EFL Teacher Education in the Philosophy-Free Context of Iran: Education or Training

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Abstract: This paper intends to first discuss the language education in the broad context of major schools of philosophy comprising idealism, realism, and existentialism/pragmatism. At the same time, it would explain the EFL/ESL education in the philosophy-oriented context of the west and philosophy-free context of Iran. Since there is thinking in education, not in training, we would imply that the EFL context of Iran is more training-centered than education-oriented, simply because it does not have a philosophic thought of its own. From this perspective, the universities in Iran train EFL teachers rather than educating them with regard to a native philosophic background. On the contrary, the western EFL/ESL context is meaningful in light of its philosophic foundation. In other words, the EFL/ESL theories, practices, teaching methodologies, assessment, and research enquiry in the west originated from a rich philosophic background, leading to educating EFL/ESL teachers as well as action researchers. Finally, the arguments made in this paper necessitate that the Iranian scholars revive their past philosophic realism which was developed by Iranian philosophers in the medieval period and renovate it according to the demands of this brand new world. The results of such a renovation should then be applied to our education system in general and EFL education system in particular.

Keywords: EFL Teacher Education, Training, Philosophy-Free Context of Iran, Idealism, Realism, Existentialism/Pragmatism

1-Introduction
A cultured education system is one that provides its people with profound knowledge of history of their country and even the world history. Such knowledge involves all aspects of the history such as its "political, social, and economic development, its literary and artistic achievements.... and various philosophical systems and thoughts" (Copleston, 1985a, p. 1). Focusing on the course of European philosophy, he remarks on the same page that "we would scarcely call anyone "educated" who had no knowledge of history" including the foregoing domains. From this perspective, a good education system is one that takes into account such historical
considerations as part of its educational curriculum to raise people's consciousness of the landmark historical events, motifs, and thoughts behind them and make their lives meaningful in light of these historical movements. Not only is education all-embracing in its subject matter, philosophical and non-philosophical, but it is a life-long endeavor, as Plato remarks in his famous book the Republic. At six, children, as Plato advocated, are removed from their mothers' care to enter school where they first learn reading, writing, and counting. Then, they engage with music and sports. At eighteen, they are to undergo the two-year period military and physical training to finish their elementary education. Then, higher education is held for those who are more qualified. While elementary education makes the soul more responsive to the environment, the higher education, Plato remarked, helps the soul to search for truth. At twenty-one, the best are screened to take an advanced ten-year course in mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and harmonics (Hare, 1989). At the age of thirty, another selection is made out of the most qualified to study dialectics, metaphysics, logic, and philosophy for the next five years. After serving junior positions in the army for fifteen years, a man would have completed his theoretical and practical education by the age of fifty. It is at fifty that he is ready to rule. In the Islamic educational context, Avicenna outlined a similar life-long educational model. He remarked that children should be sent to a Maktab School at the age of six and taught elementary education until they reach the age of fourteen. During this time, Avicenna asserted, the children should be taught the Quran, Islamic metaphysics, language, literature, Islamic ethics, and manual skills (Cahn, 1997; Goodman, 1992). Avicenna refers to the secondary stage of Maktab Schooling as the period of specialization, when pupils should begin to acquire manual skills, regardless of their social classes. He mentions that children after the age of fourteen should be given a choice to choose and specialize in subjects they are interested in, whether it is reading, manual skills, literature, preaching, medicine, geometry, trade and commerce, craftsmanship, or any other subject or profession they would be interested in pursuing for a future career. Through education, as it is believed, people become free human beings. They become, from a modernist perspective in education, free from, for example, animal-like tendencies. To a great extent, education is considered in terms of autonomy and rationality. At the very heart of the project of modernity is the notion of the necessity of education's historical role to enlighten and emancipate. From the same perspective, education can be seen as "the vehicle by which modernity's grand narratives, the Enlightenment ideals of critical reason, individual freedom, progress and benevolent change are substantiated and realized" (Usher & Edwards, 1996, p.2). "Together, they defined rational civilization", which is a key element in modernism (Aaronowitz, & Giroux, 1991, p. 57). Postmodern educators, on the other hand, focusing on the importance of education like modern educators but having different and even opposing views regarding education, point out that education is a site where people are connected to the physical world in its totality. As Usher and Edwards (1996, p. 4) point out, education in the postmodern world is "the most important way we relate to the world, to the way we experience, understand and attempt to change the world and to the ways in which we understand ourselves and our relations with others". It plays a key role in forming and shaping people's identity, sense of autonomy, individuality, and intentionality. In the EFL/ESL context, Widdowson (1984, 1990) makes a distinction between education and training in EFL/ESL teacher preparation programs. He asserts that the purpose of training is to prepare "people to cope with problems anticipated in advance
But he conceives of education as a general orientation directed at "developing general intellectual capacity, cognitive sets, attitudes, [and] dispositions" (p. 208). In other words, to fulfill the demands of an educative program, teachers in general and EFL/ESL teachers in particular have to develop themselves professionally with regard to the major intellectual currents of the communities where they administer education. Therefore, it is not odd to say that EFL/ESL teachers have to develop a rich philosophical background in them, so that they match their every day practices in educational settings with such philosophical thought or create educational techniques in line with such philosophical thought. This is the way things are in the educational context of nearly all western countries. This philosophical background, which is supposed to lead to the intellectual growth of the teachers, includes such major schools of philosophy occurring chronologically as idealism, realism, and existentialism/pragmatism. Many refer to these philosophical movements as traditionalism, modernism, and postmodernism/constructivism. In the next section of this paper, we will discuss these three philosophical schools in the educational context of the west and of Iran, using the names related to the first category of philosophical schools, although, as it seems to us, they can be used interchangeably with those in the second category. Generally speaking, the western education system is, to a great extent, philosophy-oriented while the Iranian education system lacks a native philosophy of its own at the modern time. The EFL education in Iran has the same fate. Instead of bearing a native philosophical foundation, it intended to borrow the underlying philosophic thought from abroad. As a result, the EFL context of Iran, we conceive, is more training-centered than educated-oriented. The EFL practices in the classroom and the EFL research enquiry in Iran have been the ones shaped by the western scholars in the last two centuries in the form of modernist or postmodernist ideas or a mixture of the two, which would be expounded throughout the paper.

2-Language Education in the Context of Idealism and Realism

Idealism, as it is explicated in the Classical philosophy, is the recognition of the Ideas as real, true, fixed, and universal compared with their physical counterparts in the physical world which are considered unreal, untrue, changing, and particular, and so not subject to knowledge. Such universal ideas, which are introduced in the Platonic system as part of his ontological considerations, are claimed to exist in the World of Ideas outlined by Plato. They are the only things subject to true knowledge. According to Plato, the objects of sense-perception and sensible particular objects are always in a state of flux, relative, and subject to the temporary influences on the part of the subject and object so as to be "unfit to be objects of true knowledge" (Copleston,1985a, p. 149). Instead, Plato, not rejecting the existence of physical objects, asserted that the object of true knowledge must be stable and abiding. In the Theory of Forms, he recognizes the Ideas or Forms in the World of Ideas as stable and abiding and so subject to true knowledge. A clear implication of such ontology is leaving the physical realities in favor of an extremist idealism in which objects are regarded as shadows of their universal counterparts in the World of Ideas so that the objects are only particular devices by which we can identify their corresponding universals in the World of Ideas or Forms. One essential duty of the education system is to pave the way for such identification, through which the particulars
are traced back to their Universal Forms in the World of Ideas. These Forms or Ideas are supposed to be the objects of true knowledge.

On the contrary, in realism, the physical nature received its momentum (Dewey, 1910, 2001). It was recognized as the only source to which human senses can refer to "as the starting point of knowledge" (Copleston, 1985a, p. 45). Understanding the physical nature, as Cassirer argues in Chapter Two of his book (1951), also leads to knowledge of the self. In realism, the physical objects are considered independent from the human mind in the sense that if all humans die, these objects continue their existence.

Furthermore, Devitt and Sterelny (1999) believe that realism is a metaphysical doctrine with two dimensions. The first dimension of realism is "a doctrine about what exists" (p. 233), which holds that physical entities such as stones, trees, cats, etc. exist. In other words, they are real. The second doctrine of realism is concerned with the nature of that existence. The latter doctrine then presupposes that "these entities do not depend for their existence or nature on our mind, nor on our awareness, perception or thought about them" (Devitt & Sterely, p. 233). This notion is in sharp contrast with idealism which recognized Ideas as the only true and real entities.

From this perspective, the ancient physiocrates, Aristotle, and Muslim Peripatetic philosophers such as Kindy, Faraby, Avicenna, and Averroes were all realists, because they regarded objects as valid sources for understanding. Aristotle considered a special place for the physical nature in his philosophical ideas. He, classifying the sciences into theoretical, practical, and productive, put physics into the category of theoretical sciences. Physics, as a science, deals with "things that have a separate existence but not unchangeable" (Ross, 1996, p.65). Aristotle, for instance, rejecting Plato's imaginary world of ideas and regarding the universals as real, true, and fixed, remarked that the universals are abstracted from their corresponding particulars, that is, the physical objects in the outside world, by the human mind. So, according to Aristotle, the universals exist in the mind and only have a mental reality. They receive their validity from the particular objects. In the same way, the first philosopher in the Islamic world, Kindy in his treatise named The First Philosophy defined philosophy as "having knowledge of the truth of objects based on human capacity" (Cited in Akhlaq, 2008, p. 109). The same idea is reiterated by Avicenna. In his treatise The Healing, as Akhlaq (p. 118) notes, Avicenna remarked that "philosophical statements have predicates which can be referred back to their corresponding objects in the physical world".

The realist perspective was carried on by Roger Bacon in the thirteenth century, Francis Bacon in the sixteenth century, Descartes in the seventeenth century, and Enlightenment Philosophy in the eighteenth century up to the present time, whose explanation is beyond the scope and capacity of this paper. Their common principle is observation and experience of the physical world as well as the inductive epistemology to arrive at truth. It should be noted that the realist movement was weakened in the middle ages in favor of Christian theology in which the faith was considered the only valid source for understanding. According to Christian theology, understanding is the award of the faith (Gilson, 1936). A point worthy of note here is that the realist perspective was brought back to the western thinking arena by Islamic philosophers, namely, Averroes and Avicenna (Akhlaq, 2008, 2009; Copleston, 1985b; Hallingdale, 2000; Russell, 1961; Yasrebi, 2011). It is, as Copleston (1985b, p. 10) notes, a fact that the Islamic and Jewish philosophers "constituted an important channel whereby the Aristotelian system in its
fullest became known to the Christian West”. In many cases, the Islamic philosophers elaborated on Aristotle's books, especially those on philosophy and logic, and made a lot of innovations in this regard. Later on, Avicenna and Averoess' works, which were basically the ideas of Aristotle, not Plato, were translated into Latin by Jewish and Christian scholars. Such translated works were the basis for the western awakening in the Middle Ages. They were made familiar with the realist ideas of Aristotle. Hallingdale (2000) remarks in this regard that Greek philosophy and basically Aristotle's philosophy were spread in the west by translating the works of great Islamic philosophers such as Avicenna and Averroes. The philosophic thought of all these philosophers, as Hallingdale mentions, was Aristotelian, although they also borrowed Platonic elements to some extent.

Avicenna's treatise on logic (the Healing) is an example of such an innovation to update Aristotle's treatise on logic. Unfortunately, the Islamic world in general and the Iranian community in particular could not preserve such realist philosophic thought, which turned on the candles of enlightenment in the middle ages. Such a realist movement in the Islamic world was left in favor of mystical, illuminationist, and theosophico-transcendental movements in the later centuries, which bear elements of Platonism (Yasrebi, 2011). Elsewhere (Moradian, 2010), we have talked about such a lack of philosophical thought in the current Iranian context under the philosophical fracture which has led to a state of static passivity in our contemporary intellectual history.

From the mystical perspective, the physical world, including all its objects, is not of essential importance compared with the divine entities. One of the reasons for the backwardness of our education system, as we conceive it, is the demise of the realist philosophy which the Islamic philosophers introduced in the tenth and eleventh centuries. We should not also forget that the next two schools of thought in Iran, namely, Sohravardi's Illuminationism and Sadra's Transcendental Theosophy, which appeared in the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, respectively, bore a great touch of mysticism, Platonism, and Neo-Platonism (Russell, 1961). Both schools recognized the objects in the physical world as of not much importance, paving the way for further mystical and irrational movements. We confess that we are proud of Illuminationism and Transcendental Theosophy in the Iranian context. At the same time, we are mournful at a loss of the realist philosophy in the Iranian context. In addition, one becomes disappointed to hear the words uttered by Ghazali against philosophy and even any other sciences such as mathematics and natural sciences. He openly condemned Islamic philosophy and even accused philosophers of blasphemy and recognized their texts as heretical. Yasrebi (2011, p. 24) notes in this regard that Ghazali, as an influential religious figure, declared that "not only philosophy but also all sciences are dangerous [to faith]". Ghazali warned people to keep their religious faith by keeping distance from the filth of philosophy. Elsewhere, Yasrebi (2008, p. 15) points out that "after the devastating attack of Ghazali, philosophy in the Muslim world was abandoned and could not attain its autonomy any more". Therefore, the Iranian education system was, from the very beginning, deprived of philosophizing at the dawn of Islamic philosophic intellectualism in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Russell (1961) detected the same misfortune in the history of western philosophy. He remarked in this regard that philosophy became handmaid to Christian theology in the Middle Ages. Russell believed that Islamic philosophers kindled the light of realist philosophy in the west. This fortunate occasion was brought to the western philosophical context by Averroes.
According to Russell, Averroes was the start pointing of philosophizing for the west in the Middle Ages and his death was the end of philosophizing for the Islamic context of philosophy. Yasrebi (2011, p. 25) refers to this transfer of realist philosophy to the west as "a disastrous return", which aborted philosophizing in the Islamic context and "played the role of a luminous candle which made the west brilliant and attracted much attention" (Yasrebi, p. 84). In the Mediaeval Philosophy, the distinction between philosophy and theology became blurred. In other words, logic and dialectic were devices at the theologians' disposal to treat of God and the three Persons in the Blessed Trinity, namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a fact that the philosophical contemplation in the true sense of the word, as presented by pre-Christian Greek philosophers, was essentially abandoned. Consequently, dialectic and logic, as Copleston (1985b, p. 146) concludes, were "very inferior pursuits and that their uses in theology were purely subsidiary and subordinate. In short, the place of dialectic was that of a handmaid" for the data of revelation. EFL/ESL language education in the realist modernism of the nineteenth and twentieth century's focused on "the quest for the best method" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 165) which was believed to be universal and ahistorical, a method which can be used anywhere and every time. In the past century pushed by modernist incentives, a lot of methods emerged in a competing race, one trying to cover the deficiencies of the other and encouraging the language teachers to follow "the same recommended procedures" (Prabhu, 1987, p. 106). Since the method concept was conceived to be all-pervasive, it soon spread to other related components of language teaching such as syllabus design, curriculum development, material preparation, and testing procedures. To take an example, with the spread of the audiolingual method, the grammatical syllabus, pattern practice, and discrete-point testing became fashionable. Many applied linguists (e.g., Freire, 1970; Kumaravadivelu, 2008) argue against the established methods, asserting that such methods intend to impose idealized concepts to be employed in idealized contexts, ignoring the "local knowledge sedimented through years and years of practical experience" (Kumaravadivelu, p. 165) made by teachers and educators in periphery communities such as Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and South America.

3-Language Education in the Context of Existentialism/Pragmatism

The philosophical currents of the western community have been ever-flowing for the past few centuries. The realist perspective was then subjected to drastic changes in the twentieth century under the umbrella terms of European existentialism and American pragmatism in the twentieth century. It should be borne in mind that the existentialists and pragmatists were loyal to the basic principles of realism such as attention to the physical world and as the primary source of understanding. Existentialism, as mentioned, takes the autonomy of the physical realities for granted, adding at the same time that these physical realities are valid and meaningful only if they are perceived by humans. Sartre (1988), as one of the greatest founders of existentialism, remarked that existentialism puts humanity at the center of the act of philosophizing. In this sense, existentialism is a sort of humanism. Therefore, objects and concepts such as time and space are real and existent if and only if they are related to human beings. To an existentialist, an island is real as long as it is lived by its inhabitants. Los Angeles is not so meaningful to the writer of this paper since he has never been to Los Angeles! The same is true about the concept of time. A year at jail is so meaningful to a prisoner, because it is he
who has had a "lived experience" of the jail (Flynn, 2006, p. 5). Existentialists refer to these two special occasions as "lived space" and "lived time", respectively (Flynn, p. 5-7). Educationalists consider such ideas in the context of education and encourage teachers to apply them to the educational settings. EFL/ESL teachers are no exceptions in this regard. They are advised to provide EFL/ESL learners with opportunities in which they can have a lived experience of the social context in which they acquire their additional languages. Such experiences are lived ones because they originate from the immediate environments in which they live. The development of such approaches to language teaching as cooperative learning, participatory approach, and task-based instruction under the post-method era in language teaching is all due to the application of such existentialist ideas to the context of language education, which are, more often than not, introduced in the literature on applied linguistics as constructivism and pragmatism. Pragmatism, which has lots of things in common with existentialism, is American in nature, because its founders, namely, Charles Sanders Pierce, William James, and John Dewey, were all American. Pragmatists are on the Heraglitean belief that "all things are in motion, nothing steadfastly is" (Copleston, 1985a, p. 39). They remark that it is of essential, and not accidental, importance to adopt theories which are very useful in action and give us a hand-on experience of the worldly affairs. For Pierce (1992, 1958, 1955), to take an example, the statements are meaningful which bring about practical consequences. For this reason, he advocated problem-solving orientations in research enquiry. In line with the same argument, he asserted that a piece of research should be carried out in three stages. In the first stage, a hypothesis or more are issued by the researcher. In the deductive stage, the hypotheses are tested. Lastly, the results of the hypothesis testing are evaluated in the inductive stage. Dewey (1913, 1933, 1938, 2001), applying pragmatist ideas to education, added three more stages to Pierce's trinity of research enquiry. Dewey's research model includes experience, interpretation of the experience, issuance of problems arising from the experience, writing research questions originating from the problems, making hypotheses out of the questions, and testing the hypotheses. From this perspective, there will be inherent problems in every educational setting which await solutions, and it is the educationalists and teachers' responsibility to remove them by action research techniques. The EFL/ESL education has also been benefitted by Dewey's ideas. Many scholars in the field of applied linguistics have tried their best to find theoretical foundations for more recent teaching approaches such as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and the Participatory Approach. For example, Samuda and Bygate (2008), looking for theoretical support for Task-Based Language Teaching, quote ideas from Dewey (1913), pointing out that the language learners are not "receptacles of the teachers' knowledge" (cited in Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, P. 151). Instead, they are actively involved in constructing their knowledge of language and its use in real life situations through experience and problem-solving, which are favored by TBLT. In the same way, the core practice of the Participatory Approach in language teaching is problem-posing based on which, as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, P. 171) have pointed out, a selection is made of "real-life issues from the students' lives and local cultural norms", engaging them in an open-ended process of problem-solving. In this way, the teacher is no longer depositing the knowledge of language into the language learners' minds through "the banking method" (Freire, 1970). Instead, the language teacher and learners collectively endeavor to construct knowledge of language in the classroom based on lived experience of the immediate environment in which they are living.
So far, we have argued that the western education system is basically philosophical, especially at the present time, in that it is a reflection and enactment of philosophers' doctrines, whether modernist or postmodernist. For example, the western educationalists have learned from the realist philosophers that experience of the physical world should be focused in the education system. They have also learned that classroom problems are theirs. So it is their duty to solve them through action research. Compared with the philosophy-oriented education system of the west, the Iranian education system suffers from lack of a philosophical foundation. In passive reaction to this philosophical lacking, the Iranian educationalists have given different responses. Many state that the modern west is deviant and corrupt, because, as they say, it is far away from the Christian divine values and so is highly secular. Therefore, they reject the western secular system in favor of a religious system in which divinity plays a central role (Akhaq, 2009; Yasrebi, 2008, 2011). From this perspective, the western ideas which are bought into the Iranian context are more challenging than problem-solving, because Iranian scholars, instead of thinking about our own problems, have to spend much time and energy seeking the validity and authenticity of such ideas and their applicability to the Iranian context. It is also from this perspective that the concept of hegemony, if true, is basically more philosophic than cultural, economic, or linguistic. Conversely, many others are confirmative of the western values and recognize them as developed and advanced. Therefore, they have tried to borrow philosophic thought from the western thinkers and copy the practices arising from it. It is mostly because of this lack of philosophic thought, on the one hand, and the model-borrowing of our education system that we have mentioned the Iranian education system is more training-centered than education-oriented. The EFL teachers in Iran then have to employ techniques and strategies in the classroom for which no native philosophic theory can be found. Likewise, EFL students in Iran carry out research more often as part of their M.A. and Ph.D. program requirements than as action research to remove EFL problems arising from their EFL immediate context. It is nearly three decades that the universities in Iran have been training EFL students at the M.A. and Ph.D. levels. Unfortunately, the problem of English language learning in Iran has remained unresolved yet. As an academic and scholarly reaction to such EFL problems, Farhady, after Twenty-Five Years of Living with Applied Linguistics (2006), asserts that "our academic system has not been quite fortunate in utilizing research findings to improve language education" (2011, p. 11). Furthermore, he aptly remarks that "research topics and questions should be prioritized to help solve problems of immediate concern to the field of applied linguistics in the country rather than to confirm the findings of research in other contexts" (p. 11). Although these statements are meticulously profound and correct about the Iranian EFL academic context and voice great concerns in this regard, it seems at least to us, that part of the EFL problems may originate from the lack of native philosophic thought in our country. We all know that writing an M.A. thesis or a Ph.D. dissertation on TEFL/TESL is not much of a problem, and the concerned EFL/ESL students can handle this job well, although it takes time and energy and requires academic expertise and endeavor. In addition, these students are smart at shaping research questions. As some of our students majoring in TEFL at the graduate level say, they usually come across research questions when they are reading theses and dissertations available at the English departments in Iran and papers published in the prestigious journals in the field such as The TESOL Quarterly, Applied Linguistics, Language Learning, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, and Language Testing, to name a few. It is due, to a greater extent, to
this reason that most part of our academic endeavors is confirmatory rather than exploratory. Simply speaking, these research topics and questions come from the aforementioned technical journals and the like rather than originating from the immediate EFL context of our country.

Although, as Farhady asserted, prioritization of research topics is a key factor in the academic success, it does not seem to be much problematic to the EFL context of Iran, because almost all EFL students have access to Iranian qualified professors in the field. A more serious problem, as we conceive it, is the lack of philosophic thought and contemplation behind our EFL practices at the academia. We carry out EFL research not mostly to solve the problems of immediate concern to the EFL context of our country, but to receive M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL. This seems to be not the case in the EFL/ESL contexts overseas. There, EFL/ESL questions are raised out of the immediate context of language education. In turn, the EFL/ESL researchers have learned to remove such problems as part of their existential responsibility to the community in which they are living. Existentially speaking, they are human; their problems are also human. Finally, it is they who are to solve them.

4-Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we made some arguments regarding the relationship between philosophic thought and education in the EFL context of Iran and compared it with the western educational context. The first argumentation we made was that the western education system is, to a great extent, philosophic. We also argued that it is the education system's responsibility to spread and pass on the philosophic thought along with the other domains of human endeavors such mathematics, logic, and a range of sciences, music, literature, history, physical education from one generation to the next. The third argument we made was that the Iranian education system in general and our EFL education system in particular is philosophy-free in the sense that our past scholars and thinkers were not successful to apply their philosophic thought to the education system of their time. One reason for this seclusion of the philosophic thought, as Urvoy (1991) rightly mentioned, is the elitism in the Islamic philosophy. The Muslim philosophers could influence the elites only, not the public people. Therefore, it did not bear any influence on the actual lives of the people. It seems that the education system of the time was not flexible enough to absorb their philosophic thought. Then, it was a safe haven for other sciences related to theology, Sufism, jurisprudence, literature, and religion. In the past few decades, we have imported the theories of education from the western countries in a competing race. The imported psychological schools such as behaviorism, cognitive, humanism, etc. are the backbones of our education system. The same goes on in the EFL education system of our country. Once we imported the ELT materials and curricula which were pushed by audiolingualism, incorporating its linguistic theory from structuralism and psychological theory from behaviorism (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 35) and blindly practiced the English patterns in the EFL context of Iran, public and private. And now, we import brand new ideas which are communication-based or constructivism-oriented in the form of the communicative approach for the former and participatory approach for the latter, neither of which is the offspring of Iranian scholarship. The same phenomenon plagued the EFL academic research enquiry of our country. Stimulated by waves of modernism, we imported the experimental research paradigm, which intends to quantify the qualities, and now, under the overwhelming
influence of the postmodern/constructivist paradigm, we have brought in qualitative approaches to conducting EFL research in our country. This is why we have not been "fortunate to improve our language education" (Farhady, 2011, p. 11). The pushes are, in almost all cases, not from within but from the outside, quite alien to the EFL context of Iran in term of their theoretical foundations. This is why we are led to saying that our EFL practices are more training-centered than education-oriented.

To conclude, we would make suggestions to find ways of improving our EFL language education and research. The first thing to do is to revive our past philosophic realism developed by Kindy, Faraby, Avicenna, and Averroes, as great Muslim philosophers in 900-1200 A.D. We can find in their ideas a logico-philosophical orientation which is more empirically based than intuitively driven. To take an instance, Avicenna argued that the human intellect at birth is like a tabula rasa, a pure potentiality which is actualized through education and active experience of the physical world. It acquires knowledge through empirical familiarity with objects in the physical world from which one abstracts the universal concepts (Morewedge, 1973, p. 254). Secondly, such a logico-philosophic thought must be applied to the education system of our country in general and the EFL context in particular so that not only the elites but also all those involved in the educational contexts at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels can be benefitted by it. Finally, our EFL theories and practices, research paradigm, syllabus design, curriculum development, material preparation, teaching methods, and assessment techniques should arise from such a philosophic thought. Naturally, the EFL teachers brought up in such a philosophic context receive education rather than training.

References: