

EFL Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Praxical Hope: A Qualitative Study in Public Schools

Fatemeh Malek Abbasi¹, Seyyed Mohammad Reza Adel^{2*},
Gholamreza Zareian³

¹PhD Candidate in Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

²Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran/ Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

³Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran

Abstract This qualitative study examined the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the concept of praxical hope within public school settings in Gorgan, Iran. The researchers interviewed 42 participants, including 13 pre-service teachers, 16 in-service teachers, and 13 retired teachers, to explore the nuanced understandings and implications of praxical hope in EFL education. Employing a constructivist grounded theory framework and analyzing data using MAXQDA 24, the study identified 46 initial codes and categorized them into 25 thematic groups. This process led to the development of a model of praxical hope characterized by four key elements: empowerment and agency, collaborative learning environments, critical reflection and social awareness, and innovative pedagogical practices. The findings underscore the vital role of cultivating praxical hope in enhancing educators' effectiveness and improving student outcomes, providing insights that can inform future language education strategies.

Keywords: *Hope, Praxical Hope, Qualitative Research, EFL Teachers, Perception*

*Corresponding Author: Seyyed Mohammad Reza Adel
Email: sm.adel@hsu.ac.ir; m.adel@um.ac.ir
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1136-8973>

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1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) is a challenging task that involves teachers having a positive attitude and hope for the future. L2 teaching comprises several problems constantly decelerating teachers' educational practices. EFL teachers must be hopeful to overcome these challenges (Ghadyani et al., 2020). Highly hopeful teachers are more likely to support their students to be more disciplined and educationally involved (Snyder, 2000).

Freire (1994) argued for the pedagogy of hope from a social and critical consciousness perspective. He described hope as an ontological requirement for humanity, and without hope, engagement in the struggle was impossible. In critical pedagogy, hope has been proposed as a radical or transformative mode, demanding analysis, consideration, and action for social change (Freire, 1994). He emphasized that without active participation and intervention, hope can risk becoming either overly idealistic or inert (Freire, 1970). Accordingly, praxical hope is an operative form of hope, deeply embedded in the development of *conscientização* (critical consciousness) and maintained through sustained, committed efforts for transformation. Therefore, this study adopts the term 'praxical hope' rather than 'critical hope,' as the former captures hope as an active, reflective process integral to praxis—the essential dialogue between thought and action that drives social and educational change.

Praxical hope can impact teachers' pedagogical practices, including the ability to evaluate one's conditions in a fair and just manner and predict the potential for a more desirable future (Dugan, 2017; Duncan-Andrade, 2009). It suggests to teachers a resource to overcome the challenges they encounter in their professions in healthy and supportable ways (Dugan, 2017).

Education must focus on nurturing critical and reflective teachers who can cultivate the presence of hope and empower learners to become purveyors of hope (Carl, 2011). If the purpose of education is transformation and empowerment on individual and collective scales, educators will need to possess the skill to foster and maintain a practical sense of praxical hope (Webb, 2010).

Previously, several variables have been studied and emphasized for teachers' effective role in teaching a second or foreign language. Due to the

lack of research on the interface of hope and second or foreign language teaching ([Ghadyani et al., 2022](#)) and the lack of studies on the praxical hope among Iranian EFL teachers, the current study aimed to explore the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope in public schools. This qualitative study aimed to contribute to the literature on praxical hope in language teaching by examining the perceptions of EFL teachers from different backgrounds and experiences.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Hope and its different taxonomies

As an intrinsic component of human existence, hope persists endlessly despite our anxieties. Hope empowers us to overcome difficulties, irrespective of their formidability. It means that hope is a central aspect of being human. It exists within us and continues to thrive even in the face of fear and uncertainty. This idea is supported by researchers such as [Snyder \(2002\)](#), who emphasized hope theory. “The absence of hope renders any contemplation of education entirely inconceivable” ([Freire, 2007, p. 87](#)). Literature reviews have identified various theories and definitions of hope, resulting in the emergence of different models and taxonomies of hope. Considering hope as an active orientation toward some featured good, [Webb \(2008\)](#) has developed a taxonomy of hope that distinguishes between five distinct modes: estimative, resolute, patient, critical, and transformative.

Duncan-Andrade explained three concepts of critical hope and their application within the educational setting: material hope, Socratic hope, and audacious hope. [West \(2004\)](#) described critical hope as ‘tragicomic hope’: the ability to find enjoyment and reserve a sense of delight in life. On the other hand, [Giroux \(2006\)](#) employed the concept of ‘educated hope’ that represents both resistance and the potential for change. Moreover, [Lear \(2006\)](#) used the phrase ‘radical hope’ to define a variation of critical hope.

2.2. Theoretical framework

One of the significant psychological theories concerning hope was Snyder's hope theory ([Snyder, 2002](#)). [Snyder et al. \(1991\)](#), as positive psychologists, suggested a cognitive perspective on hope that consisted of three different components: goals, pathway thinking, and agency thinking. This theory highlighted the pursuit of goals as a crucial feature of human behavior

(Snyder, 1994; Snyder, 2002). While agency thinking referred to a sense of sheer determination to achieve goals in the past, present, and future, pathway thinking relates to the belief in one's capacity to recognize practicable ways of accomplishing goals (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, 1994). Consequently, agency thinking and pathways thinking shape the hope (Snyder, 2000, 2002).

Furthermore, Freire (1994) studied the concept of hope concerning the pedagogy of hope, observing it through the lens of social and critical consciousness and theorizing it as an integral need for humanity. Indeed, the lack of hope transformed humans into mere objects subjected to the impact of governing powers in the world.

2.3. Constructs of praxical hope

Upon conducting a literature review on praxical hope, seven key constructs were identified and explored. These constructs include agency, optimism, social justice orientation, future orientation and vision, existential longing, efficacy, and reflective practice.

Agency: It involves distinguishing oneself as being in command of one's actions and the subsequent outcomes (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Optimism: Optimism influences hope regarding previous experiences, the current situation, and expectations for the future. Optimism is a broad disposition to believe that positive experiences will produce favorable consequences rather than negative ones (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Social justice orientation: Praxical hope arises as a powerful force associated with a social justice orientation. Freire supported an ontology of hope that concentrated on reconstructing the world in ways that developed social justice (Freire, 2007).

Future orientation and vision: Grain (2022) highlighted that hope, being future-oriented, brings joy not in its fulfillment but its possibilities. Hope serves two purposes: To increase the present moment and to improve future outcomes.

Existential longing: Freire (1972) associated hope with "active waiting" rather than passive resignation. He believed hope was an anxious yearning that permeates one's very being.

Self-efficacy: Bandura (1977) introduced the notion of self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to arrange and fulfill the actions required to achieve specified accomplishments.

Reflective practice: A fundamental requirement for critical hope is active participation in reimagining power dynamics and striving to live consistently with aspirations and visions for a more favorable world based on a thorough understanding of wider systems of oppression (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

2.4. Previous research on critical hope

An extensive and developing body of scholarship has investigated the concept of critical hope within educational contexts. In a study on first-year urban school teachers who were members of a social justice university group, Picower (2011) indicated that teachers who used material hope lived in a state characterized by apprehension, compliance, and the pressure to conform. Within these conditions, there was an acknowledgment that managers placed extreme focus on standardized testing, thus posing a challenge to their ability to teach with an emphasis on social justice.

In another study, Duarte (2018) developed a comprehensive understanding of the feelings of efficacy and career choices among first-year teachers. The study investigated the personal narratives of three novice teachers working in economically underprivileged schools. The findings proposed that educators' ideologies may support the illusory hope promoted by the neoliberal policy framework, which indicated equal chances and diligent effort.

Moreover, Olave et al. (2023) underlined the significance of critical hope in science education by presenting it as a practice interwoven with radical love, solidarity, and collective growth. They attempted to create an educational space where humility, attentiveness, risk-taking, and vulnerability were considered central values. They claimed that integrating radical love with critical hope offered a vital basis for transformative educational practices to foster social and knowledge-based justice.

Furthermore, Virella (2024) investigated how school principals refined and used the concept of critical hope to direct their schools through crisis circumstances. The study examined how these leaders nurtured hope for themselves and their school communities by providing persistent leadership efforts during challenging times. The findings specified that principals constantly cultivated critical hope as a crucial component in their leadership approach.

Reviewing the literature reveals the rarity of studies on teachers' perceptions regarding praxical hope in EFL contexts. This study employed a qualitative approach using constructivist grounded theory methodology to explore the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope in Iranian public English classes. It aimed to improve teachers' understanding of the constructs of praxical hope and how teachers in the Iranian context conceptualize and actualize the concept of hope. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following main research question:

What are the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope in public schools?

3. Method

3.1. Participants and setting

This qualitative study involved pre-service, in-service, and retired English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (male and female) in Gorgan, Iran. The researcher interviewed 42 EFL teachers, including 13 pre-service, 16 in-service, and 13 retired teachers. Their teaching experience ranged from 7 to 30 years in public secondary and high schools, with various university degrees. The study was conducted in the participants' respective schools or via online platforms, based on their preferences. The researchers informed the participants of the study's objectives and their rights, and asked them to provide informed consent before participation. The study took place over six months.

3.2 Instrumentation and materials

The researchers used a variety of data collection instruments and materials in this qualitative study, including interviews, a voice recorder, and MAXQDA software 24.

3.2.1. Interview

Interviews are particularly valuable for exploring complicated subjects such as teacher perspectives. They provide a more comprehensive investigation of participants' encounters and viewpoints ([Rubin & Rubin, 2012](#)). Consequently, interviews allow for in-depth, nuanced discussions that can reveal personal insights and emotions, fostering a trusting environment for participants to share their experiences. In the present study, the researchers

interviewed the three groups of EFL teachers who participated in this research.

3.2.2. Voice recorder

During a qualitative interview, the researcher will record information using handwritten notes or through audio and videotaping (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the researchers used a mobile phone to record the interviews.

3.2.3. MAXQDA Software 24

MAXQDA is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) software. It is a program for PC/Windows computers and is appropriate for textually-based case study research (Mills et al., 2010). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), hand-coding is strenuous and time-consuming. Using a computer is an effective method of sorting and locating qualitative data. This study used MAXQDA Software version 24 to analyze the collected qualitative data.

3.3. Design

The present study employed a qualitative research framework, which is well-suited for investigating and understanding complicated phenomena within their natural situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This qualitative study employed constructivist grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). According to Charmaz (2006), this approach identifies that individuals build their understanding of the world through their experiences and interactions, and that these constructions are fundamentally designed by their unique perspectives and interpretations. To investigate the validity of the findings, this study used four general criteria of trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985), including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

The current study used purposive sampling. It is a non-random sampling method where participants are selected based on their expertise or relevance to the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, three groups of EFL teachers have been purposefully selected because of their unique experiences and perspectives on praxical hope. The selection criteria for participants included their age, years of experience in EFL teaching, and

educational backgrounds, ensuring a diverse group of participants with varying levels of experience and expertise ([Merriam & Tisdell, 2016](#)).

3.4. Procedure

3.4.1. Data collection

In this constructivist grounded theory study, the researcher explored the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how diverse stages of a teaching career impact one's viewpoint on hope in the educational context. The data collection process followed several significant steps as outlined by [Strauss and Corbin \(1997\)](#), [Charmaz \(2006\)](#), and [Braun and Clarke \(2019\)](#). Primarily, all participants filled in the consent form, confirming they comprehended the study's purpose. Afterward, the researchers scheduled individual interviews in a comfortable and confidential situation. Then, the researchers recorded and transcribed all interviews while maintaining participant anonymity. Finally, the data was organized and stored securely to protect participant confidentiality.

3.4.2. Data analysis

To analyze the qualitative data, the researchers used MAXQDA 24. They interpreted and coded the data regarding the three coding levels of grounded theory (open, axial, and selective) ([Braun & Clarke, 2019](#); [Charmaz, 2006](#); [Clarke, 2005](#); [Corbin & Strauss, 1990, 2008](#)). There was a considerable number of codes in open coding. Next, the researchers established a relationship between these codes at the axial level and classified them under the dominant categories. Ultimately, they developed the core category at the selective coding level. The researchers continued data collection until theoretical saturation, meaning that no new codes or themes emerged from the data.

4. Results

The present study investigated the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope in public schools. The researchers planned several interview questions based on the related literature concerning the praxical hope and interviewed these three groups of EFL teachers using semi-structured interviews.

After collecting the data, the researchers transcribed the interviews and entered them into MAXQDA software version 24 for analysis using three coding phases of Grounded Theory Methodology. In open coding, the researcher identified 46 primary codes for praxical hope based on teachers' perceptions. Figure 4.1 illustrates the main menu of the MAXQDA software, presenting the codes and sub-codes of praxical hope.

In the axial coding, the researcher established a relationship between these primary codes and identified 25 categories: student engagement, student confidence, growth mindset and adaptability, goal setting, teacher self-efficacy, optimism, community engagement and collaboration, creating a supportive environment, peer teaching, feedback, student-centered approaches, social justice awareness, critical thinking, reflective practices, self-assessment, cultural awareness, future-oriented vision, existential longing, use of technology, creativity and flexibility in teaching, project-based learning, having a mentor.

Finally, in selective coding, the researchers categorized these codes under four fundamental constructs of praxical hope: empowerment and agency, collaborative learning environments, critical reflection and social awareness, and innovative pedagogical practices. Figure 4.2 displays the proposed model of the praxical hope regarding the EFL teachers' perceptions.

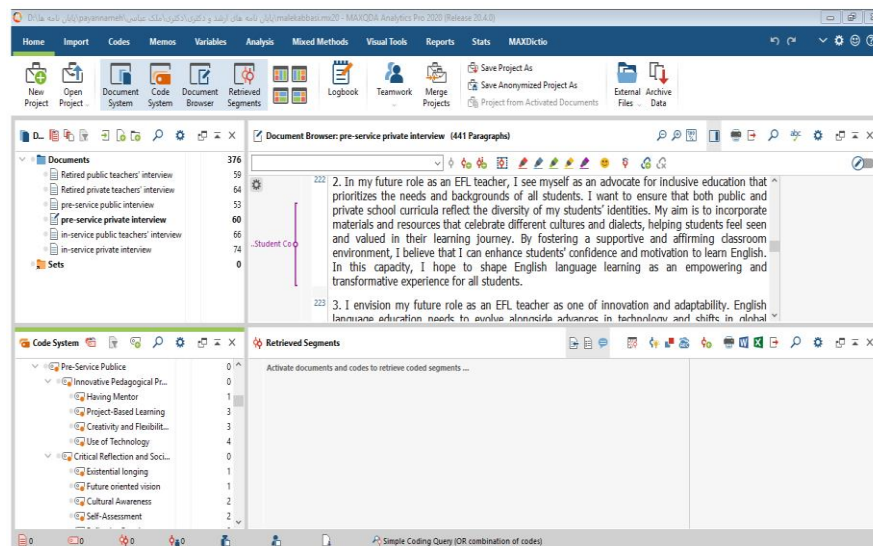


Figure 1. The Codes and Sub-codes of Practical Hope in MAXQDA Software

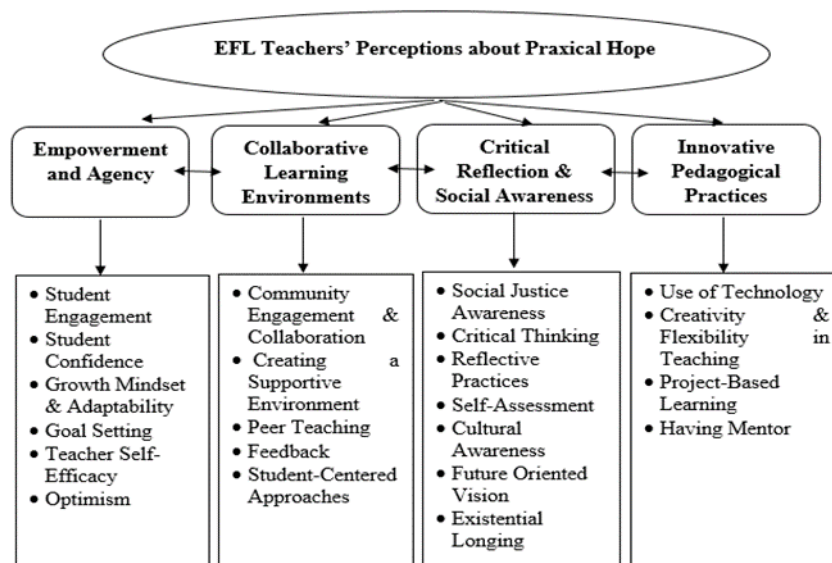


Figure 2. The proposed model of practical hope based on EFL teachers' perceptions

The following section explains four fundamental constructs of practical hope and the sub-constructs derived from the interviews with EFL teachers. Moreover, the researcher describes these categories using valid references

from the related literature, confirmed by the extracts from participants' interviews.

4.1. Empowerment and agency

One of the fundamental constructs of praxical hope derived from the EFL teachers' perception was empowerment and agency. This study identified six sub-constructs for this dimension: student engagement, student confidence, growth mindset and adaptability, goal setting, teacher self-efficacy, and optimism.

4.1.1. Student engagement

Student engagement covers the level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and motivation that learners establish through the educational process. It comprises behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions that encourage active participation and more profound understanding ([Fredricks et al., 2004](#)). [Marzban et al. \(2021\)](#) further emphasized the role of identity in shaping advanced Iranian learners' experiences, suggesting that valuing learners' backgrounds could enhance their engagement in the language learning process. Participants of the present study indicated student engagement as a construct of paraxial hope:

By connecting their language learning to their unique experiences, students will feel more engaged and empowered to express themselves (pre-service participant No. 10).

Collaboration has fostered deeper engagement among my students. By working on projects where they must collaborate to solve problems or create presentations, students learn to value each other's perspectives and contributions (in-service participant No. 5).

Encouraging students to create their learning materials was a key part of my approach. By having them design presentations or lesson aids, they developed ownership and pride in their work (retired participant No. 7).

4.1.2. Student confidence

Student confidence refers to the degree of belief or trust that learners have in their ability to accomplish tasks successfully and be involved in the learning process ([Bandura, 1977](#)). Here are some extracts from the participants' interviews about student confidence:

When students improve or even try hard, I want to highlight their efforts publicly. Knowing that their achievements are recognized by teacher can help them build confidence and a sense of hope (pre-service participant No. 2).

Now, I see my role as helping students gain confidence and agency through English. I encourage them to express their opinions and advocate for themselves (in-service participant No. 4).

I regularly encouraged them to celebrate small achievements in their language learning (retired participant No. 3).

4.1.3. Growth mindset and adaptability

A growth mindset is the belief that intelligence and aptitudes are not static but established through dedicated effort, constant learning, and persistence (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). Moreover, adaptability indicates the ability to remain open and flexible in the face of change, allowing individuals to adapt their approaches and succeed in shifting environments (Feraco et al., 2023). Many participants of the present study emphasized a growth mindset as a construct of praxical hope:

I want to focus on building a growth mindset in my students. I'll introduce activities that encourage perseverance and resilience, clarifying that struggles are part of the learning process (pre-service participant No. 13).

Promoting a growth mindset among my students has been crucial to empowering them in their language learning. I regularly remind them that making mistakes is part of the learning process and that persistence leads to improvement (in-service, participant No. 9).

I prioritize fostering a growth mindset among students. I occasionally encountered students stuck in a fixed mindset, which hindered their progress (retired participant No. 9).

4.1.4. Goal setting

Goal setting is a thoughtful process through which individuals or groups create clear, specific, and achievable purposes that direct behavior and continue motivation over time (Locke & Latham, 2002). Here are some teachers' perceptions about goal setting:

I set specific goals for myself at the beginning of each semester. For example, one goal might be to incorporate more technology into my

lessons or to improve my classroom management skills (pre-service participant No. 4).

At the beginning of each term, I encourage students to set personal language learning goals—whether improving their speaking fluency, expanding vocabulary, or mastering a specific grammatical structure (in-service participant No. 1).

In my classroom, I encouraged students to set their own learning goals and reflect on their progress continuously. This strategy fostered a sense of accountability and personal investment in their journey (retired participant No. 3).

4.1.5. Teacher self-efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy refers to educators' confidence in their ability to successfully implement classroom responsibilities, engage learners, and foster effective learning (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with higher self-efficacy feel a sense of control over the current conditions and perceive themselves as skilled. Self-efficacy impacts their perspectives, goals, and aspirations, leading to greater effort from the teacher in overcoming obstacles and enhancing the quality of teaching (Fathi et al., 2021). The following section presents some extracts from teachers' interviews, indicating teacher efficacy and confidence:

To build my confidence and efficacy as an EFL teacher, I plan to immerse myself in continuous professional development (pre-service participant No. 1).

One of the strategies I use to maintain confidence is balancing my expectations. I acknowledge that teaching is not about perfection but about growth and fostering a positive learning environment (in-service participant No. 16).

To build confidence, I attended workshops specifically focusing on classroom strategies. Implementing what I learned gradually improved my classroom dynamics, and I felt more competent as a teacher (retired participant No. 1)

4.1.6. Optimism

Optimism frequently refers to a positive outlook concerning future events, representing the belief that problems can be managed and objectives achieved

(Carver & Scheier, 2014). Most of the participants of the present study indicated the optimism:

I think having a positive outlook can create a ripple effect in the classroom. When I

approach teaching with enthusiasm and optimism, it encourages my students to engage more actively (pre-service participant No. 1).

Maintaining a positive outlook has significantly enhanced the atmosphere of my classroom (in-service participant No. 1)

Maintaining a positive outlook helped me create a welcoming classroom environment where students felt safe to express themselves (retired participant No. 1)

4.2. Collaborative learning environments

The second construct and dimension of praxical hope regarding the teachers' perception was collaborative learning environments. The researchers of the present study identified five sub-constructs for this dimension, including community engagement and collaboration, creating a supportive environment, peer teaching, feedback, and student-centered approaches.

4.2.1 Community engagement and collaboration

Community engagement and collaboration require the active participation of community members in shared decision-making and problem-solving efforts (Arnstein, 1969). Several participants of this study indicated the importance of community engagement and collaboration:

I engage students in community service projects that require them to use the language. The more they see the relevance of the language in their environment, the more purposeful their learning feels (pre-service participant No. 5).

I participate in online communities and forums dedicated to EFL teaching. Engaging with other educators allows me to share experiences, seek advice, and reflect on my practices (in-service participant No. 10).

In my experience, I found that collaborating with colleagues was invaluable. Sharing lesson plans and teaching techniques helped me feel supported (retired participant No. 2).

4.2.2. Creating a supportive environment

Practically, supportive and safe environments provide the psychological security and social trust necessary for individuals and groups to engage meaningfully in predicting, planning, and acting towards common purposes (Ejiogu, 2025). The following section presents the EFL teachers' perception regarding the supportive environment:

I want to create a safe classroom where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas, regardless of how different their ideas may be. I'll encourage open conversations about identity, culture, and social issues (pre-service participant No. 8).

I strive to create a supportive classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves in the English language. When they feel supported, their enthusiasm and engagement boost my morale and self-efficacy (in-service participant No. 3).

My vision was to create a supportive learning environment that fostered innovation and creativity. I encouraged students to express their ideas freely (retired participant No. 11).

4.2.3. Peer teaching

Peer teaching is an educational strategy in which students at similar levels alternate in teaching and supporting one another's understanding, thus encouraging shared knowledge production and active participation (Topping, 1996). The participants of the current study indicated peer teaching and learning:

I want to create a classroom that prioritizes group work and peer learning, where students can exchange ideas and collaboratively develop their language skills (pre-service participant No. 4).

One effective strategy I've used is peer teaching, where students explain concepts to each other. This issue not only builds their confidence but also reinforces their understanding (in-service participant No. 2).

I promoted peer teaching, where students would tutor each other on specific language elements or themes. It empowered them to take the initiative and bolster their confidence in their understanding (retired participant No. 4).

4.2.4. Feedback

Feedback can target particular tasks, cognitive processes, or self-regulatory mechanisms. When carried within supportive atmospheres, operative feedback reflects on past performance and proposes clear, actionable recommendations that increase motivation and self-efficacy (Shute, 2008). The participants of this study emphasized the significance of feedback both from students and colleagues:

I actively seek feedback from my students after lessons through simple surveys or informal chats. Asking them what they enjoyed or found challenging helps me gauge their understanding and engagement levels (pre-service participant No. 8).

I actively seek feedback from my students as a way to gauge my effectiveness as an EFL teacher (in-service participant No. 3).

Feedback from my students was a crucial part of building my confidence. By implementing anonymous surveys, I learned what they enjoyed and what needed improvement (retired participant No. 5).

4.2.5. Student-centered approaches

Praxical hope, defined as hope symbolized through deliberate, practical actions and cooperative effort, discovers productive ground within student-centered settings that authorize learners to imagine and follow improved futures (Tang, 2023). Here are the perceptions of this study's participants regarding student-centered approaches:

I try to create a classroom where students work together and can participate in different activities (pre-service participant No. 4).

My future-oriented vision as a teacher has evolved to focus heavily on student-centered learning. Now, I design lessons that encourage student participation, choice, and ownership of their learning (in-service participant No. 3).

I believed strongly in student-centered learning, which I implemented by allowing students to choose project topics related to their interests. It not only motivated them but also fostered ownership of their understanding (retired participant No. 1).

4.3. Critical reflection and social awareness

Concerning the EFL teachers' perceptions, the third construct of praxical hope is critical reflection and social awareness. The researchers of the present study identified seven sub-constructs for this dimension of praxical hope, including social justice awareness, critical thinking, reflective practices, self-assessment, cultural awareness, future-oriented vision, and existential longing.

4.3.1. Social justice awareness

Social justice awareness involves a critical understanding of systemic injustices and a commitment to support fairness within societal organizations, particularly in educational contexts ([Freire, 1970](#)). The following section presents the perception of the participants regarding social justice awareness:

I plan on discussing how language can perpetuate stereotypes or foster discrimination. Empowering them to understand language as a tool for both oppression and liberation will be a vital part of my teaching philosophy (pre-service participant No. 7).

I now strive to create a curriculum that reflects and legitimizes the diverse experiences of all my students, allowing everyone to see themselves in the material we explore (in-service participant No. 4).

I began implementing lessons that celebrated diversity, but I found it challenging to strike the right balance between social issues and language instruction (retired participant No. 3).

4.3.2. Critical thinking

Critical thinking provides individuals with the cognitive tools to evaluate evidence and articulate strategies rooted in contextual realities. This intellectual rigor allows praxical hope to transcend passive optimism, developing into informed and purposeful action ([Schwittay, 2023](#)). Furthermore, [Adel and Ramezanzadeh \(2017\)](#) emphasized the necessity of integrating creative and critical thinking skills, fostering an environment where learners can actively engage with content and navigate their educational journeys. Some participants indicated the significant role of critical thinking:

I envision myself as a facilitator of critical thinking. I want to engage my students in debates and discussions about social justice topics. It

improves their language skills and encourages them to think critically about the world around them (pre-service participant No. 3).

Encouraging critical thinking has been a key part of empowering my students. I pose open-ended questions and ask them to support their opinions during discussions, prompting them to take responsibility for their contributions (in-service participant No. 15).

I focused on developing critical thinking skills through discussions about global issues. This issue empowered students to articulate their viewpoints in English, giving them a voice (retired participant No. 11).

4.3.3. Reflective practices

The reflective practice covers active and continual reflection during an activity (reflection-in-action) and after its completion (reflection-on-action), thereby enabling informed and deliberate selections ([Machost & Stains, 2023](#)). In their exploration of critical pedagogy in English Language Teaching (ELT), [Adel et al. \(2019\)](#) emphasized the importance of providing educators with tools that encouraged reflective practices and empowered learners. Their development of a Critical Pedagogy Questionnaire provides insights into the teachers' readiness to adopt transformative approaches in the classroom. Additionally, [Adel and Khalili \(2024\)](#) discuss the significance of intersectionality in second language education, advocating for inclusive pedagogical practices that recognize diverse identities. Here are some extracts from teachers' interviews regarding the importance of reflective practices:

After reading something new, I reflect on how it relates to my practice. It keeps me updated on best practices while encouraging self-reflection (pre-service participant No. 6).

Reflective practice is the cornerstone of maintaining my confidence. I set aside time each week to reflect on my lessons, analyzing what worked and what didn't (in-service participant No. 4).

As I gained more experience, I realized the importance of self-reflection. I kept a journal where I documented my lessons, what worked, and what didn't (retired participant No. 1).

4.3.4. Self-assessment

In Self-assessment, learners critically reflect on and evaluate their own work and development concerning recognized criteria, thus promoting autonomy,

self-regulation, and a deeper understanding of their learning processes (Panadero et al., 2017). Many participants of this study indicated the role of self-assessment as a construct of praxical hope:

I created a self-assessment rubric based on the key competencies I want to develop as an EFL teacher, like lesson planning, student engagement, and assessment strategies (pre-service participant No. 9). Engaging in peer feedback sessions has been invaluable for my self-assessment. I regularly collaborate with fellow EFL teachers, and we observe each other's classes (in-service participant No. 2).

Watching my teaching from the students' perspective was eye-opening and allowed me to recognize strengths and areas for improvement in my instructional techniques (retired participant No. 5).

4.3.5. Cultural awareness

Cultural awareness helps to create the comprehensive and supportive situations required for praxical hope by encouraging mutual respect and understanding. It empowers individuals and groups to work cooperatively toward meaningful social transformation (Carlson et al., 2024). Teachers who are familiar with the culture of the foreign language they are teaching are quickly attracted to intercultural topics during instruction. They are more likely than unfamiliar teachers to include intercultural models in foreign language teaching (Taheri et al., 2015). Here is the perception of the participants in this regard:

I plan to incorporate diverse perspectives and cultural contexts into my lessons, helping students appreciate the richness of different cultures while learning English (pre-service participant No. 4).

Understanding that language learning also involves appreciating diverse cultures, I now strive to include cultural topics and global issues in my curriculum (in-service participant No. 2).

My vision included preparing students for international communication. I focused on intercultural competence, integrating cultural discussions into my curriculum (retired participant No. 4).

4.3.6. Future-oriented vision

A future-oriented vision involves the ability to predict, conceptualize, and deliberately plan for potential and desired futures, preparing individuals and

organizations to manage uncertainty and complexity efficiently (Pawlak & Moustafa, 2023). Here is the perception of EFL teachers about future-oriented vision:

Having a future-oriented vision makes me think about my students as global citizens. I want to teach English in a way that connects them to the world beyond our classroom (pre-service participant No. 2).

My future-oriented vision as a teacher has evolved to focus heavily on student-centered learning. I design lessons that encourage student participation, choice, and ownership of their knowledge (in-service participant No. 3).

Having a future-oriented vision was transformative for my teaching. I always aimed to equip my students with skills for global citizenship and lifelong learning (retired participant No. 1).

4.3.7. Existential longing

Praxical hope involves ongoing, cooperative efforts to translate optimistic visions into tangible realities, with existential longing vitalizing this process by highlighting what is deeply meaningful and worthy of pursuit (Schwittay, 2023). The participants of the present study indicated the existential longing:

I plan to connect language education to their personal passions and life goals to cultivate a sense of existential longing and purpose in my students' language learning. This approach empowers them to see English not just as a subject, but as a tool to explore and achieve their aspirations (pre-service participant No. 1).

I believe that cultivating a sense of existential longing in language learners involves exploring the cultures associated with the language they are learning (in-service participant No. 3).

I actively shared my own learning experiences with students, emphasizing that learning is a lifelong journey. This shared vulnerability encouraged them to approach their studies positively (retired participant No. 11).

4.4. Innovative pedagogical practices

Finally, the fourth fundamental construct of praxical hope regarding the EFL teachers' perception is innovative pedagogical practices. This study established four sub-constructs for this dimension, including the use of

technology, creativity and flexibility in teaching, project-based learning, and having a mentor.

4.4.1. Use of technology

Over recent decades, technological developments have meaningfully restructured educational procedures by facilitating personalized learning pathways, increasing access, and supporting engagement through collaborative and adaptable approaches ([Zou et al., 2025](#)). Most participants emphasized the significance of using technology:

With the rapid advancement of digital tools, I want to incorporate things like online collaboration platforms and language learning apps into my lessons. This makes learning more engaging for students (pre-service participant No. 1).

Integrating technology into my lessons has been a fantastic way to engage students and build my confidence. I have embraced various online tools that cater to different learning styles, making my lessons more interactive (in-service participant No. 12)

My vision focused on preparing students for a rapidly changing world, which led me to integrate technology into my lessons. I introduced digital tools to enhance language learning (retired participant No. 2).

4.4.2. Creativity and flexibility in teaching

Creative teaching inspires exploration, critical problem-solving, and active student engagement through various techniques, including brainstorming, role-playing, and questioning, to improve motivation and enable profound comprehension ([Neacşa, 2023](#)). Here is the perception of EFL teachers about creativity and flexibility in teaching:

I think creativity is key to fostering hope. I plan to incorporate art, music, and drama into lessons to help students to express frustrations (pre-service participant No. 3).

Through creative projects, students take charge of their learning, collaborating to solve real-world problems, research, and produce creative outputs (in-service participant No. 10).

I incorporated art and music into lessons, connecting language learning to creative expression. This helped many students find their passion for learning English (retired participant No. 12).

4.4.3. Project-based learning

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional approach focusing on students' actively acquiring knowledge and skills by engaging in complex, authentic projects over a prolonged period (Rehman et al., 2024). Therefore, according to teachers' perception, project-based learning not only advances academic competencies but also fosters the pragmatic hope essential for enduring personal growth and social transformation:

I want to integrate project-based learning in my teaching, where students work on meaningful projects that allow them to use their language skills creatively (pre-service participant No. 13).

Incorporating project-based learning into my curriculum has significantly empowered students. Through projects, students take charge of their learning, collaborating to solve real-world problems, conduct research, and produce creative outputs (in-service participant No. 14).

Using project-based learning that addressed real-world problems allowed my students to see the impact of their language skills (retired participant No. 3).

4.4.4. Having mentor

Mentors support the learning process by communicating their knowledge, representing best practices, and promoting critical reflection, which allows mentees to successfully encounter challenges and improve their competencies (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Several participants of the present study indicated the role of a mentor:

I've connected with a mentor teacher who provides invaluable insights into my teaching practices. After each observation, we sit down for a chat where she gives me feedback and asks reflective questions (pre-service participant No. 7).

Having a mentor in my teaching career has been a game-changer for my confidence and growth. My mentor provides guidance and a safe space to discuss the challenges I face (in-service participant No. 8).

Having a mentor during my early years was transformational. They guided me through lesson planning and classroom management techniques (retired participant No. 7).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study has significantly contributed to understand praxical hope among EFL teachers in Gorgan, Iran, by investigating the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired educators within public school contexts. Using a qualitative framework and employing constructivist grounded theory, the research revealed the multifaceted nature of praxical hope. This study identified four fundamental constructs of praxical hope, including empowerment and agency, collaborative learning environments, critical reflection and social awareness, and innovative pedagogical practices. It highlighted the significance of developing a hopeful mindset among EFL teachers.

Furthermore, the variety of perspectives captured from pre-service, in-service, and retired teachers enhances the discourse on praxical hope by demonstrating how experiences across diverse stages of a teaching profession shape insights and practices. The study underlined the need for continuing professional development that encourages teachers to reflect on their roles as facilitators of hope and change within their classrooms.

The findings of the present qualitative study provided a nuanced understanding of the perceptions of pre-service, in-service, and retired EFL teachers regarding praxical hope. Through the lens of constructivist grounded theory, the study showed that teachers across diverse stages of their professions shared a common yet varied understanding of praxical hope. The selective coding phase assisted the researcher to propose a praxical hope model with four fundamental constructs: empowerment and agency, collaborative learning environments, critical reflection and social awareness, and innovative pedagogical practices. These constructs functioned as a basis for understanding how teachers conceptualized praxical hope in their daily practices.

The study's identification of collaborative learning environments as a key category aligns with [Vygotsky's \(1978\)](#) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the centrality of social interaction and collaborative dialogue in knowledge construction and identity formation. Contemporary research by [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#) supports the notion that peer collaboration, mentorship programs, and community engagement enhance both teacher and student

agency by creating contexts where individuals feel supported and valued. More recent empirical evidence specifically within EFL contexts illustrates that collaborative professional learning communities bolster teachers' sense of belonging and hope through shared problem-solving and reflective dialogue (Yoo & Jang, 2023).

The current study's linking of critical reflection and social justice awareness to praxical hope echoes and extends critical hope theory as theorized by Duncan-Andrade (2009), who defines it as a form of hope intertwined with critical consciousness and social action. Critical hope involves recognizing systemic inequities while maintaining a commitment to transformative educational praxis.

Furthermore, the results of the present study are in line with those of Strikwerda and Lalas (2021). They framed the concept of "critical hope" and investigated how systemic oppression in society uninterruptedly perpetrates the "hope gap" in low-income students. They identified nine themes reflecting hope: building trust and caring relationships; goal oriented, willingness to act, and perseverance; critical reflection and empowerment; valuing optimism; confronting hopelessness; personal commitment to ethical responsibility and accountability; humanizing self-identity; consciousness of economic, social, cultural, and historical life barriers; and inspiring motivation and engagement.

Moreover, the findings of the current study support the results of the research by Ghadyani et al. (2022). In an exploratory mixed-methods grounded-based methodology, they explored the precise meaning of hope for learning EFL (HLEFL). The findings of their study indicated that goal-setting, emotion, certainty, anticipated effort, interpersonal relationships, sources, and social purposes establish the underlying issues that impact the development of HLEFL.

Moreover, research on peer teaching and feedback mechanisms reveals their positive influence on both learner engagement and teacher confidence (Velez & dos Santos, 2023). However, some inconsistencies surface in the literature regarding the scalability of collaborative environments. For example, Eryilmaz et al. (2025) caution that without intentional facilitation and school leadership support, collaborative structures risk becoming

superficial, potentially exacerbating teacher isolation rather than alleviating it.

On the other hand, [Day and Gu \(2013\)](#) remind us that agency is not guaranteed; systemic barriers such as institutional policies, workload, and resource scarcity may inhibit teachers' capacity to sustain hopeful and agentic practices over time. These findings suggest that while empowerment undergirds praxical hope, it is contingent on supportive structural conditions.

The findings from this qualitative study indicated significant pedagogical implications for various stakeholders in the educational setting. EFL teachers should distinguish the significance of nurturing praxical hope within their classrooms. By contributing to a curriculum that encourages empowerment, collaboration, and critical thinking, students will cultivate crucial skills such as adaptability, creativity, and self-assessment.

Moreover, policymakers can generate a more dynamic and responsive education system and create a more equitable and hopeful learning situation for all learners. Additionally, curriculum developers can develop materials and resources that facilitate student-centered approaches, encourage peer teaching, and integrate technology effectively.

While this study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding praxical hope, several limitations must be recognized that may influence the generalizability and interpretation of the findings. Although the study included different groups of EFL teachers, the sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Future research could benefit from larger and more varied samples to improve the transferability of the results.

As a qualitative study, the findings depend on participants' interpretations and reflections. Despite efforts to confirm trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the researchers' interpretations of the data may introduce bias.

Personal biases or predetermined ideas concerning praxical hope may unintentionally affect how questions were framed during interviews or how data were interpreted.

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About the authors

Fatemeh Malek Abbasi is a PhD Candidate of Applied Linguistics at Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran. She is an English language teacher. Her research interests include critical pedagogy, EFL teaching, and teacher education.

Seyyed Mohammad Reza Adel is an Associate Professor at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, having previously served as an Associate Professor at Hakim Sabzevari University. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics, with a research focus on critical socio-applied linguistics. With more than a decade of experience in higher education, he has contributed to the field through scholarly publications and conference presentations. Additionally, he has successfully supervised many Master's and PhD theses, as well as postdoctoral research projects, guiding them to successful completion.

Gholamreza Zareian is an Associate Professor at Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Iran. His research areas are second language acquisition and curriculum studies. He has published several papers in many national and international conferences and journals.