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## Research Paper

# Teachers' Online Professional Development Through Dialogic Interaction: A Study of Novice and Experienced EFL Teachers

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## Abstract

The current study investigated the effect of EFL teachers' dialogic interactions on their online professional development (OPD). For this purpose, a group of 3 experienced and 5 novice teachers participated in the study. After the analysis of the teachers' written reflective narratives and interviews, the most significant themes of the teachers' OPD were found and categorized. Results showed that dialogic interaction navigated the teachers' OPD, but in different directions. Whereas the novice teachers exhibited a tendency toward more behaviorally oriented trajectories of development, the experienced teachers were more attitudinally and cognitively invested in the OPD process. This study invites teacher education programs and teacher educators to capitalize on dialogic interaction as a resource to promote teachers' OPD and to support the personalized and professional needs of teachers at different developmental stages.

**Keywords:** Online Professional Development (OPD); Dialogic Interaction; Experienced Teachers; Novice Teachers.

## 1. Introduction

The essence of studying teachers' online professional development (OPD) is more evident today due to the fundamental changes that the COVID-19 pandemic forced against the world conduct after 2020. A generous number of teachers now seek venues to promote their digital literacy, increase their online teaching expertise, and access online learning management systems (Ahadi et al., 2021; Chin et al., 2022; Jones & Kessler, 2020). In return, more researchers are also turning the spotlight on effective OPD designs, programs, and trajectories (Atmojo, 2021; Pölzl-Stefanec, 2021; Pölzl-Stefanec & Geisler, 2022; Sadeghi & Ashegh Navaie, 2021; Yeo, 2021). Their concerted efforts revealed that uncertainties about issues such as online classroom management, innovative teaching strategies, online student engagement, digitalized formative and summative assessment, feedback, and so on agitate not only the teachers' experience of teaching, but also their value systems, attitudes, emotions, and perceptions, that is, teachers' professional identity (Richter, Brunner, & Richter, 2021; Li, Zhang, & Gamble, 2022). As a result, more teachers around the world now experience burnout (Bailey, 2022; Trudel & Sokal, 2023), have less organizational commitment (Akartuna & Serin, 2022), and/or leave the profession before the time of retirement (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022).

Various studies have recommended access to and provision of technical support, materials/resources, interventions, and supervision as some forms of solutions (Billaudeau et al., 2022; Lau et al., 2022; Panadero et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the significance of hearing teachers' voices and building upon their immediate expectations of OPD programs is not accentuated. Although the literature suggests that dialogic interaction facilitates active participation in interactive and supportive social events and allows regulation and development of selves, voices, stances, and practices (Vygotsky, 1978), there is still a huge gap in OPD designs that allow teachers to explicitly articulate their needs for development, help them achieve their personalized goals and readjust their professional practice (Atmojo, 2021). Not only that, it seems that little importance is attached to domain-specific professional development. That is to say, after the pandemic, general education teachers have been under more evaluation in terms of OPD (Chin et al., 2022) compared to the subject matter teachers, in particular ELT/EFL teachers.



Bearing in mind the significance of tailor-made trajectories of teachers' OPD, the present study relied on the potential of dialogic interaction to help English teachers find and express their needs for development. For this purpose, Evans' (2011) framework of professionalism was employed as the theoretical basis of analysis. According to this framework, teachers' professional development is defined as attitudinal, intellectual, and behavioral refinements through which the teacher can meet individual and collective goals of the profession. Using Evans' (2011) framework, the present study targeted the following research question:

How do EFL teachers' online dialogic interactions affect their process of OPD?

It is worth mentioning that novice and experienced teachers were included in this study because the sudden transition to online and hybrid platforms of teaching was perceptually confusing for both groups (Dolighan & Owen, 2021; Gautam & Gautam, 2021; Ozudogru, 2021).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

Not without ties to Vygotskian social constructivist views of development (1978) and Wegner's (1998) community of practice, the studies on teachers' professional development (TPD) offered a fresh outlook on teachers' professionalism. The socially situated systems of other-regulation and self-regulation were considered to be the major drive for TPD and at the heart of the theoretical framework of this line of research (Danielewicz, 2001; Evans, 2011). It was believed that through engagement in a relevant social discourse that provides adequate ZPD (Vygotskian view of zone of proximal development, 1920s) and through relying on a collective professional identity, teachers can speed up the TPD process (Burns & Richards, 2009). Evans (2011), however, was concerned with identifying the shape of teacher professionalism. She reviewed the perceptual changes of the concepts of professionalism and professional development from the 1980s onward and proposed a detailed framework.

According to Evans (2011), professionalism is not only what people do, or the quality and outcome of their experience with the job, but also "how and why they do it" (p. 855). Therefore, taking into consideration the multidimensional nature of professionalism, she suggested a componential structure for it, including behavioral, attitudinal, and intellectual aspects. Each of these elements was, then, described separately: (1) behavioral: fostering processes, actions, outcomes, and achievements of the practice; (2) attitudinal: developing self-perception, other-perception, integration, and motivation; and (3) intellectual: acquiring knowledge of the world and the subject matter, as well as reasoning ability and analysis. According to Evans (2011), TPD happens when at least one of the three components of professionalism is self-/other-regulated within the social context of the profession to achieve personal and professional goals of development. This framework, providing a more concrete means of measuring TPD, formed the theoretical underpinning of the current study and was used to analyze the data deductively.

### 2.2. Language Teachers' Professional Development: Evolution of the Concept

With the growth of more scientific and rigorous methods of teaching (e.g., audiolingualism) back in the 1960s and 1970s, teacher training programs began to emerge and find ground pervasively. The main goal of these programs was to help prospective teachers acquire the required skills and strategies for purposeful and practical functioning in classrooms. At this level, still under the effects of the dominant methods of foreign/second language teaching, cultural studies, literature and the study of language were the main courses (Freeman, 2002). The teachers were provided with theoretical knowledge, and the required skills were practiced in a controlled context under the strict supervision of teacher trainers. At the end of the program, the trainees were granted a certificate of qualifications which was proof of their gained professional teacher competence. According to this certificate, the trainees could be considered qualified teachers who are ready to enter classrooms and put into practice all that they have brought with them from the teacher education program (Burns & Richards, 2009).

Regulated by the theoretical overhauls of second/foreign language teaching methods in the 1980s and the appearance of programs such as teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), second language teacher education (SLTE) programs also changed drastically. The scope of these programs was broadened and courses like Theories of Second Language Acquisition, Applied Linguistics, and Teaching Methodologies attracted the attention of

teacher educators (Burns & Richards, 2009). The SLTE programs were extended to higher education programs and instead of a certificate of qualifications, the prospective teachers were granted a license. The difference was that the license was not merely a proof of qualification, but a formal and legal permission for the teachers to enter the professional market of teaching (Cronin, 1983). As such, the L2 teachers were given a formal and professional status, but they owed to the SLTE programs. Simply saying, the SLTE programs were considered the only source of legitimizing the teachers' professional being and professional development.

Greater moves were made by the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s when the idea of continuous teacher professional development (TPD) entered the scene as a reaction to the short-term programs of TPD which presumed no responsibility for follow-up services (Gilford, 1996; Little, 1993). It was believed that the teachers' context of practice was in constant change, including the diverse range of students' needs and demands, and classroom dynamics (Corcoran, 1995). As such, new TPD programs were supposed to provide constant responses to the individual needs of teachers and students and facilitate the integration of teachers' skills and knowledge with the requirements of the adaptive teaching context (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998). The new proposals of the TPD programs, then, fired a dispute among the researchers and educators who had already been afflicted with confusion over the definition of professional development (Desimone et al., 2002; Knight, 2002). Some scholars believed that professional development is a state of in-service teachers because they are practically employed in the teaching profession (Little, 1993). Others, however, viewed TPD as a requirement for the professional growth of students and preservice teachers (Borko, 2004).

After more than five decades of research from different perspectives, TPD found a more weighted and certain status, with a wider scope to include both in-service and preservice teachers (Evans, 2013). However, with the COVID-19 pandemic shaking the world order in 2020, TPD, on par with many otherwise stable conceptualizations, lost its validity as a function of contextually and pragmatically altered forms of teaching and learning (Bergdahl, 2022). That is why the need to study TPD within the online era of education is once more heightened in significance.

### 2.3. Promotion of the TPD Process

Along with the attempts that were made throughout many years of investigation to anatomize the TPD structure (Evans, 2011), researchers also pursued different forms and means of improving it. On that account, the TPD process was measured using different contextual manipulations and interventions such as the effect of preservice and in-service programs on enhancing teachers' competencies and skills (Arrif, Mansor, & Yusof, 2017; Cleaver et al., 2020; Torres & Ramos, 2021), TPD activities for developing teachers' strategic performance (Ajani, 2019; Orale et al., 2016; Padilo et al., 2021; Piedrahita, 2018), and the impact of attending conferences on TPD (Jenkins, 2015; Rimmer & Floyd, 2020; West, 2019). In addition to the interference with the teachers' practice to promote the process of TPD, researchers investigated collegial relations and teachers' communicative activities as a source to energize teachers' professional development (Kolleck et al., 2021; Maggioli, 2004; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Muhassin, 2016). Subsequently, topics such as in-service scaffolded practice (Engin, 2014; Rahman et al., 2015), teachers' collaboration and development (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Chan & Pang, 2006; Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000; Little, 1987), and teachers' alignment with the community of practice (Trabona et al., 2019; Younger & Goerge, 2013; van As, 2017) came into fashion.

However, the review of this line of inquiry revealed that very little is done on teachers' collaboration as sharing of knowledge and cooperative problem-solving through reflective-responsive dialogue (Brook et al., 2007; Lay et al., 2020). With the O-teaching and learning gaining ground after the COVID-19 pandemic, and teachers' interaction through online dialogue becoming the major means of collaboration, it becomes necessary to reemphasize the issue of teachers' dialogic interaction and its influence on online TPD and/or OPD.

### 2.4. Empirical Studies on OPD After the Pandemic

Despite the strong line of research that has so far investigated the effects of the pandemic and distance learning on education, in general, and on O-teaching and teachers' practice, in particular, very few studies have called the issue of teachers' OPD into attention after the COVID attack. In a recent study, Tsegay and his colleagues (2022) interviewed 13 Chinese teachers to investigate their perceptions of the O-teaching challenges during the post-COVID period. Lack of adequate preparation for online teaching and distance communication was reported by the teachers to be the major reason for the difficulties of online classroom management and materials adaptation. Although the study had no direct focus on the issue of OPD, it was found based on the analysis of the teachers' perceptions that a mandatory shift to online platforms

of teaching needed to be supported by IT and OPD training. In the absence of professional assistance, the teachers relied either on external sources of support (e.g., friends, family members, other more experienced colleagues, and/or YouTube channels) or on trial-and-error methods which they believed would waste the time and energy of both teachers and students.

With an eye to teachers' identity reconstruction during the pandemic, Chin et al. (2022) examined the OPD needs and challenges of 174 Filipino teachers. In response to a survey, the teacher participants announced their need for online technical support, information/communication technology, and innovative teaching strategies. OPD was considered as the development of online teaching and communication skills by the teachers, and it was supposed that collegial interaction, motivational support, and in-service training can help OPD.

In another study, Dolighan and Owen (2021) investigated the effects of the transition to online teaching on teachers' OPD during the pandemic. According to this study, the teachers who had prior experience with online teaching platforms and had previously developed the required skills were more efficiently adjusted to the sudden changes after the COVID-19 hit. The results coincide with the findings of a prior study (i.e., Mahyoob, 2020) which explored the efficiency of online teaching methods after the pandemic in Saudi Arabia. With a sample size of 184 male and female EFL students, this study showed that more than 30% of the learners felt dissatisfied with the online teaching methods and means of interpersonal communication. It was found that in addition to online distractions, low Internet speed, disturbing technical issues, and frequent disconnections, it is the inadequacy of teachers' computer literacy and online professional skills that impedes the process of students' O-learning.

Jones and Kessler (2020) also shed light on teachers' online identity within the COVID era. Although the study is a conceptual review, it explains how the emergency transition to O-teaching can influence teachers to reflect on their selves, competencies and skills, and their professional being. It is discussed that sudden contextual fluctuations should not be taken for granted considering the professional identity of teachers. In a completely new stream of practice, that is, O-teaching/learning, both teachers and learners might lose the prospects of their needs, goals, and roles, and as such, suffer from a fragile self-knowledge which can lead them towards break-down, burnout, and/or complete demotivation in practice. One proposal made by Jones and Kessler (2020) is to appreciate teachers' OPD and invest in understanding the process of teachers' identity reconstruction as a response to online post-COVID teaching.

Fallah, Chalak, and Heidari Tabrizi (2022), Askari and Chen (2021), and Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) also investigated the effects of the pandemic on teachers' online professional identity, but within the EFL context of Iran. These studies addressed the immediate need of EFL teachers to develop vocational skills and knowledge for more efficient O-teaching outcomes. In this line of research, OPD is referred to as a gradual process of optimizing access to social, vocational, and digital repertoires. It is, therefore, hypothesized that, for the OPD to happen, teachers need not only training and support but also the opportunity to be engaged in a developmental process of forming digital and social capitals through online interaction. In the present study, the OPD process of EFL novice and experienced teachers will be examined through their online dialogic interactions in their meaningful context of practice.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

Two selection criteria were observed for the invitation of the participants. As a reminder, it was intended to study the OPD in the context of EFL teachers' dialogic interaction in order to see how online and meaningful dialogues will affect their process of OPD. As such, no interference and/or intervention could be made by the researchers to formulate and/or energize the OPD. Therefore, the participants had to be recruited from an English school or institute where the teachers had sufficient and natural online dialogic interaction. Second, one of the incentives of the study was to see into the OPD trajectories of both novice and experienced teachers. To this end, it was necessary to find teacher groups that included both novice and experienced participants. Based on these criteria, we contacted some of the popular private language institutes in Ahvaz, Iran, that were actively providing online English courses after the pandemic. Of the seven language institutes contacted, only three had regular online teacher group meetings where novice and experienced teachers shared their record of classroom conducts. Among the three schools then, only one (Nakhl Language Institute) had a weekly meeting and the other two schools had the meetings on a monthly schedule.

Presuming the benefits of more available hours, the teacher group working at Nakhil Language Institute was sent a written consent to take part in the present study. The teacher group consisted of eight male and female English teachers: Three teachers had almost a decade of teaching experience and five teachers had one to three years of English teaching background. In addition to that, four of the teachers were M.A. holders of TEFL, one of the teachers had an M.A. in translation studies, and the other three teachers were B.A. holders of language and literature and translation studies disciplines. The demographic information of the teacher participants is provided in Table 1 (all the participants are given pseudonyms by the researchers). Based on the level of experience and education, the teachers with a wider teaching background who also had an M.A. in TEFL formed the group of the experienced teachers including Ana, Pardis, and Mehdi. The other five teachers, then, were considered as the participants of the novice group:

Table 1. *Demographic Information of Teacher Participants*

Pseudonyms	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Level of Education
Ana	Female	10	M.A. in TEFL
Pardis	Female	8	M.A. in TEFL
Mehdi	Male	10	M.A. in TEFL
Negar	female	1	M.A. in TEFL
Peyman	Male	3	M.A. in Translation Studies
Golnar	Female	1	B.A. in Language and Literature
Milad	Male	3	B.A. in Language and Literature
Sarah	Female	2	B.A. in Translation Studies

### 3.2. Setting: Postteaching Feedback Sessions

The objective of the weekly teacher group meetings at Nakhil Language Institute was to enable the English teachers to share experiences and challenges of their online/hybrid teaching practice, negotiate the details of their methodological approach, and be in constant contact with each other. Because these teacher group meetings were named the Postteaching Feedback Sessions by the director of the institute, the same term was employed by the researchers of the current study to refer to the online meetings. Therefore, caution should be urged not to misinterpret the objectives of these sessions with the so-called observation-feedback practices in a supervision/feedback session.

Every Friday, an online meeting on the Web-Based Big Blue Button (BBB) platform of teaching was held for the teachers to discuss their experiences, share critical moments of their online classes for collaborative problem solving, and collect responsive feedback. The online meeting was a paid and, as such, a mandatory session for the teachers in this institute. The director of the institute and all the English teachers were online for 90 min to raise their questions and share their experiences. It was mentioned by the director of the institute that the postteaching feedback sessions were designed to provide the teachers with an opportunity to help each other and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Other online group meetings were also regularly administered at Nakhil Language Institute, namely the Parents and Teachers Board, and the Students' Committee. Postteaching Feedback Sessions, however, formed the appropriate setting for the purposes of the present research.

### 3.3. Data Collection Procedure

#### 3.3.1. *Written Reflective Narratives*

Looking back at the major incentives of the current study, it should be restated that the intention was to figure out the OPD process of the teachers under the effect of their dialogic interaction with other colleagues. However, it is hardly possible to track the teachers' professional development without access to the more internally oriented processes of development (Hubbs & Brand, 2010; Phelps, 2005). Thereupon, reflective narratives were used as a means to investigate the deeper and more hidden layers of the teachers' OPD. In fact, the temporal and forward-looking nature of written narratives works perfectly in tandem with the moment-by-moment changes and dynamics of professional development and allows for revisiting the past and conceptualizing the future (Liu & Xu, 2013; Schultz & Ravitch, 2013).

It is, however, worth mentioning that writing reflective narratives was not part of teachers' regular practice at the Nakhil Language Institute. On that account, the researchers provided the teacher group with a sample that was adopted from *A Short Guide to Reflective Writing* (UOB, 2015) to exemplify the format and the narrative language. It was made clear to the teachers that they could use their L1 (i.e., Persian) to write the narratives in order to ease the full expression

of their thoughts and feelings. Regarding the content of the narratives, the teachers were asked to include their feelings, thoughts, and experiences with respect to the feedback sessions, how they think the meetings help them develop their knowledge/skills and teacher character, and how it helps them meet their personal and professional goals. So, the teachers were asked to include as many details and narratives as possible in their writings after attending each postteaching feedback session within a timespan of 6 weeks.

### **3.3.2. Semistructured Interviews**

Considering the complexity of the phenomenon under investigation, that is, OPD, the interviews were also used to enable data triangulation and to enhance the validity of the findings (Dornyei, 2007). Two weeks after collecting the teachers' reflective narratives, each of the teachers in the teacher group was invited for a 30-min semistructured interview. The reason for this time interval was to allow the researchers to review the participants' writings in case the entries could inform the interviews.

The interviews were all audiorecorded and conducted in Persian (i.e., teachers' and researchers' L1) with frequent English code-switching throughout the talk. Like reflective narratives, the use of L1 was to facilitate the clear articulation of thoughts and feelings without any language barrier effects. In addition to insights from the written data, the teachers' responses also helped navigate the interviews. The questions were mostly focused on teachers' experience with online teaching, how it is different from on-site teaching, how online weekly sessions help them adjust to the new teaching environment, and how online interaction with other teachers helps them respond to their needs, goals and expectations for successful online teaching. One of the questions that appeared repeatedly in almost all of the interviews was whether the postteaching feedback sessions were useful for teachers and how. The interviews were, then, transcribed for later analysis of the data.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

A deductive approach to data analysis was used to find the major patterns of English teachers' OPD. To start, the data were approached inductively. Preliminarily, reviewing the data, each researcher of the current study individually developed some general descriptive codes at the level of paragraphs. Then, at a more focused stage of coding, they used the indications of professional needs, perceptions, expectations, values, and learnings to group some head categories, for example, values, actions, beliefs on teaching, needs, identity learnings, and so on. At this phase, the head categories developed by the two authors were compared and discussed to reach the highest level of consensus regarding the content, terminology, and understanding. Finally, the data grouped in each head category were analyzed for more specific subcategories of recurring patterns that illustrate changes in teachers' online teaching attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions, that is, OPD. These subcategories were used at a final stage to triangulate with the findings of the deductive analysis. At the deductive level, the terminology used by Evans' (2011) framework of professional development was assigned to the coding of the data. The set of categories that were coded based on Evans' framework was, then, juxtaposed with the data-driven categories to see how the inductive codifications correspond to attitudinal, intellectual, and behavioral definitions of professional development. After several rounds of refinement and recategorization, each researcher composed a detailed scheme of the results. To check the rigor of the categories, we compared their coding systems, discussed incompatibilities, and adjusted their coding terminologies to the point of reaching a strong consensus.

The same process was performed on the transcriptions of the interviews except that one additional step was followed at the final phase. After completing the categorization of the common themes via inductive and deductive analyses of the interview data, the final categories from the written narratives and interviews were compared to check the trustworthiness of the analysis throughout the data. Because the nature of the subject under the study was dynamic and the narratives were highly personal, the process of data analysis experienced several occasions of refinements, expansions, and deletion of themes/categories before final results could be obtained. As the last step of the data analysis, the frequency of the occurrence of each theme in each category was summed up for a later explanation of the findings.

## **4. Results**

According to the question of the study, the aim was to discover how the teachers' online dialogic interactions influenced their OPD process. The data were analyzed based on Evan's Framework of Professionalism (2011). By that means, three dimensions of attitude, behavior, and cognition formed the major categories of OPD. In each dimension,

there emerged, at least, one theme of development describing the OPD trajectory of the experienced teachers as a result of their dialogic interaction. For the novice teachers, it was found that only attitudinal and behavioral dimensions were of effect. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the themes in each category with an indication of the frequency of occurrence in the data for the experienced and novice teachers accompanied by an example. According to the findings, the online dialogic interactions motivated the OPD process of both novice and experienced teachers—of course, on different developmental trajectories:

Table 2. *The Description of OPD Themes for Experienced Teachers*

Opd Dimension	Themes of Development	Frequency of Emergence in Data	Example From Data
Attitudinal Dimension	Professional Visibility	13x*	“We are working together, but we don’t have much time to talk or share. During the feedback time, I see myself helping my younger colleagues, and they appreciate my skills. That gives me the satisfaction to know I am there for my job and colleagues, not just my students” (Mehdi, Narrative)
Behavioral Dimension	Computer and online teaching skills	7x	“We are learning a lot from our colleagues about using computer systems and online websites for better teaching practice. I was very worried when I started teaching online, but then the meetings gave us the chance to gain more skills” (Ana, Interview)
Cognitive Dimension	Collective thinking	8x	“I learned I have to trust the common sense of my group. The chance to share the burden and think about it all together was a very noble experience. I learned to ask more questions, I really needed that to lower the pressure.” (Pardis, Narrative)

\*x indicating the times of emergence

As shown in Table 2, the attitudinal dimension appeared in the data as the most frequent category of OPD (13x) for the experienced teachers, followed by the cognitive dimension (8x), and the behavioral dimension (7x), respectively. Based on the findings, the experienced teachers seemed to be concerned about developing their professional visibility through online dialogic interactions. The dialogic interactions are also shown to be a chance for the experienced teachers to learn to think collectively. Fewer instances of OPD were observed in the data of the experienced teachers regarding their behavioral dimension, except for the computer and online teaching skills which seemed to be a shared interest between the novice and experienced participants.

Table 3. *Description of OPD Themes for Novice Teachers*

OPD Dimension	Themes of Development	Frequency of Emergence in Data	Example From Data
Attitudinal Dimension	Accountability	4x*	“When I share a solution or an idea, my other colleagues count on me better. That’s important because then I am more motivated to be a better teacher.” (Milad, Interview)
Behavioral Dimension	Computer and online teaching skills	5x	“You have to stay up-to-date in order to answer your students’ needs. That was a goal for me, and I think our group discussions helped me reach it.” (Sarah, Narrative)
	Problem solving	11x	“Now I spend more time with my students talking about their difficulties with online systems. That’s what I learned from our feedback sessions. So we can solve the problem together and see what works better for my students.” (Golnar, Narrative)
	Successful communication	5x	“Our online connection with other colleagues, and the way that we wanted to see and support each other worked like a model. I mean, I put myself in the shoes of the students in online classes, and I thought, ok this is how the online communication works. So, I looked on to the strong points of my own relation with my colleagues, and remodeled that in my class.” (Peyman, Interview)

\*x indicating the times of emergence

As illustrated in Table 3, the novice teachers’ process of OPD was mainly in the direction of behavioral dimensions, including computer and online teaching skills (5x), problem-solving (11x), and successful communication (5X). The next thematic development for the novice teachers showed to be the attitudinal dimension. Although the



frequency in this dimension was not as big as the behavioral dimension, it still emerged as a pattern of tendency for accountability (4x). No OPD theme was found with regard to the cognitive dimension among the novice participants. The findings and their relevance to the question of the study are fully discussed in the following section.

## 5. Discussion

After the analysis of the data collected through the written reflective narratives and interviews, it appeared that online dialogic interactions stimulated the OPD process of the teacher participants of the present study. It seems, however, that experienced and novice teachers pursue different OPD goals and trajectories. With a particular emphasis on developing online professional skills and procedures while engaged in dialogic interactions, the novice teachers were obviously attracted to the behavioral dimensions of OPD. The experienced teachers, on the other hand, used the potential of dialogic interactions to improve their cognitive-attitudinal aspects of OPD.

### 5.1. Attitudinal Dimension: Professional Visibility and Accountability

According to the findings, the dialogic interactions seemed to have a facilitating role in navigating the experienced teachers' attitudinal disposition in the form of professional visibility. In fact, the experienced teachers used the opportunity of dialogic interactions to provide their (less experienced) colleagues with emotional and methodological support which, in respect, brought them confidence, visibility, and satisfaction. The possibility that the dialogic interactions opened up for the experienced teachers to share their knowledge, skills, and strategies in a coconstructed environment of trust and credence, helped them form a stronger belief in their teacher identity and inspired them to work for the benefit of other members of their community of practice. The sense of motivation and satisfaction that resulted from this attitudinally respected dimension of their teacher self signaled the OPD trajectory of this group of participants.

Under the same conditions, the less experienced teacher participants also improved the attitudinal status of their OPD, though towards a different direction (sense of accountability). Based on the data, where the novice teachers' ideas and suggestions were confirmed by the group and held accountable, they perceived motivation, satisfaction, and positivity regarding their role and their profession. Although the data showed that the novice teachers were more behaviorally oriented towards OPD and were generally reliant on their peers for solutions and feedback, they can develop attitudinally too if their voice and teacher identity are appreciated and recognized. In explaining the framework of professionalism, Evan (2011) clarifies that self-assertion and perception of satisfaction and motivation are indications of attitudinal engagement with professional development.

### 5.2. Behavioral Dimension: Computer and Online Teaching Skills, Problem-Solving, Successful Communication

The analysis of the data proved that the most occurring category of OPD for the teacher participants of this study was the behavioral dimension. Among other themes found in this category, computer and online teaching skills were a shared concern of both novice and experienced teachers. The data revealed that the recent transitions to online/hybrid teaching platforms have engaged teachers irrespective of their background experience. The teachers reported in their data that the dialogic interactions during the postteaching feedback sessions provided the answer to many technical difficulties and questions. In another recent study by Soifah, Jana, and Pratolo (2021), it was also shown that implementing computer-related and Web-based programs in online courses is one of the major challenges of EFL teachers. However, the teachers in the current study benefited from the troubleshooting strategies, online classroom management skills, and online platform administration techniques that were shared and discussed during the postteaching feedback sessions.

As was also mentioned in the above section, the experienced teachers cast an expert eye on their interaction with other colleagues and, as such, prepared the conditions for the novice teachers to behave reactively and be more dependent. Besides, the analysis of the interviews and reflective narratives echoed the need of the novice teachers for assistance and collaborative problem-solving. However, what the teacher participants of the study emphasized in their data was the learning opportunity to extend the patterns of collaborative problem-solving and scaffolded practice to their online teaching environment. Seemingly, the problem-solving potential of the online dialogic interactions was perceived by the novice teachers as a model of behavior for classroom practice. This pattern of behavioral change was recurrently found in the data of the novice teachers.



Another emergent theme of the behavioral OPD which particularly concerned the novice teachers was successful communication skills. Evidently, online successful communication was a serious issue for both novice and experienced teachers. However, it was only the novice group that referred to the facilitative role of dialogic interactions in helping online communication with the students. According to the data, the dialogic interaction and connection during the postteaching feedback sessions provided novice teachers with a representative miniature of successful online communication. They believed the meetings were constructive and meaningful because of the mutual trust and alliance with the more experienced members of the group. Building upon their experience of online successful communication with colleagues, the novice teachers indicated that they had learned to pay careful attention to the learning needs of the students, provide support, create a safe teaching/learning environment, and practice dialogues to enhance the quality of the online mode of communication with their students. In this case, online dialogic interaction enabled the changes in teachers' online communication styles, and the achievement of professional goals which, in Evans' (2011) terms, would mean the behavioral dimension of development.

### 5.3. Cognitive Dimension: Collective Thinking

Evans (2011) explains that the cognitive (intellectual) dimension of professional development includes changes in teachers' reasoning ability, analytical skills, and knowledge base. Though it was not easy to locate a thematic pattern of changes in the knowledge base of the teacher participants of the study, the results showed that dialogic interactions had some effects on the teachers' reasoning ability. Especially thematical in the data of the experienced teachers, the ability to think and analyze together seemed to be an outcome of the dialogic interaction. Even though experienced teachers are more authoritative and agentive in their classroom decisions (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015), our findings maintain that experienced teachers enjoy the possibilities of collective thinking and reasoning.

It seems that rather than focusing on teaching skill development, in general, the experienced teachers in this study were looking for opportunities to enhance their attitudinal and cognitive aspects of OPD. In the same line, Mahmoudi and Ozkan (2015) also found that "the professional development needs and desires of experienced and novice teachers differ" (p. 63). Whereas experienced teachers benefit from the professional development activities that involve sharing ideas, coaching, and mentoring, novice teachers find courses and workshops practical for skill building. In a more or less similar way, Zhang, Admiraal, and Saab (2021) assert that the more experienced teachers may be unwilling to participate in social interactions to learn teaching skills and rely more on their autonomous cognitive engagement; nevertheless, as experts to provide support and guideline, social interactions become stimulating for experienced teachers too.

### 5.4. Experienced and Novice Teachers' OPD Trajectories

To answer the question of the present study, the OPD trajectories of the novice and experienced teachers were compared and analyzed. Generally, the results showed that both the novice and experienced teachers were aware of their vocational needs, immediate contextual requirements of their online teaching, and personal developmental processes. Nevertheless, the perceived personal and professional requirements of online teaching featured the direction of OPD. In other words, the difference between the OPD trajectories of the novice and experienced teachers was a result of the professional identity needs of the teachers. Whereas the novice teachers found problem-solving abilities and successful online communication with students as the main goals of OPD, the experienced teacher participants relied more on legitimatizing their voice and professional status and enhancing the ability of collective thinking.

Regarding the teachers' orientation to professional development, Karlberg and Bezzina (2020) discussed that, during the beginning years of teaching, it is the efficiency of practice that teachers usually invest in. But with more experience counting in, teachers develop a tendency to validate their voices and become professionally recognized. Lave and Wenger (1991) also suggested that, through weaving affinities and correlation, more experienced members of a shared community of practice promote the status of their being and strengthen the ties of alignment between the members of that community. This is while the novice members focus on improving their contribution to the community in terms of achieving shared goals.

In the current study, the experienced teachers benefited from the grounds of dialogic interaction to create an augmented professional self-image, too. They were actively responsive in an expert-novice pattern of dialogic interaction and unlocked the reservoirs of their knowledge and experience in order to legitimize and/or develop their professional

identity. At the same time, the novice participants enjoyed the dialogic interaction insomuch as it offered procedural and social schemas of practice in a supportive and encouraging setting.

About the vocational needs of teachers in the era of online teaching, Aboud (2020) clarifies that it is not just the classroom problem and the teaching outcome that the teacher should prepare for. In fact, the essence of preserving/regaining a balance between the previously developed self-concept and the current adjustments of the self-image to the requirements of online teaching urges teachers to seek opportunities for professional development. Due to the unexpected immigration to online mediums of teaching, education, in general, experienced extensive restructurings and overhauls for which both novice and experienced teachers had to develop new capacities of change and remodeling.

The need for collective thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving, then, seems growing with greater reason. Teachers' tendency towards OPD, as Foreman-Brown, Fitzpatrick, and Twyford (2023) reviewed, is embedded in their inclination to rejoin their teacher identity for which the right services and contexts should be provided. Yuan and Liu (2021) also invited institutions to take responsibility for granting teachers access to means of professional development and identity reconstruction. Acknowledging the essence of teachers' reflective practice, Yuan and Liu (2021) think self-help is not enough and schools should allow collaborative dialogic interaction of teachers at the time of online teaching. Through negotiating alternative and hypothetical responses to personal, pedagogical, and methodological needs within a nonthreatening context of collaboration and correlation teachers will proceed toward OPD.

## 6. Conclusion

The current study was an attempt to illustrate the effects of dialogic interactions on the OPD process of novice and experienced EFL teachers in the era of online education. For this purpose, the teachers' written reflective narratives and interviews were analyzed for the major themes of OPD. The results documented different OPD trajectories of the novice and experienced EFL teachers. Based on Evans' (2011) model of professionalism, it appeared that for experienced teachers, active and supportive collaboration is a means of identity learning through increased visibility and collective thinking ability; however, novice teachers were primarily sensitized to a more behavioral approach to OPD, that is, increasing the efficacy of their teaching practice and students' learning outcome. As such, OPD was shown to be a function of both internal and external factors. What made the difference, however, was the teachers' preference, choice, background knowledge, and teaching/learning experiences. The inductive analysis of the data, further, asserted that whereas novice teachers seek more grounds for dialogic interaction to reduce instructional pressure and contextual interference, experienced teachers strive to develop their professional identity.

Considering the fact that online teaching and learning is now the legitimate form of education in the world, more time and energy should be granted to positioning the OPD process of both novice and experienced teachers. It is implied from the findings of the present research that teachers' perception of OPD differs as a function of their level of experience, needs, contextual requirements, challenges, and competencies. Nevertheless, it emerged from the data that OPD is a necessary means of teachers' forward momentum rather than an indication of their qualification and/or an outcome of pre/in-service training. Further, it should be noted that dialogic interactions lubricate the OPD process; it also entails the teachers' process of professional identity construction. As such, teacher educators and teacher education programs should plan for the right contexts of teachers' OPD with a greater emphasis on dialogic interaction and collaborative problem solving of teachers outside the classroom. Theoretically, definitions of professionalism, teacher identity, and professional development should reconsider the role of OPD in the era of online education, too. With more prominence granted to OPD indicators and OPD functions within the online teaching context of teachers, future studies can compensate for the limitations of the current study. So to say, inviting more teacher groups to the study, comparing different contexts and group ethnicities, and using more rigid and quantitatively objective methodologies in order to achieve more reliable and generalizable results.

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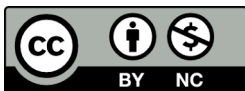
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