, and institutional policies intended to support reflective and responsive teaching.

Method

Design of the Study

The study employed a qualitative multi-method design to investigate the enactment of praxis pedagogy. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and classroom observations, allowing the researchers to examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives. Methodological triangulation was used to enhance the credibility, depth, and consistency of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2013). By triangulating data from these different sources, this study aimed to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the practices of in-service and retired teachers in praxis pedagogy (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select a group of EFL teachers.

Participants and Setting

The researchers employed purposive, maximum-variation sampling to select 40 in-service and retired EFL teachers from public schools and private language institutions. Participants were eligible if they had professional experience in English language teaching, were willing to discuss their classroom practices, and provided informed consent. Selection aimed to include teachers from different career stages, institutional settings, and geographical locations so that the study could capture a broad range of experiences related to praxis pedagogy. Their teaching experience ranged from 1 to 35 years, allowing the researchers to compare the perspectives of relatively novice, experienced, and retired teachers and to examine how understandings of praxis may develop or change throughout a teaching career. Recruitment continued until the sample provided sufficient variation and relevant information for addressing the purpose of the study.

Each participant took part in an individual semi-structured interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in a quiet office setting and audio-recorded with the participants' permission. Before data collection, the researchers explained the purpose and procedures of the study, assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses, and obtained their informed consent.

For the focus group interviews, 32 teachers were organized into four groups of eight. The composition of the groups reflected differences in teaching experience and institutional background, which encouraged participants to compare their perspectives and discuss both shared and contrasting experiences. The sessions were conducted through Google Meet, lasted approximately 90 minutes, and focused on participants' understandings and classroom enactment of praxis pedagogy. In addition, one researcher observed 40 classes in Roshtkhar, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Faizabad, and Mashhad. The observations were selected to represent different teaching settings and were documented through a validated observation checklist and detailed field notes on instructional practices, classroom interactions, and contextual conditions.

Table 1. *Demographic and Professional Characteristics of the Participants*

Characteristic	Participant information
Total number of participants	40 EFL teachers
Professional status	In-service and re-engaged retired teachers
Gender	Both male and female
Teaching experience	Approximately 1–35 years
Experience of re-engaged retired teachers	Approximately 30 years before retirement, followed by up to 5 additional years of teaching after re-entry
Academic field	English language teaching or a related field; exact fields not reported
Institutional setting	Public schools and private educational institutions
Geographical setting	Mashhad, Torbat-e Heydarieh, Roshtkhar, Khaf, and Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran
Sampling strategy	Purposive sampling with attention to variation in professional experience and institutional setting
Inclusion criteria	Current or previous professional experience in EFL teaching, active engagement in teaching, willingness to discuss classroom practices, and informed consent
Participant categories	Currently employed in-service teachers and retired teachers who had re-entered teaching
Sample-size criterion	Data saturation, determined through ongoing data collection and analysis

Note. EFL = English as a foreign language. Re-engaged retired teachers were those who had formally retired but subsequently returned to active teaching.

Instruments and Materials

Triangulating different data collection modes could increase the probability that the research findings and interpretations will be credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the present study, the researchers used different instruments and materials to collect and analyze the data.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are the most frequently used interview technique in qualitative research. They provide a balance between structure and flexibility (Charmaz, 2014). Their formats typically combine predetermined questions and open-ended prompts (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In the current study, the researchers interviewed forty in-service and retired EFL teachers at public and private schools. (See Appendix A for interview questions)

Focus Group Interviews

The current study conducted focus group interviews as a data collection tool to facilitate dynamic interaction among participants and generate a range of perspectives (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Overall, the use of focus groups in this study provided a valuable means to explore the complexities and nuances of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices.

Observation

To strengthen the data, the researchers used observation, focusing on both the teaching activities and the physical settings where the activities were taking place (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011). Observation was chosen as it allows for the collection of rich, detailed data on the practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers in their classrooms. The researchers

developed an observation checklist or scheme to use during observation and validated it. (See Appendix B for observation checklist)

Data Collection Procedure

This qualitative study used a semi-structured interview format to examine the common practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers in implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms in public and private schools. Moreover, the researchers organized separate focus group discussions for in-service and retired teachers to encourage group interactions and generate rich insights into their practices. The focus group interviews continued until data saturation, when no new information or themes emerged from the interviews.

Additionally, the researchers conducted observations in public and private schools over a semester. They observed a subgroup of both in-service and retired teachers who participated in the semi-structured interviews. The researchers took detailed field notes during classroom sessions, noting specific instances of praxis pedagogy implementation to capture key observations and insights (Ciesielska & Jemielniak, 2018).

Based on relevant literature and guidelines, the researchers developed an observation checklist to ensure consistency and objectivity in the observation process. This checklist outlined specific behaviors, events, or variables to be observed and recorded to capture relevant aspects of enacting praxis pedagogy, such as instructional strategies, student engagement, and the classroom environment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To validate the checklist, the researchers followed recommended procedures, such as conducting pilot tests, seeking feedback from experts in the field, and assessing inter-rater reliability (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Data Analysis Procedures

In the current research, the researchers precisely transcribed and organized all collected data to provide an inclusive dataset for analysis. Then, the researchers used MAXQDA software 24 and thematic analysis to analyze the collected data. After reading the data carefully, the researchers examined the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the practices of implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms. The researchers identified eight themes as constructs of praxis pedagogy, including student agency, social transformation, cultural relevance, emotional ecology, critical reflection, ethical decision-making, collegiality and collaboration, and feedback and communication.

Results

This study investigated the common practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers in implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms in public and private schools. Using thematic analysis suggested by Kiger and Varpio (2020), the researcher identified eight themes. Consequently, the researcher considered these eight themes as constructs of praxis pedagogy and investigated the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the practices of implementing praxis pedagogy in their classrooms, using semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and observation.

Results of the Study Based on Semi-Structured Interviews

The following section presents several extracts for each construct.

Student Agency

The EFL teachers in this study encouraged students to take ownership of their learning through various activities, including self-directed projects, setting personal goals, and involving them in problem-solving and critical thinking activities:

I encourage students to take ownership of their learning by allowing them to choose project topics, set personal learning goals, and participate in self-assessment (school in-service, participant No. 3).

I encourage students to take ownership of their learning through self-directed projects, self-assessment, and the use of online resources (school retired, participant No. 8).

I emphasize that success is the result of their own decisions and efforts. I encourage students to take responsibility for their learning (institution in-service, participant No. 10).

I encourage agency by allowing students to set their own learning goals and choose project topics. For example, I once let a group of students design a class activity based on a current event, they were passionate about (institution retired, participant No. 4).

Social Transformation

The participants of the current study contributed to broader social change by fostering critical thinking, raising students' awareness of social issues, creating a supportive classroom environment, and preparing them to become responsible members of society:

As a teacher, I contribute to broader social change by fostering critical thinking, promoting values like empathy and respect, and encouraging students to participate in community service and social projects (school in-service, participant No. 7).

Based on my past experiences and the feedback I've received, my actions contribute to broader social change by shaping the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of my students (school retired, participant No. 7).

I encourage them to participate in social and cultural activities, which helps build a sense of responsibility and cooperation. By creating a space for open discussions about social and cultural issues, I help strengthen social cohesion and promote a more inclusive society (institution in-service, participant No. 8).

My actions contribute to social change by fostering a sense of responsibility, critical thinking, and cultural awareness of students (institution in-service, participant No. 10).

By teaching students about social issues and encouraging them to think critically, I help them develop the skills needed to contribute to broader social change (institution retired, participant No. 10).

Historical and Cultural Relevance

EFL teachers encouraged their students to understand cultural and historical influences by using local resources, incorporating cultural elements, organizing discussions, encouraging them to research their cultural heritage, and performing several other activities:

I tailor my teaching strategies by using locally available resources and incorporating cultural elements into my lessons (school in-service, participant No. 3).

I introduce students to historical figures and events, which helps them understand the impact of history on society (school retired, participant No. 2).

I incorporate discussions about culture and history into my lessons, encouraging students to share their own experiences and perspectives (institution in-service, participant No. 1).

I encourage students to value their own culture by incorporating cultural references and examples into the lessons (institution retired, participant No. 3).

Emotional Ecology

In the present study, the participants indicated that they integrate emotional ecology by creating a supportive and safe environment, paying attention to their emotions, listening to them, seeing students as valuable human beings, and using group activities and class discussions:

Some of my students faced significant personal issues that affected their performance. By paying attention to their emotions and listening to them, I could help them regain motivation and focus (school retired, participant No. 1).

I use group activities and class discussions to encourage students to share their feelings and listen to each other (institution in-service, participants No. 4 and 9).

I integrate emotional ecology by addressing both positive and negative emotions in the classroom. I focus on triggering positive feelings by appreciating students' strengths and listening to their personal problems (institution retired, participant No. 6).

Critical Reflection

The EFL teachers in this study emphasized that they incorporate critical reflection by encouraging students to provide feedback and share their opinions, introducing peer feedback sessions, using a question-and-answer approach, and encouraging critical thinking activities:

In a recent class, I noticed that students were struggling with a particular concept. After reflecting on my teaching methods, I decided to incorporate more visual aids and hands-on activities (school in-service, participants No. 3 & 7).

I incorporate critical reflection by using a question-and-answer approach in the classroom. I challenge students to explain their reasoning (school retired, participant No. 5).

I incorporate critical reflection by encouraging students to question and evaluate information before forming conclusions (institution in-service, participant No. 5).

I incorporate reflection activities, such as journaling or group discussions, to help students think critically about their learning (institution retired, participants No. 4 and 5).

Ethical Decision Making

EFL teachers in this study indicated that they ensured their teaching decisions were ethically informed by connecting the syllabus to students' real-life experiences:

I once encountered a student from a divorced family who was very sensitive and fragile. By giving her special attention, I saw immediate positive changes, which even other teachers noticed (school in-service, participants No. 7 and 8).

I often ask students to demonstrate their language skills through presentations or conferences (school retired, participant No. 5).

I once had a student who was struggling due to family issues and emotional stress. By providing emotional support and adapting my teaching approach, I helped the student regain confidence and improve their academic performance (institution in-service, participant No. 4).

I ensure that my teaching decisions are ethically informed by connecting the syllabus to students' real-life experiences (institution retired, participant No. 2).

Collegiality and Collaboration

Most of the EFL teachers in the current study stated that they engage with other educators through strategic meetings, workshops, online platforms, conferences, small talks before classes, constructive discussions, and sharing ideas:

I engage with other educators through strategic meetings and by sharing educational materials in virtual groups (school in-service, participant No. 1).

I participate in meetings and workshops organized by school principals and educational groups (school retired, participant No. 3).

I engage with other educators through regular meetings and professional development workshops. We share experiences, discuss challenges, and collaborate on new teaching strategies (institution in-service, participants No. 2 and 3).

I engage with other educators by discussing challenges in the school office and listening to their suggestions (institution retired, participant No. 3).

Feedback and Communication

Most participants of this study sought feedback from students and tried to improve their teaching methods based on their feedback:

I regularly seek and consider feedback from school staff, teachers' assistants, class leaders, students, and parents. I'm open to adjusting various aspects of my teaching (school in-service, participant No. 10).

After receiving feedback from students that they did not feel heard in class, I changed my teaching approach to create more opportunities for student participation (institution in-service, participant 9).

I regularly sought feedback from students and reflected on their input to identify areas for improvement (institution retired, participant 7).

Adaptability and Responsiveness

Participants of the present study referred to some common practices regarding the adaptability and responsiveness as a construct of praxis pedagogy: creating a supportive and motivating environment, changing their teaching strategies based on the needs of the students and the available resources, replacing the final exam with a large group project, using a student-centered approach, developing a project-based learning module, and incorporating culturally relevant materials:

There was a time when I was working with students in an underprivileged school, and I quickly realized that simply following the standard lesson plan wouldn't meet their real needs (school retired, participant No. 1).

In response to students' low reading levels, I developed a gradual approach using animations like 'Peter Rabbit' (institution in-service, participant No. 10).

I developed a peer-mentoring program where advanced students helped beginners. This strategy was a response to the diverse proficiency levels in our institute and helped build a collaborative learning environment (institution retired, participant No. 4).

Results of the Study Based on Focus Group Interviews

This section reports the results of the research question based on the focus group interviews with ten EFL retired and in-service teachers. The researcher categorized the insights from the focus group interviews under the relevant constructs of praxis pedagogy.

Student Agency

Reza (retired teacher) encouraged student agency by developing an environment where students felt empowered to express their observations and corrections. He stated that "I have encouraged my students to feel confident enough to point out any errors they notice in my speech or writing without experiencing stress or anxiety." Moreover, several teachers promoted student agency through encouraging them to express their opinions and engage in discussions. Mina (retired teacher) stated "we give them a challenging question. We ask the children to give their opinions. However, we guide this discussion". Nasrin (in-service teacher) promoted student agency by encouraging them to take responsibility for sharing knowledge with their peers, permitting them to engage actively in their learning process.

Student-Centered Learning

Several teachers highlighted student-centered learning by prioritizing student voices in the classroom. For example, Reza (retired teacher) stated that "I allow students to speak up within reasonable boundaries—provided that their comments do not become disrespectful or offensive." Additionally, Zahra (in-service teacher) said "I don't let students sit silently and just listen in my class."

Azar's (retired teacher) practice of demanding student resumes exhibited a commitment to student-centered learning. By understanding her students' backgrounds and personal conditions, she adapted her method to meet their individual needs and construct a supportive learning situation.

Social Transformation

Reza's (retired teacher) decision to prioritize empathy over curriculum delivery demonstrated a commitment to social transformation. He encouraged a supportive classroom culture in which he considered emotional well-being along with academic success by addressing the emotional state of his students. Moreover, Ali (in-service teacher) tried to develop a spirit of inquiry and critical thinking and contributed to social transformation within his classroom: "I try to strengthen the spirit of questioning and demanding in them."

Moreover, Bahar's (retired teacher) approach to fostering teamwork over traditional group leadership encourages social transformation. She fostered an environment where students learn the value of collaboration and mutual support by encouraging them to work collaboratively and support one another.

Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is essential to teaching practice, as teachers evaluate their methods and the advice they receive from colleagues. They contemplate the effectiveness of different strategies based on their experiences and the evolving educational background. Mina indicated that "I always evaluate suggested methods based on my own experience to ensure that they are socially and pedagogically up to date."

Reza's (retired teacher) reflection on the impact of different learning environments demonstrated critical reflection in practice. He said that "my experience indicates that the learning environment plays a highly significant role—whether the setting is a vocational school, a regular public school, or a gifted school." Additionally, Ali's (in-service teacher) reflection on the significance of constructing relationships with students revealed his critical awareness of teaching practices.

Ethical Decision Making

Teachers showed ethical decision-making by prioritizing students' emotional well-being over traditional disciplinary methods. Ali's (in-service teacher) emphasis on consistent rule enforcement demonstrated his commitment to ethical decision-making in his teaching practice. He stated that "as a teacher, I personally find it easier when the classroom teacher enforces rules consistently, except in exceptional circumstances where I am confident that no misuse or exploitation is involved."

Reza's (retired teacher) ethical stance against authoritarian teaching practices revealed his commitment to fostering an open dialogue in the classroom. He expressed that "I fundamentally oppose the notion that a teacher can assert something as absolute truth and expect students to accept it unquestioningly."

Emotional Ecology

Mina's (retired teacher) focus on making an emotionally supportive atmosphere speaks to the construct of emotional ecology. She promoted a safe environment where students share their feelings by creating a compassionate and non-judgmental stance. Moreover, Nasrin (in-service teacher) stated that "one way to create a safe environment for students is to allow them to express themselves and have the courage to answer questions when the teacher asks."

Collegiality and Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers is essential for professional growth and effective teaching. Engaging with colleagues across subjects allows teachers to share insights and strategies that benefit all students. According to Mina (retired teacher), “it is essential that we engage in professional collaboration with teachers of other subjects.” She demonstrated the significance of collegiality among teachers, accepting that even educators can struggle with self-expression in professional settings.

By identifying this shared experience, Zahra (in-service teacher) highlighted the need for collaborative environments where teachers can support one another and share their ideas freely. She stated that “even we as teachers sometimes lack the confidence to express our views... colleagues often hesitate to speak up out of fear that their opinions might be incorrect.”

Feedback and Communication

Teachers signified open communication and constructive feedback as tools for improvement. They acknowledged the consequence of being receptive to criticism and using it to enhance their teaching practices. Mina stated that “teachers must be capable of accepting criticism and negative feedback.” Several teachers indicated the significance of communication with students to provide feedback and nurture understanding.

By allowing students to prepare materials they are interested in while also providing structured guidance, Baran fostered an environment of open communication and constructive feedback: “They prepare the materials they like... I will personally assign the teacher to come and teach here.”

Results of the Study Based on Observations

The following tables illustrates the results of the study based on the observations

Table 2. *Observation Checklist for Exploring Practices of an In-Service EFL Teacher in Implementing Praxis Pedagogy in the Classroom in a Public School*

Observation Checklist	An In-Service Teacher in a Public School
Ethical Decision Making Does the teacher engage in practices that promote social justice, equity, and ethical actions in the classroom?	✓ The teacher gave a student who received a low grade an opportunity to improve through additional activities, rather than strictly adhering to rules. ✓ The teacher considers the well-being of students by understanding their personal situations and not overly pressuring them.
Emotional Ecology Does the teacher create a safe and supportive classroom environment that fosters open dialogue and discussion about emotions and feelings?	✓ The teacher maintains a kind tone of voice and calls students by their first names to create a warm and supportive atmosphere. ✓ The teacher allows students to make mistakes and learn from them, fostering emotional growth.

Adaptability & Responsiveness Does the teacher tailor lessons to the specific context of the school and community?	✓ The teacher personalizes lessons, such as having students describe their village (e.g., Khor) or organize school festivals with local clothing, posters, and conversations.
Historical & Cultural Relevance Does the teacher incorporate historical and cultural perspectives and narratives into their teaching	✓ The teacher discusses topics like the appropriate age for marriage, encouraging critical thinking about social norms.
Student Agency Does the teacher foster a sense of ownership and agency among students?	✓ The teacher allows students to choose the date for exams by providing options and letting them decide.
Critical Reflection/Collegiality & Collaboration Does the teacher seek feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators to inform their professional development?	✓ Students are encouraged to analyze their exam results and reflect on their learning.

Table 3. *Observation Checklist for Exploring Practices of an In-Service EFL Teacher in Implementing Praxis Pedagogy in the Classroom in a Private School*

Observation Checklist	An In-Service Teacher in a Private School
Ethical Decision Making Does the teacher engage in practices that promote social justice, equity, and ethical actions in the classroom?	✓ The teacher encouraged students to think about their plans, which promotes self-reflection and personal growth, aligning with ethical teaching practices. ✓ The teacher ensures that all students are involved, including silent students, by calling on them to participate.
Emotional Ecology Does the teacher create a safe and supportive classroom environment that fosters open dialogue and discussion about emotions and feelings?	✓ The teacher's warm greeting, energy, and smiles create a positive and supportive atmosphere. ✓ By not directly correcting students but guiding them to correct themselves, the teacher fosters a sense of responsibility and respect among students.
Adaptability & Responsiveness Does the teacher tailor lessons to the specific context of the school and community?	✓ The teacher's use of local examples (e.g., Qadir Park and NOROOZ) demonstrates contextual adaptation and integration of local resources.
Historical & Cultural Relevance Does the teacher incorporate historical and cultural perspectives and narratives into their teaching?	✓ The teacher discusses NOROOZ, a cultural event, when teaching the word "holiday," which incorporates cultural perspectives into the lesson.
Student Agency Does the teacher foster a sense of ownership and agency among students?	✓ The teacher encourages students to self-correct and participate actively, which empowers them to take responsibility for their learning.
Critical Reflection/Collegiality & Collaboration Does the teacher seek feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators to inform their professional development?	✓ There is no specific evidence of the teacher building relationships with students, parents, or community members during the observed class.

Table 4. *Observation Checklist for Exploring Practices of a Retired EFL Teacher in Implementing Praxis Pedagogy in the Classroom in a Public School*

Observation Checklist	A Retired Teacher in a Public School
Ethical Decision Making Does the teacher engage in practices that promote social justice, equity, and ethical actions in the classroom?	✓ The teacher showed concern for students' well-being, checked on absent students, and ensured everyone was engaged and comfortable.
Emotional Ecology Does the teacher create a supportive classroom environment that fosters open dialogue and discussion about emotions and feelings?	✓ The teacher's supportive approach to correcting mistakes and her use of group work encourage students to express themselves and build confidence.
Adaptability & Responsiveness Does the teacher tailor lessons to the specific context of the school and community?	✓ The teacher used a creative analogy to help students understand the lesson and show adaptation to the students' needs. ✓ The teacher connected the lesson to local culture, such as the hospitality of the Isfahan people.
Historical & Cultural Relevance Does the teacher incorporate historical and cultural perspectives and narratives into their teaching?	✓ No specific evidence of historical or cultural perspectives was observed during the class.
Student Agency Does the teacher foster a sense of ownership and agency among students?	✓ Students actively participated in the learning process, made choices about their assignments, and led group discussions. ✓ The teacher encourages students to construct sentences and participate in group activities.
Critical Reflection/Collegiality & Collaboration Does the teacher seek feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators to inform their professional development?	✓ The teacher adapted the lesson based on student responses and engagement.

Table 5. *Observation Checklist for Exploring Practices of a Retired EFL Teacher in Implementing Praxis Pedagogy in the Classroom in a Private School*

Observation Checklist	A Retired Teacher in a Private School
Ethical Decision Making Does the teacher engage in practices that promote social justice, equity, and ethical actions in the classroom?	✓ The teacher ensures all students are included in activities without considering their socio-economic backgrounds, promoting fairness and equality.
Emotional Ecology Does the teacher create a safe and supportive classroom environment?	✓ The teacher begins the class with specific questions to understand how their day has been, encouraging open communication about feelings.
Adaptability & Responsiveness Does the teacher tailor lessons to the specific context of the school and community?	✓ The teacher occasionally uses local or regional examples, including place names, to make lessons more relatable.
Historical & Cultural Relevance Does the teacher incorporate historical and cultural perspectives and narratives into their teaching?	✓ The teacher compares advanced societies with their own, encouraging students to think critically about improving their communities.
Student Agency Does the teacher foster a sense of ownership and agency among students?	✓ The teacher introduces various tools such as apps, websites, and social media channels, allowing students to select their preferred method of study.
Critical Reflection/Collegiality & Collaboration Does the teacher seek feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators to inform their professional development?	✓ Both high-performing and struggling students are asked to reflect on their experiences, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. ✓ The teacher engages in online courses, webinars, and conferences, leveraging professional networks to enhance their teaching skills.

Discussion

The present study examined how in-service and retired EFL teachers enacted praxis pedagogy across educational settings. Eight interconnected dimensions emerged: student agency, emotional ecology, social transformation, cultural relevance, ethical decision-making, adaptability, professional collaboration, and holistic education. These dimensions reflected teachers' attempts to connect pedagogical knowledge with learners' social, cultural, and ethical realities. Project-based learning promoted learner ownership, supportive relationships encouraged participation, and local traditions, real-world issues, and moral dilemmas positioned language education as reflective and socially responsive practice.

The findings can be understood through the theory of practice architectures proposed by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008). This framework suggests that praxis is shaped by cultural-discursive, social-political, and material-economic arrangements rather than by teachers' individual competence alone (Kemmis et al., 2014; Mahon et al., 2017). Culturally relevant materials and community concerns reflected cultural-discursive conditions. Student agency, emotional support, and professional collaboration were connected to social-political arrangements involving relationships, authority, participation, and autonomy. Project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and adaptation to learner needs depended on material-economic conditions such as time, resources, facilities, and professional development. Praxis therefore requires institutional support.

The results align with Tagata's (2018) study of English teachers in Brazilian public schools, which conceptualized praxis as the integration of critical reflection and action and positioned teachers as theorists of their own practice. Both studies emphasize student agency, cultural relevance, and social transformation. However, Tagata focused on Moodle forums and online discussions in a distance-learning programme, whereas the present study used interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations and included practicing and retired teachers. This design offers insight into how understandings of praxis appear in everyday classroom practice.

Similarities also emerged with Bradley et al. (2024), who examined praxis-oriented professional education for community and youth workers at Maynooth University in Ireland. Their model emphasized ethical reflection, dialogue, mentoring, field-based learning, and responsiveness to community needs. These features parallel the present findings on ethical decision-making, collaboration, holistic education, and real-world engagement. Nevertheless, Bradley et al. described a programme structured around Freirean and feminist principles, while the Iranian teachers often enacted praxis informally within institutional arrangements. This suggests that praxis can develop locally, but without organizational support it may remain inconsistent and dependent on individual teachers.

Internationally, the convergence of findings across Iranian, Brazilian, and Irish contexts indicates that reflection, participation, ethical responsibility, and responsiveness to local realities are central to praxis. Yet these principles cannot be transferred uniformly because their enactment depends on curriculum expectations, institutional authority, autonomy, resources, and cultural conditions.

The findings have implications for policy and practice. Educational institutions should provide autonomy, collaborative inquiry opportunities, adequate resources, and sustained professional development linking theory to classroom problems. Teacher-education programmes should move beyond technical training by addressing culturally and ethically complex situations. Retired teachers' knowledge may support mentoring and intergenerational learning when examined critically. At school level, collaborative reflection, locally relevant materials, and discussion of learner needs can strengthen praxis. Overall, praxis-oriented teaching depends on alignment between teachers' critical intentions and the cultural-discursive, social-political, and material-economic conditions of their contexts more fully.

Conclusion

This study has provided a nuanced understanding of the pedagogical practices of in-service and retired EFL teachers, emphasizing the complex relationship among the different constructs that shape their teaching methodologies. The findings highlighted the significance of promoting student agency, critical thinking, and emotional well-being within the classroom. It also indicated the role of cultural relevance and ethical decision-making in improving language instruction. The interconnected themes identified in this research not only revealed the complexities of EFL teaching but also emphasized the need for a holistic approach to education that prioritized both teacher and student development.

This study has several pedagogical implications for teachers, learners, curriculum designers, and policymakers. This study emphasizes the necessity of adopting a student-centered

approach that inspires active participation and critical engagement for EFL teachers. Teachers are encouraged to generate comprehensive and culturally relevant learning situations that distinguish and celebrate diversity. Professional development opportunities should concentrate on increasing teachers' adaptability and nurturing their emotional well-being, as these issues significantly influence their success in the classroom. Moreover, students stand to benefit from the insights gained in this research by experiencing more engaging and empowering learning environments. When teachers prioritize student agency and critical reflection, students are more likely to cultivate indispensable skills that extend beyond language acquisition. This approach promotes a sense of ownership over their learning, encouraging self-confidence and motivation.

On the other hand, curriculum designers should consider the findings of this study by developing curricula that highlight critical reflection, emotional ecology, and cultural relevance. Incorporating these fundamentals into EFL programs can generate more meaningful learning experiences that resonate with students' lives and objectives. Additionally, curricula should provide flexibility to accommodate diverse teaching styles and learner needs. For policymakers, the study indicated the significance of supporting EFL teachers through targeted professional development initiatives and resources that encourage holistic education. Policies should inspire collaboration among educators, nurturing communities of practice that permit teachers to share experiences and strategies. Moreover, policies should support curricula that reflect the different cultural backgrounds of students, guaranteeing fairness in language education.

While this study offers appreciated insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The sample size may not fully represent the various experiences of all EFL teachers across diverse contexts. Furthermore, the reliance on qualitative methods may introduce subjectivity in data interpretation. Future research could benefit from incorporating quantitative measures to complement qualitative findings.

Future research should examine the long-term influences of praxis pedagogy on EFL teaching practices and student outcomes. Moreover, future research could explore the experiences of EFL teachers in different educational contexts, including urban versus rural environments or diverse cultural backgrounds. Intensifying the scope to include students' perspectives on their learning experiences could provide a more comprehensive understanding of praxis pedagogy. Finally, longitudinal studies investigating the development of teaching practices over time would contribute valuable insights into the dynamics of EFL instruction.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions

Exploring the Perceptions and Practices of In-service and Retired EFL Teachers Regarding the Implementation of Praxis Pedagogy: A Qualitative Study in Public and Private Schools

1. How do you ensure that your teaching decisions are both ethically informed and practically effective in the classroom?
2. Can you share an experience where you felt that your teaching practice was not just about following rules or techniques, but was informed by a moral commitment to your students' learning and well-being?
3. How do you integrate your understanding of emotional ecology into your daily teaching practices?
4. Can you share an experience where your emotional knowledge significantly impacted a student's learning journey or well-being?
5. How do you tailor your teaching strategies to the specific cultural, social, and economic context of your school?
6. Can you share an example of a teaching strategy you've modified or developed in response to the particular needs of your school community?
7. How have historical and cultural contexts influenced your decision-making and teaching practices within the classroom?
8. In what ways do you encourage students to understand and engage with the historical and cultural influences on their own learning?
9. In what ways do you encourage students to develop their own sense of agency within the learning process?
10. Can you share an instance where you had to make a significant decision that impacted the educational outcomes of your students?
11. How do you incorporate critical reflection into your teaching practice?
12. Describe a recent experience where critical reflection has influenced your teaching approach or decision-making process.
13. "What role do you believe education plays in social transformation?"
14. In what ways do you believe that your actions as a teacher contribute to broader social change?
15. In what ways do you engage with other educators to collectively reflect on and improve teaching practices?
16. How do you foster a sense of collegiality and connectedness among staff in your school to create a supportive and interconnected teaching community?

Appendix B**Observation Checklist for Exploring Perception and Practices of In-Service and Retired Teachers Regarding the Implementation of Praxis Pedagogy in EFL Classrooms**

Teacher Name: _____

Date: _____

Class/Level: _____

Observer: _____

1.1 Does the teacher demonstrate a clear understanding of the ethical implications of their actions in the classroom?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

1.2 Does the teacher prioritize the well-being of students and the broader community in their decision-making?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

1.3 Does the teacher engage in practices that promote social justice and equity?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Clear examples of the teacher making decisions based on moral principles, such as promoting equity, fairness, and respect.

2.1 Does the teacher create a safe and supportive classroom environment that fosters emotional well-being?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

2.2 Does the teacher acknowledge and address their own emotions and biases?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

2.3 Does the teacher encourage students to express and regulate their emotions?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

2.4 Does the teacher encourage open dialogue and discussion about emotions and feelings in the classroom?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher actively listening to students, validating their feelings, and incorporating their emotional experiences into the learning process.

3.1 Does the teacher adapt lessons based on the specific context of the school and community?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

3.2 Are local resources and cultural elements integrated into lesson plans?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher incorporating relevant local issues, resources, and cultural perspectives into their lessons.

4.1 Does the teacher incorporate historical and cultural perspectives and narratives into their teaching?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

4.2 Does the teacher help students understand how current events are shaped by past experiences?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

4.3 Are students encouraged to reflect on their own histories and identities?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher discussing historical events, social issues, or cultural contexts related to the lesson content.

5.1 Does the teacher empower students to make informed choices and take responsibility for their learning?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

5.2 Does the teacher foster a sense of ownership and agency among students?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

5.3 Are students given opportunities to make choices in their learning activities?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

5.4 Does the teacher encourage student initiative and self-directed learning?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of students actively participating in the learning process, making choices about their assignments, or leading group discussions.

6.1 Does the teacher engage in regular self-reflection and evaluation of their teaching practices?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

6.2 Does the teacher seek feedback from students, colleagues, and administrators?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

6.3 Does the teacher use reflection to inform their professional development and improve their teaching?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

6.4 Are students prompted to reflect critically on their learning experiences?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher participating in professional development activities, journaling about their teaching experiences, or seeking feedback from students or colleagues.

7.1 Does the teacher incorporate social justice themes into lessons?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

7.2 Does the teacher encourage students to become active citizens and agents of change?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

7.3 Are students encouraged to discuss and challenge social norms?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

7.4 Does the teacher address inequalities or injustices observed in the school environment?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher incorporating social justice themes into their lessons, discussing current events, or organizing community service projects.

8.1 Does the teacher participate in professional development activities and networks?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

8.2 Does the teacher collaborate with colleagues to share best practices and learn from each other?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

8.3 Does the teacher build relationships with parents and community members to support student learning?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Evidence: Examples of the teacher participating in collaborative planning sessions, sharing resources with colleagues, or attending professional development workshops. Note: This observation checklist provides a framework for assessing the implementation of praxis pedagogy.