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Understanding EFL teachers' experiences of ChatGPT-driven collaborative reflective practice through a community of practice lens

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Despite the acknowledged impact of generative artificial intelligence chatbot (ChatGPT) in the field of education, further research is necessary to explore the potential of ChatGPT in enhancing the professional growth of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. Hence, this study aims to uncover how Iranian EFL teachers' (four novice and four experienced teachers) ChatGPT-driven collaborative reflective practice (CRP), both independently and collaboratively, can contribute to their professional development.

Design/methodology/approach: We adopted a transcendental phenomenology approach which encouraged us to eliminate any biases or preconceived notions we may have had regarding the phenomenon under investigation and analyzed the data thematically.

Findings: Findings gathered through group discussions, observations, and semi-structured interviews demonstrated that EFL teachers developed professionally through ChatGPT-driven CRP done individually and collaboratively. Teachers' individual reflection with ChatGPT served as a complementary preparatory step for contributing insightful perspectives during CRP in the community of practice (CoP).

Originality/value: Discussion of findings indicates the ways ChatGPT-driven CRP as a new mode can enhance the quality of language teacher education and professional development programs, especially in disadvantaged contexts where mentors and teacher educators are not always available to provide language teachers with reflective feedback.

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ChatGPT; collaborative reflective practice; EFL teachers; community of practice; professional development

Introduction

The field of English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching has attracted significant attention from scholars, researchers, and educators seeking to improve the professional development of EFL teachers through various tools, techniques, methodologies, and strategies. It can be a great basis for fostering teachers' knowledge of teaching and learning, language students' achievement, and the quality of language teaching. Therefore, reflective practice is considered as a professional tool to enhance EFL teachers' professional development (Farrell 2015). EFL teachers engage in reflective practice as a professional development strategy either on their own or with their colleagues through various

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modes – written, verbal, or even interactive (Collin and Karsenti 2011). To add more interactive and collaborative practices to systematic reflections, EFL teachers can use collaborative reflective practice (CRP) in a community of practice (CoP) with other teachers, peers, students, and other stakeholders. In this case, EFL teachers can conduct CRP to gain constructive feedback, achieve scaffolding, build mutual connections, make sense of experiences, solve problems, implement new strategies, and co-construct knowledge collectively and reflectively within a CoP (Daniel, Auhl, and Hastings 2013).

However, the introduction of AI (Artificial Intelligence) tools has reframed the way teachers can engage in reflection and collaboration (Awidi 2024). Although, in theory, AI can support the practice of teacher reflection and collaboration, it is yet to be explored how teacher CRP can be enhanced and how AI might change the process of teacher CRP (Floris 2023; Yu 2024). Teachers need to learn how to critically engage with these AI-based tools and regulate their collaborative reflection processes (Kasneci et al. 2023). AI tools can provide several opportunities for teachers to deepen their thinking by offering perspectives they may not have considered, much like experienced and knowledgeable peers might provide. In the absence of such peers and experienced colleagues, ChatGPT, 'a natural language processing (NLP) system developed by Open AI' (Deng and Lin 2022, 81), can be used for co-reflection. Although previous studies have discovered the significance of ChatGPT in enhancing teachers' reflective and collaborative professional development (ElSayary 2024), there remains a scarcity of studies exploring the role of engaging in CRP with ChatGPT, both individually and within a community of practice (CoP). Thus, in this study, we aim to explore and present how a cohort of novice and experienced EFL teachers reflect with ChatGPT, both individually and collaboratively and engage in professional development through CRP in a CoP. To address this, we seek to answer the following research question: 'What are the novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers' individual and collective reflection experiences with ChatGPT-driven CRP?'.

AI-driven ChatGPT in language teacher professional development

AI is defined by Popenici and Kerr (2017, 1) as 'computing systems that are able to engage in human-like processes such as learning, adapting, synthesizing, self-correction, and use of data for complex processing tasks'. It can positively boost, reform, and maintain the quality of educational practices by including intelligent agents, tutoring systems, and collaborative learning systems. Hence, AI can offer various advantages for EFL students, such as providing a personalized learning environment, offering immediate feedback, and enhancing engagement and inclusion. Moreover, it can lead to increased motivation and excitement, facilitate ongoing accessibility and approachability, and improve vocabulary and grammar knowledge as well as speaking and writing skills by modeling and correcting language (Kohnke, Luke Moorhouse, and Zou 2023; Jeon and Lee 2023). Nevertheless, it comes with some disadvantages, like limited human interaction with social and emotional practices (Ebadi and Amini 2022), unfairness and discrimination in perceiving and producing information, and lack of language exposure to genuine and meaningful language use originated in authentic contexts (Alam 2022).

One such standard AI-based tool used for educational purposes is ChatGPT, which can offer real-time feedback, answer questions efficiently, and arrange personalized tutoring systems (Kasneci et al. 2023). Although ChatGPT has been partially investigated to see its influence on language teaching and language proficiency (Jeon and Lee 2023), language teacher education and professional development programs need to consider how to employ AI-driven ChatGPT for EFL teachers' professional development (Pokrivcakova 2019). It is especially significant to know how EFL teachers in socio-economically disadvantaged contexts like Iran can use ChatGPT to advance professionally since mentors and teacher educators are not always available to provide constructive and professional feedback and/or some teachers can be busy with their second jobs or other responsibilities due to financial constraints. So, ChatGPT can function as an ever-present virtual mentor to help teachers by supplying immediate feedback regarding their teaching practices, lesson plans, problems during teaching, and exploration of information (Lisnawati and Muharam 2023; Montenegro-Rueda, et al. 2023; Roumeliotis and Tselikas 2023).

Additionally, ChatGPT can clarify and solve problems perceived during and after teaching hours, enhance teachers' engagement and motivation to build their professional and personal competence, and have a personalized tutoring system to accelerate their professional development. Moreover, boosting productivity and competence, enhancing fairness, and changing their beliefs and practices can be other benefits of ChatGPT for teachers' professional development (Celik 2023; Kohnke, Luke Moorhouse, and Zou 2023; Ulla, Perales, and Busbus 2023). ChatGPT, due to its capacity to interact and provide help and guidance, can work as an interlocutor and teaching assistant, make available the desired content, and evaluate the teaching performance of EFL teachers (Jeon and Lee 2023). Still, it may need to meet the contextual and cultural demands of the specific setting and have an empathetic understanding of teachers (Grassini 2023). By means of ChatGPT, EFL teachers can engage in CRP to explore their questions and concerns in the specific context, and collectively change their instructional practices in a CoP (Banegas 2022; ElSayary 2023; Farrell 2015; Yuan and Mak 2018). Moreover, ChatGPT-driven CRP can serve as a facilitator of peer discussion to encourage more critical and stimulating questions. It offers a generative variety of ideas, strategies, and methods and provides personalized, immediate, and contextualized feedback, facilitating a culture of continuous learning (Al-khresheh 2024; Bozkurt et al. 2023).

As such, ChatGPT is capable of assisting and guiding teachers by informing them of current methodologies, materials, and practices, discovering desired content and materials for their professional learning, providing instantaneous constructive feedback, and increasing reflective and collaborative practices through scaffolding and mentoring (Kasneci et al. 2023). Not only can EFL teachers conduct CRP with ChatGPT individually, but they can also employ CRP with colleagues in a CoP. Within a professional CoP, they can experience a more authentic, meaningful, and human-oriented negotiation, development, and learning to compensate for the shortages of ChatGPT for teachers' professional development.

Teachers' ChatGPT-driven collaborative reflective practice

As defined by Zwozdiak-Myers (2018, 5), reflective practice is 'a disposition to inquiry incorporating the process through which students, early career and experienced teachers structure or restructure actions, beliefs, knowledge, and theories that inform teaching for professional development'. Through reflective practice, EFL teachers can systematically examine their teaching practice and personal theories, link their practice with theories, think and act creatively, and maximize their opportunities for developing knowledge, skill, and practice (Beauchamp 2015).

Reflection, if supported in a CoP through mutual interaction, meaningful experience, and constructive feedback, can become more effective as a collaborative reflective practice (CRP). CRP is a recent mode of reflective practice, shaping teachers' knowledge, skill, and practice through reflection and collaboration in a CoP (Daniel, Auhl, and Hastings 2013). Hence, collaboration, scaffolding, and communication with colleagues, experts, peers, and stakeholders can collectively support systematic reflection. EFL teachers can collectively work towards exploring weaknesses and taking relevant actions, observing, and changing instructional practices, co-constructing knowledge and understanding, having a more critical reflection, building their skills and knowledge, and being engaged in collaborative tasks in a CoP (Kemmis et al. 2014).

ChatGPT can function as a virtual learning partner for CRP with the capacity to interact with teachers and learners to provide content, answer their questions, solve problems, offer guidance, summarize, and analyze data, create change and transform practice, and foster teaching and learning effectiveness (Javaid et al. 2023). Moreover, ChatGPT can generate a human-like virtual environment, produce audio files or text, find, and connect patterns and concepts, and explore pertinent and preferred information (Lan et al. 2023). Teachers can also receive immediate feedback regarding their teaching practices, boost their engagement and enthusiasm to shape their professional and personal knowledge, and organize personalized learning with ChatGPT (Kasneci et al. 2023). Likewise, ChatGPT-driven CRP can be a source of professional development for EFL teachers (Al-khresheh 2024). Since ChatGPT can improve critical thinking and communication skills, have conversations,

assist virtually, provide self-paced and personalized learning, answer questions, and encourage transformation of practice, EFL teachers can implement CRP with ChatGPT to enhance their knowledge independently, even if other teachers are not approachable (Shihab, Sultana, and Samad 2023).

Theoretical framework: Community of Practice (CoP)

Teachers need to interact and communicate with each other, informally and contextually, by participating in a supportive and friendly community, as teachers' professional development can be supported in a team, network, or community to have shared repertoires and practices in a non-judgmental atmosphere (Vescio, Ross, and Adams 2008). Wenger-Trayner's (1998) CoP is used as a theoretical framework for providing a model to boost teacher collaboration in which teachers can share their goals, practices, repertoires, and experiences with others to reflect on the experience, solve problems, and creatively change them in a sustainable way. Legitimate peripheral participation functions 'an initial form of membership characteristic of such a community' in which 'acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice' (Lave and Wenger-Trayner 2008, 110), i.e. the novice teacher.

In this way, novice and experienced EFL teachers can come together as a joint enterprise with a shared objective and goal to achieve and a joint repertoire to have the same activities, meanings, concepts, content, and procedures. They can also work together with a mutual commitment by having an interpersonal relationship with other colleagues and a sense of collegiality and belonging with a collective identity. Consequently, they can generate knowledge collectively via authentic and interactive tasks, reflect on their practice to develop innovative ideas with others in a team, and enhance and reconstruct their professional knowledge, skill, and practice. Moreover, they can be more active and responsible for their own and others' growth, and to reform their thoughts, feelings, and actions both individually and collectively (Barak 2015).

So, CRP can become a meaningful and authentic practice for teachers' professional development, by linking collective and individual practice through reflection and collaboration in a professionally oriented CoP. Moreover, working in a CoP enhances EFL teachers' agency, openness, reliability, innovation, and collaboration, since it provides contextualized collaboration, curiosity-driven personalization, and evidence-informed reflection (Admiraal et al. 2021). Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of novice and experienced Iranian EFL teachers with ChatGPT-driven CRP in a CoP.

Method

Research design

We adopted a transcendental phenomenology approach which encouraged us to eliminate any biases or preconceived notions we may have had regarding the phenomenon under investigation, that is, language teacher professional development through ChatGPT-driven CRP. Transcendental phenomenology is an approach 'in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time' (Moustakas 1994, 34). The researchers rely on participants' intuition, ideas, and overall frameworks to gain a comprehensive understanding and insight through a systematic approach to analysis (Moustakas 1994). As such, before the data collection and analysis procedures, we explored our own experience with the phenomenon to 'become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions', a process called *epoche*. We then *bracketed* them as much as possible so that we can understand teachers' individual and collective experience with ChatGPT-driven CRP (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 27).

Participants and context

In this study, we purposely approached four novice and four experienced EFL teachers through snowball sampling. We located one key participant from each group (novice and experienced) with the particular

characteristics (level of teaching experience, major, professional development motivation, and technological literacy) required in this study and asked them to refer to another English teacher from the same school who shared similar attributes (Merriam and Tisdell 2016). In this study, we conceptualize novice teachers as those with less than three years of teaching experience (Freeman 2002) and experienced teachers as those with 3–18 years of teaching experience (see Table 1 for information about participants).

The secondary school where the participant teachers worked had multiple branches in Iran and operated as a private institution with its own governing system. Although the school must follow the curriculum set by the Ministry of Education, it has more freedom to provide extra classes, support, or events. As a result, they were able to offer additional English classes through an independent language department. The 20 English teachers in the school were on one-year contracts and they taught approximately 200 students. Students' level of proficiency ranged from A2 to B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). English classes took place in the afternoon after the regular school hours. The curriculum for the classes was based on materials provided by an international publisher. The teachers were encouraged to advance professionally to receive promotions, and salary increases and the school provided opportunities for reflective practice, such as observations, journal writing, and action research. Collaborative team teaching, cooperative projects, discussion groups, workshops, conferences, and other professional development programs were also available. This demonstrated the school's commitment to fostering a welcoming educational growth and improvement environment.

Data collection process

We collected data through three methods: (1) taking field notes during group discussions, (2) observing and taking notes during virtual meetings, and (3) conducting interviews with teachers. We did not include any established checklist, since the goal was to enhance flexibility, explore broad insights, reach emergent and contextual data, have organic organization, and foster creative and artistic processes (Bernard 2017; Patton 2014). To uphold research ethics and protect the confidentiality of participants, consent forms were provided for them to sign. They were also assured that their identities and personal details would remain anonymous and that the research findings would not be utilized for other purposes.

Subsequently, the first researcher conducted a one-hour workshop to discuss the CRP process based on Korthagen and Vasalos' ALACT model (2005). The workshop encompassed these aspects: actions (lesson planning and teaching), looking back on the actions with reflections (observation, reflection, and analysis), awareness of essential aspects through interpretations (understanding), creating alternative approaches (innovative solutions and answers), and having trial through implementing further actions and practices collectively.

First, novice and experienced EFL teachers interacted with ChatGPT individually before their class to plan their lessons, receive guidance, prepare authentic materials, and know how to teach the specific content (see Appendix 1 for sample teacher interactions with ChatGPT and Appendix 2 for a sample lesson plan co-designed with ChatGPT). They proceeded to provide ChatGPT with information regarding their content, materials, goals, objectives, students, context, and skills, as well as other relevant details to receive the necessary guidance and assistance. They were encouraged to

Table 1. Participating teachers' demographic information and their PD background.

Teacher	Gender	Degree	Major	Age	Experience	PD background
NT1	Male	B.A.	ELT	22	1	TESOL
NT2	Male	B.A.	ELT	23	1	CELTA
NT3	Female	B.A.	Translation	25	2	TKT
NT4	Female	B.A.	ELT	26	3	TESOL
ET1	Male	B.A.	ELT	41	18	TKT
ET2	Female	M.A.	Translation	29	4	CELTA
ET3	Female	B.A.	ELT	37	16	CELTA
ET4	Male	M.A.	ELT	39	15	TKT & CELTA

guide the discussion they had with ChatGPT through negotiating points, directing the discussion, managing details and information, providing details, linking theory and practice, and inquiring about more information. Thus, they could perceive and understand what, how, and why to teach in a specific way to particular learners with certain goals. During class, teachers could observe and record their practices, experiences, and attitudes. After that, ChatGPT functioned as a reflective and collaborative partner to evaluate the practice, give more suggestions, enhance professional knowledge, notice gaps and strengths, and plan further changes for future practices. The first researcher helped them throughout the process, including directing their interactions, asking relevant questions, providing practical prompts, and enhancing the reliability of CRP. So, teachers acquired the skills of collaborative planning, acting, observing, analyzing, reflecting, understanding, and evaluating in conjunction with ChatGPT to enhance their professional growth.

Next, they formed two teams, each consisting of two novice and two experienced teachers, to implement ChatGPT-driven CRP throughout the semester (60-minute weekly session for three months). Teachers utilized ChatGPT to engage in interactions before, during, and after their teaching sessions. They were also advised to conduct CRP within their teams by meeting with other team members once a week and maintaining virtual communication through WhatsApp or Skype in a virtual CoP. During the group discussions, the first researcher acted as a complete observer and gathered data by taking field notes. We chose an unstructured observation method to align with the inductive nature of our data analysis, which allowed us to reveal emerging practices without relying on established frameworks or checklists. Such flexibility and openness enabled us to explore deeper insights and gather more naturalistic data (Patton 2014).

Also, the first researcher conducted two waves of 15-minute semi-structured interviews with the participants, one in the middle of the semester and one at the end. The interview questions were as follows: *(1) How would you describe your experience with ChatGPT-driven CRP?, (2) What role(s) did ChatGPT play in your CRP?, (3) Can you provide some benefits and challenges of ChatGPT-driven CRP?* The interviews were conducted in English and recorded for transcription purposes. Finally, the data collected from observations (virtual discussions), field notes (group discussions), and transcriptions (interviews) were consolidated for analysis and interpretation.

Data analysis

We followed Moustakas' (1994) procedures in this study: (1) selecting a specific phenomenon to investigate (ChatGPT-driven CRP), (2) setting aside personal experiences (researchers' previous experiences), and (3) gathering data from multiple individuals (novice and experienced EFL teachers) who had encountered the phenomenon (developing professionally through ChatGPT-driven CRP). We then carefully analyzed the collected data, with the first researcher condensing the information into meaningful statements or quotes and organizing them into themes. Subsequently, the first researcher constructed a textural description of the participants' experience, highlighting what they went through. Additionally, a structural description was developed, focusing on how the participants experienced the phenomenon in terms of the surrounding conditions, situations, or context. Finally, the textural and structural descriptions were combined to convey the overall essence of the experience (Creswell and Poth 2016). The themes were identified by discerning patterns in the initial data and formulating themes according to their resemblances and distinctions (Braun and Clarke 2006). We then as a team discussed the emerging themes and what they indicated about the essence of the participant teachers' experiences with the phenomenon (see Table 2 for data analysis procedures).

Findings

Teachers' individual reflection experience with ChatGPT

Although our research focused on revealing teachers' collaborative reflection experiences with ChatGPT, their individual reflection with the tool served as a complementary preparatory step for

Table 2. Procedures of analyzing phenomenological research (Adapted from Moustakas 1994).

Stages	Aim	Description of the process
1	Describe personal experience with the phenomenon under study.	The researcher only focuses on participants' practices and experiences without including his/her perspective.
2	Develop a list of significant statements.	Identifying statements (from interviews or other data sources) describing individuals' experiences, compiling, and treating them equally valuable (horizontalization), and creating a list of unique and non-repetitive statements.
3	Group the significant statements into broader units of information.	Meaning units or themes were created for interpretations.
4	Create a description of 'what' the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon.	Doing a textural description of participants' experience, including what happened.
5	Draft a description of 'how' the experience happened.	Implementing a structural description to describe the settings, contexts, and conditions to see how it happened.
6	Write a composite description of the phenomenon.	Integrating both what (textural) and how (structural) experience happened

contributing insightful perspectives during CRP in the CoP. Findings indicated that teachers' individual reflection experience with ChatGPT seemed to be positive and they benefited from reflecting with ChatGPT in multiple ways. They were not only encouraged to delve deeper into their experiences when engaging with ChatGPT, but ChatGPT also facilitated teachers in enhancing their reflective practice. Through reflection with ChatGPT, teachers could reflect on their personal, social, and cognitive aspects, such as their beliefs and theories of teaching, emotions, and feelings during teaching and interacting with students, and social and interpersonal practices while collaborating with others. Like a critical friend who co-reflects, ChatGPT seemed to provide collaborative and reflective feedback for two of the novice teachers in our study:

Excerpt 1. ChatGPT as a critical friend

I used ChatGPT to solve my problems related to teaching grammar, generate grammatical tasks, and guide my grammatical instruction and presentation. Also, I could shape my belief system, regulate my emotions, reform, and transform my instructional practice, and improve my knowledge continuously. (Novice teacher-NT3)

Excerpt 2. ChatGPT as a reflective peer

I felt alone when no supervisor was around me during my teaching, lesson planning, and reflecting practices. Hence, I could finally find a ubiquitous peer to collaborate with. ChatGPT helps me with my lesson plans, teaching procedures, learners' learning styles, methodologies, and assessment and evaluation. (NT1)

So, conducting reflective practice with ChatGPT offered novice EFL teachers opportunities to gain help, guidance, and support through enhancing lesson plans and developing activities and tasks before the class, monitoring and evaluating practices to solve problems during the class, and identifying appropriate teaching strategies and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning innovatively after their classes. While using ChatGPT, novice EFL teachers could critically self-reflect on and make sense of their first teaching experiences, gaining deeper insights into their practices and identifying areas for improvement through '*thinking and deliberating on novel experiences innovatively, gaining social and professional support, fostering instructional practice and knowledge experientially, and reforming thoughts, practices, and theories (NT2)*'. Hence, novice teachers were able to enhance their cognitive, social, and professional skills through reflecting and interacting with ChatGPT. Also, they appeared to foster their noticing skills and awareness as they reflected with ChatGPT, as stated by NT1: '*Whenever I referred to ChatGPT for seeking guidance, direction, and support, I noticed that I could become sharp and acute, observe more attentively, and understand events and occurrences more clearly*'. In addition, they jointly developed lesson plans with ChatGPT, which boosted their creativity, as NT3 described, '*I could enhance my lesson plan by changing it constructively, theoretically, and practically. It helped me develop tasks, modify content, add innovation, use feedback, and check comprehension* (NT4)'.

In addition, novice EFL teachers could contact a coach/mentor who was always available to converse professionally about their pedagogical practices. Hence, they reflected with ChatGPT about their novel experiences, co-regulated their emotions, co-identified problems, co-generated creative options, and developed continuously, as NT2 stated:

Excerpt 3. ChatGPT as a professionally reflective mentor

When I reflected on teaching conversation with ChatGPT, I realized that I needed to use more authentic and real-life activities in my classes to enhance meaningfulness and authenticity. Likewise, it helped me with predicting crucial moments with a more professional identity - not acting like a novice but as an experienced teacher.

In the absence of a mentor, novice teachers had the opportunity to enhance their pedagogical practice and knowledge with the assistance of ChatGPT, as NT4 said, '*Since experienced teachers, mentors, or supervisors were not always present, it was important to make some decisions individually*'. In such cases, novice EFL teachers could professionally experience a socio-constructivist learning approach, have automated support and immediate feedback, and generate knowledge and sharpen their skills through reflection with ChatGPT, as the first researcher observed during discussion groups: 'Novice *teachers discerned that they used to explain and talk a lot during their teaching since ChatGPT highlighted the role of students' inclusion and engagement*'.

Novice teachers went through a process of experiential learning by reflecting on their novel experiences and receiving scaffolding and feedback from ChatGPT, as NT1 said, '*When I interacted with ChatGPT to know how to teach a specific reading point, I realized that it could work as a coach or trainer to scaffold the required knowledge and linked theories and practice creatively and contextually*'.

Besides, reflections and interactions with ChatGPT created the space for novice teachers where they became more motivated, creative, and satisfied in developing their teaching knowledge and practice and emotionally felt better:

Excerpt 4. ChatGPT as a reflective counselor

It worked as a counselor and psychologist to me and my team since whenever we faced a personal, social, or professional problem and my peers could not help immediately without doing some research, we could talk to ChatGPT together as a team to discuss, make sense, and negotiate our instructional practices. (NT2)

In addition to novice teachers, experienced EFL teachers had the opportunity to develop professionally through their reflections and interactions with ChatGPT, as one stated, '*Reflecting and interacting with ChatGPT individually and obtaining feedback continuously created constructive change in my beliefs and thoughts* (Experienced teacher-ET1)'.

Experienced teachers developed greater flexibility and adaptability through their systematic reflections and interactions with ChatGPT. They could regulate their beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and values with a more critical stance toward their practice and experience. Having used ChatGPT reflectively, they were able to bridge the gaps in student motivation and align their classes with students' lives. Moreover, experienced EFL teachers became more creative and innovative in adapting and transforming their established practices and theories, which allowed them to incorporate new practices and knowledge. In such instances, ChatGPT functioned as a teacher educator who keeps them up-to-date, as ET3 explained:

Excerpt 5. ChatGPT as a reflective teacher educator

ChatGPT taught me to teach vocabulary in the context rather than in isolation, use games to teach vocabulary, adopt some authentic and real-life pictures to teach words, select and make stories to contextualize those words, implement cooperative and each-based learning approaches for vocabulary teaching, and increase creativity in vocabulary instruction. (ET3)

Besides these benefits, there were a couple of challenges teachers perceived during their reflective interactions with ChatGPT. Some experienced teachers did not possess enough level of digital literacy, so it was hard for them to use ChatGPT, as ET2 stated, '*I could not use ChatGPT as I am not into*

technological devices'. Also, the speed of the internet in Iran can be very slow and ChatGPT or other AI tools can be restricted. Therefore, some teachers had difficulties in connecting to them. In addition to the technological challenges, some novice teachers stated that they could not follow some of the suggestions from ChatGPT since they believed that the cultural, contextual, and ideological factors in Iran were somehow different. For instance, NT3 described, '*I teach in a school which focuses on Islamic norms, so using songs and dancing during teaching, as provided by ChatGPT, to teach grammar cannot be possible for me!*'. Some teachers were very conservative and traditional and could not trust AI and ChatGPT, stating that ChatGPT might use their data and information for alternative purposes, as ET2 explained, 'I am afraid of asking some questions related to my professional teaching, contextual setting, and personal life'.

Teachers' collective reflection experience with ChatGPT

Teachers' collective reflection experiences with ChatGPT in the CoP preceded by individual reflection experiences with ChatGPT revealed that these two processes complemented each other. Both novice and experienced EFL teachers indicated that they were able to negotiate the feedback and data gained from ChatGPT to find the most suitable practice for their specific contexts when they reflected on it with their peers in the CoP. Since ChatGPT may not focus on the specific teaching context with unique contextual and cultural considerations, interacting with peers along with receiving guidance from ChatGPT offered more relevant, to-the-point, and practical benefits.

Similarly, the first researcher noted, '*Collaborating with others within a CoP fills the gaps of conducting CRP individually via ChatGPT. It provided advantages like expressing subjective ideas and discussing personalized interactions, getting relevant and contextual responses collectively, and considering cultural and societal aspects'*. In other words, the information and feedback they got individually from ChatGPT turned out to be more authentic, purposeful, contextual, and meaningful as teachers reflected with other colleagues in a community who possessed the unique knowledge of the specific teaching context and particular learners, as some teachers described:

Excerpt 1. Co-reflecting on ChatGPT prompts

First, we need to provide the exact details to ChatGPT to get relevant feedback. So, collaborative reflections could be used to negotiate what and how to have a request and what follow-up questions should be asked from ChatGPT. Everything can be personalized for students' language proficiency and our own personal and professional development. (ET1)

Excerpt 2. Co-reflecting on what ChatGPT provides

Doing CRP while cooperating with other teachers could enhance authenticity and meaningfulness. Teachers are more familiar with the context and students' needs, have more social-emotional understanding and practice, use their intuitions based on some hunches, and possess personal and professional experience through trials and errors, while ChatGPT lacks these features. (NT3)

Excerpt 3. Modifying ChatGPT content through collaborative reflection

When I implemented the lesson plan prepared by ChatGPT in my class, I recognized that students needed to be more energized and interested. I think that it does not respect the context. So, I collaborated with other teachers to contextualize my lesson plans. (NT4)

Besides, the observations of the first researcher confirmed that ChatGPT-driven CRP in the CoP enhanced the emotional and humanitarian dimension of reflective practice. CRP among novice and experienced EFL teachers boosted their collegiality and belongingness and fostered their interpersonal relationships, as ET4 explained, '*Doing CRP with others could facilitate innovations and authentic practice in a team and generate a friendly and nonjudgmental environment (ET4)'*.

Furthermore, the learning process became enhanced to be more practical and applicable to real-life situations, thereby reinforcing the aspects of learning, such as embracing mistakes and deriving valuable lessons from them. So, implementing CRP with other teachers in the CoP had the potential

to enhance the authenticity and meaningfulness of the process of learning with ChatGPT. Since novice and experienced EFL teachers possessed a deep understanding of the specific context and the needs of the students to support or reject the information received from ChatGPT. In addition, they brought valuable social and emotional insights and practical knowledge to the table, which could add more meaningfulness to their practice.

Discussion

EFL teachers' experiences of ChatGPT-driven reflection revealed that they benefited from the experience both individually and collaboratively. First, teachers described their individual interactions with ChatGPT as useful and productive, conceptualizing ChatGPT in multiple roles that boosted reflection: critical friend, peer, mentor, counselor, and teacher educator. Reflective practice with ChatGPT enabled novice EFL teachers to sharpen their noticing skills as they had to reflect and collaborate constantly with ChatGPT after observing their classes and making plans wisely. It also made it possible for them to take action by linking theories and practice more innovatively and reflect more cyclically to improve professionally. In the absence of a teacher educator, responsive mediation offered by ChatGPT empowered novice EFL teachers to rethink and enact their teaching practices in line with a sociocultural perspective (Johnson and Golombek 2016).

Similarly, experienced EFL teachers, when reflecting and collaborating with ChatGPT, could receive continuous feedback to reform their knowledge, beliefs, and theories of teaching innovatively and creatively. They could reconstruct their conceptual knowledge and think and act out of the box by changing the previously established beliefs and everyday practices, as supported by previous literature (Kasneci et al. 2023; Ulla, Perales, and Busbus 2023; Vogt and Flindt 2023). From a sociocultural lens, these teachers went through a transformative process of connecting their everyday practices with the new conceptual knowledge (Johnson and Golombek 2016) ChatGPT provided in their reflective interactions.

Secondly, teachers' experience with ChatGPT-driven CRP in the CoP helped them to make collective sense of their individual reflection experiences with ChatGPT. Teachers had the opportunity to employ CRP alongside their colleagues in the CoP, leveraging the information obtained from ChatGPT to enrich their professional knowledge and skills. In the CoP, novice EFL teachers were positioned as legitimate peripheral participants in ongoing practice and learn with/from experienced teachers in the community (Lave and Wenger-Trayner 2008). Overall, through participation in an activity system in the CoP, as Lave and Wenger-Trayner (2008) stated, both novice and experienced EFL teachers had the opportunity to 'share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities' (p.98).

Previous literature also suggests that reflection is not necessarily an isolated process and that teachers benefit from collaborative reflection in similar ways (Beauchamp 2015). By obtaining more comprehensive feedback in the CoP from both human sources and the AI, participants in our study could collectively address challenges and obstacles, as supported by Floris (2023). They had the opportunity to either accept or reject the information presented by ChatGPT through collaborative reflection in the CoP. Thus, CRP with other teachers in the CoP improved the contextualization, meaningfulness, and authenticity of their individual reflections with ChatGPT, as also suggested by Al-khresheh (2024). Besides, they could improve their mutual relationships, collegiality, and interactivity in a friendly and supportive community via ChatGPT, as highlighted by Admiraal et al. (2021). Thus, our findings suggest that ChatGPT-assisted reflective practice for teacher professional development needs to be contextualized through CRP with peers within a CoP to enhance the process emotionally and professionally.

Conclusions and implications

The importance of AI and AI-based tools for teachers' professional development has encouraged professional development agencies to incorporate more AI-driven practices into their teacher education and professional development programs. One such way to improve teachers' professional

knowledge and skills can be through collaborative reflections with the help of ChatGPT. However, more research is needed regarding the potential of ChatGPT to support and advance teachers' CRP. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of how CRP utilizing the information and feedback obtained from ChatGPT can improve EFL teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional methods.

As such, as a new mode of language teacher professional development, the ChatGPT-driven collaborative reflective practice model we proposed in this study includes teachers' individual interactions and reflections with ChatGPT accompanied by their collaborative reflections with peers, highlighting the interplay of ChatGPT and peers in language teachers' reflection processes. As teachers collaborated individually with ChatGPT, they engaged in reflection, exploring their practices, challenges, and growth areas with the targeted advice and guidance of ChatGPT. However, the depth of reflection expanded as teachers jointly discussed these insights and experiences with their peers through inter-thinking (Mercer 2000), building on each other's ideas and gaining new perspectives in a community.

Thus, we suggest that further studies that focus on ChatGPT-driven teacher reflection take this point into consideration and create the space for teachers where they can further jointly reflect on what ChatGPT provides in a community, learning from each other's insights, experiences, and expertise. Especially in contexts where teachers' reflection with a mentor and/or teacher educator is not always possible due to several constraints, ChatGPT may function as a virtual mentor whose advice needs to be sensitively modified and contextualized in a community of teachers.

Another crucial point is that the constant presence of ChatGPT may lead to teachers becoming lazy and over-dependent (Mogavi et al. 2024). Consequently, they may not make any efforts to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, identify problems, generate, and evaluate solutions, think critically, and introduce new models and practices if they believe ChatGPT will always take care of these tasks. To avoid this state, more self-made and collective decisions are needed within a CoP.

While we argue in the paper that teachers found an opportunity to reflect with a source of pedagogical knowledge, we also acknowledge the ethical issues and other professional concerns that might arise from the use of ChatGPT. During the training, we discussed with the teachers how they can use the tool responsibly and ethically to ensure that ChatGPT complements their own efforts rather than substituting them. This approach positions ChatGPT as a supportive mediator in their learning process, which challenges them to invest time and effort. Future studies need to take this dimension into account while using ChatGPT as a language teacher professional development tool.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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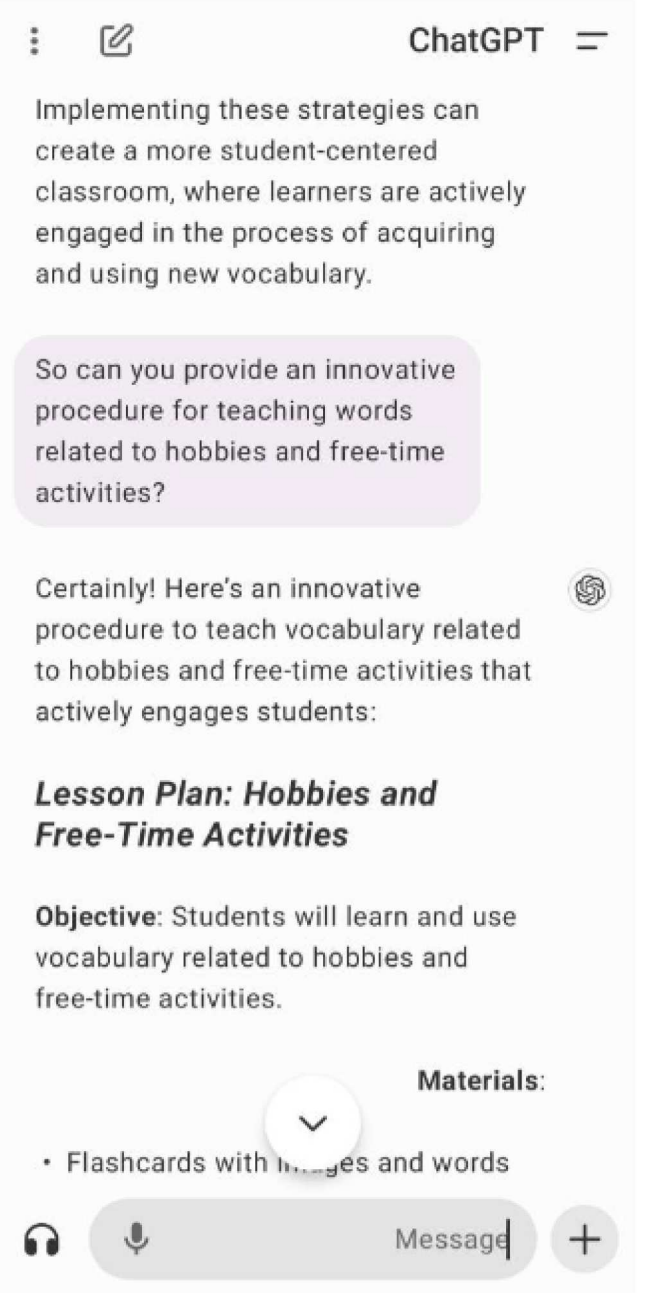
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Appendices

Appendix 1. Sample teacher interaction with ChatGPT



Appendix 2. Sample lesson plan co-designed with ChatGPT

Lesson Plan: Present Continuous (Implicit Learning)

General Goals:

- Students will be able to use the present continuous tense to talk about actions happening now or around now.
- Students will develop listening and speaking skills through interactive activities.

Key Terms (Implicitly Introduced):

- Present continuous tense (not directly labeled)
- 'Be' verb (am, is, are)
- '-ing' verb form

Learning Activities and Approaches:

Stage 1: Warm-up (10 minutes)

- Activity: Play a short video clip (without sound) of people doing various activities (e.g. eating lunch, reading a book, playing sports).
- Approach: Whole class interaction
- Interaction: Ask students questions about the video:
  - What can you see in the video? (Elicit descriptions of people and objects)
  - What do you think these people are doing right now? (Encourage guesses and use prompts like 'Is she … ?' or 'Are they … ?')

Stage 2: Main Activity (40 minutes)

- Activity 1: Mime and Guess (15 minutes)
- Approach: Pair work
- Interaction: Students take turns miming actions that happen in the present continuous (e.g. writing, talking, listening). Their partner guesses the action and uses the present continuous tense (e.g. 'You are writing!').
- Activity 2: 'Now or Never' Game (25 minutes)
- Approach: Whole class interaction
- Interaction: Divide the class into two teams. The teacher calls out verbs (present simple tense). Students stand up if the action can be happening now (present continuous) and stay seated if not. The team with the most correct responses wins. (Implicit Contrast): Through this activity, students will implicitly contrast situations that can happen now (present continuous) vs. habits or general truths (present simple).

Stage 3: Wrap-up (10 minutes)

- Activity: Sentence Scramble (10 minutes)
- Approach: Individual work
- Interaction: The teacher writes present continuous sentences on the board with the words scrambled (e.g. ing, read, book, is, he, a). Students unscramble the words to form correct sentences.
- Review: Briefly discuss the structure of the present continuous tense by pointing to the unscrambled sentences on the board (e.g. 'He is reading a book').

Resources:

- Short video clip (without sound) showing people doing various activities
- Whiteboard or projector

Assessment Model:

- Observe students' participation in class discussions and activities.
- Check students' understanding during the 'Sentence Scramble' activity.

Implicit Learning:

Throughout the lesson, the focus is on using the present continuous tense in a communicative way without explicitly mentioning the grammar rules. By exposing students to the language through activities and prompts, they will develop an implicit understanding of the tense.

Differentiation:

- Provide sentence starters or word banks for students who need additional support during the miming activity.
- Allow students to draw pictures to represent actions instead of miming for the kinesthetic learners.

This lesson plan is designed to be interactive and engaging for pre-intermediate EFL students. By using implicit learning techniques, students will develop a foundational understanding of the present continuous tense in a fun and dynamic way.