Evaluating EFL Learners' Philosophical Mentality through their Answers to Philosophical Questions: Using Smith's Framework

Gholamhossein Shahini

Abstract

Given the role philosophical mentality can fulfill in bringing individuals the essential skills of wisdom and well thinking, the present paper, by applying Smith's (2007) theoretical framework, strived to explore the extent philosophic-mindedness exists among the participants. Considering the fact that, a philosophic mind begets philosophical answers, the participants' philosophical thinking ability was evaluated through analyzing their answers to philosophical questions. To this end, through convenience sampling, a group of 40 EFL students in BA degree, 21 female and 19 male with the age range of 19 to 35, at Shiraz University, Iran, were selected. They were asked to read two simple short passages, story and non-story, and answer the related questions. Based on three characteristics of philosophic-mindedness (i.e. comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility) it was revealed that the majority of the participants signified rigidity and dogmatism in their way of thinking and were in the habit of shallow and superficial thinking. They seemed to be unable to afford themselves a profound insight into the questions. The minority, on the other hand, took notice of different options in the questions, reappraised their varying strands, and provided reasonable answers. In addition, it was inferred that lack of comprehensiveness alone assures lack of philosophical mentality. Finally, the three dimensions of philosophic-mindedness recommended in the framework can be utilized by stakeholders in educational fields to realize a person with (non-) philosophical mentality.

The mere undertaking of education as a large enterprise in any society is not to enable students to read and write or to learn subject matters. Indeed, as Smith (2007) points out, imparting specific contents such as geography or physics is the least important thing done in school. Students, he argues, require to learn habits and attitudes that remain active and influential even after they finish formal education. Dewey (1983,) states that "the object and reward of learning is continued capacity for growth" (p.117). The function of education, according to him, is to empower students to learn to think about the things they encounter in life and the products of schooling are intellectual powers.

Smith (2007), in the same vein, points out that the value of people relies on their ability to think rationally not perfunctorily, and this ability is one of the fundamental issues in education that effective instruments are needed to cultivate it. If *philosophy*, he holds, goes in education, it can definitely be a thought-provoking practice that offers students search for profound insights about the causes and grounds of the issues. Besides, since it aspires for the maximum probable depth and adequacy of thought and pushes one's life into more reflective levels, philosophy can greatly assist in the enhancement of thoughtfulness on the part of students (Fantasia, 2002; Haynes, 2002; Murris, 1992; Ofsted, 1997; Seon-Hee, 2002).

Literally, the word philosophy means love of wisdom and refers to a certain mode of thinking. As Shermis (1967) clarifies, philosophy is an attempt to make sense out of a complicated and puzzling situation. It is concerned with exploring the underlying meaning of specific problems. A philosophical problem, he explains, "is an abstract analysis, not only of the here-and-now but of the underlying beliefs and barely verbalized feelings of people as they make assertions, ask questions, express preferences, plan for the future, etc." (p. 3). Philosophy, in other words, seeks after the deepest level of meaning of what people think, express, and do.

Smith (2007) adds that philosophy struggles with fundamental issues of man and tries to supply comprehensive and systematic responses to them. From his viewpoint, philosophy is an activity rather than a set of ideas and contents to be studied. That is, the emphasis is laid on doing philosophy or philosophizing. Philosophy as such invites people to contemplate and raise questions for deeper and better understanding of various stages of life and whatever associated with that (Cam, 1995). Philosophical mentality, as a result, offers people some sort of insight to be open-minded and can stop them from narrow-mindedness, self-centeredness, and unilateral perception in addressing the issues. In fact, those who think philosophically, seek deep and profound wisdom, critically put their basic and deep-seated beliefs into question (Rand, 1982) and no longer lead similar sort of unreflective life based on a bulk of attitudes, biases, and the habitual beliefs of ordinary people (Russell, 1997). Philosophy in this manner undoubtedly begins a process that can enrich one's life immensely.

What distinguishes philosophy from other forms of reflective thinking (e.g., critical, creative, and caring thinking), is its specific types of higher-order *questions* on wide-spread concepts. The concepts that are principal and prevalent in our lives such as life, liberty, identity, God, worshipping, punishment, making a judgment, etc. (Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

Philosophical Questions

Philosophical questions are described as fundamental, general and odd questions that cannot be addressed by referring to empirical facts, experts' knowledge and one's information (Cam, 1995). They impel people to reflect about issues in new ways, to think independently for themselves and not to be stampeded into the way the crowd thinks. Such questions which arouse puzzlement, are quite controversial that cannot be satisfactorily resolved (Gregory, 2008). Philosophical questions are, in fact, questions many of us have thought about for a long time in our

lifetime. Questions like What is friendship? What makes a good friend? What is happiness? Can money buy true happiness? What is infinity? Is God infinite? What is mind? What is the relationship between mind and body? Who am I? and so on.

Hirst and Peters (1970) provide a classification into the specific characteristics of philosophical questions (see Figure 1). They advance that such questions involve profound reflection (including analysis and defining) on the concepts (e.g., What constitutes punishment? What is education? What is the meaning of true pleasure?) and the type of grounds which are of significance for making judgment about those concepts (e.g., How should a criminal be punished correctly? How should people be educated? What kinds of pleasure should I choose or avoid?).
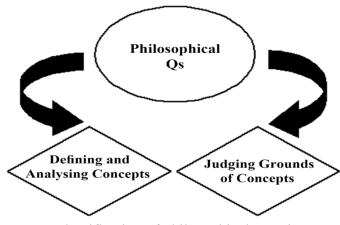

Figure 1. Classification of philosophical questions,
Hirst and Peters (1970)

From another perspective (see Figure 2), Smith (2007) mentions that philosophical questions can be divided into metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological. Metaphysical questions are concerned with supernatural forces and events. They, as Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) describe, have to do with the grounds of being, existence and all existent entities,

reality (ontology) and how things are related to one another. Some examples of such questions are: What does it mean to exist? What is the nature of reality? What kinds of reality are there? In what sense can we say that something is or is not?

Epistemological questions include nature and source of knowledge, justification, and the rationality of belief. Questions like: What makes justified beliefs justified? What does it mean to say that one knows something? How do we know that we know?

Axiological questions have their eye on two kinds of values: ethics and aesthetics. Ethics, according to Lipman et al. (1980), scrutinizes the concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, and moral principles. Aesthetics investigates the concept of beauty and the principles that control the creation of the beautiful. For instance: What is beauty? What is the value? What is of value? What are the sources of value?
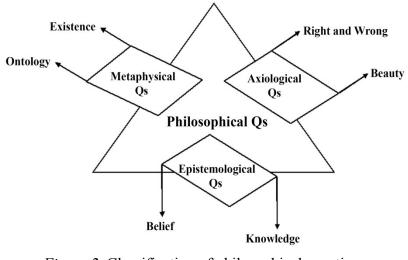

Figure 2. Classification of philosophical questions
by Smith (2007)

Philosophical questions, however, call for *philosophical answers*. These answers are not set in advance and there is no fully-formed frame of reference into which they can be put (Cam, 1995; Lipman, 2003). Such answers, which lead to more investigation/reflection, are open to disagreement and it is difficult to find a few number of people to have the same mind upon a single philosophical problem (Gregory, 2008). To reach such answers, one is obliged to deeply focus on the issue at hand, formulates an idea and then makes considerable effort to analyze, expand, support, and criticize it. In fact, what is expected from such answers are further depth and clarity.

A philosophic mind from which philosophical answers originate, according to Smith (2007), has characteristics which appear to cluster along three interrelated dimensions as explicated below.

Smith's Theoretical Framework

To Smith (2007), a philosophic-minded person appears to possess three interrelated characteristics of *comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility.*

Comprehensiveness

The first and most evident quality of a philosophic-minded person is her/his making great effort to have comprehensiveness of outlook. Comprehensiveness is synonymous with vastness, extensiveness, and inclusiveness. A comprehensive mind attempts to see life as a whole or to view the big picture. It tries its utmost to see the forest because as it is commonly said we fail to see the forest for the trees. Such a mind, for instance, raises questions like: What are we trying to accomplish in the long run? How does our activity gear in with the work of others who may hold the same long-range goals? More simply, comprehensiveness of thought means to view things in the light of their precursors and the probable consequences. A comprehensive view, thus, makes a haphazard

flow of isolated things become purposeful and move in a specific direction. Those who think comprehensively, take all options into account upon confronting them and do not turn a blind eye to even one. In other words, they do not hold dichotomous, binary, one-sided, and black and white view towards phenomena. They do not abruptly focus on one alternative, brush others aside, and jump into conclusion. Simply put, they see the two sides of a coin. In sum, comprehensiveness means looking at particular cases in relation to broad fields and relating the immediate issues to long-term goals.

Penetration

A philosophic mind, rarely is satisfied with particular, immediate, obvious responses or ways of raising questions. It tends to go beyond the most common assumptions, ordinary slogans, clichés, and stereotypes and ventures to get to the roots of issues to reveal the major and basic relations. A philosophic mind, after considering all choices and aspects of a given issue in comprehensiveness stage, starts pondering, digging, or delving into every single choice until it discovers depths and fundamentals. A penetrating look also burrows beneath the particular and superficial alternatives that seem non-relatable and makes an effort to shed light upon the basic relations to view them as a whole. Making such a generalization then empowers one to cope well with a set of similar cases. In this fashion, a combination of both comprehensiveness and penetration is crucial to philosophic mindedness.

Flexibility

Flexibility is in sharp contrast with behaving in a rigid and dogmatic manner and sticking to the old methods that have yielded successful results in apparently similar situations. It looks for perforating, penetrating, and reexamining the situation at hand. Although habits, routines, and organized procedures can be so fruitful in life, we have to admit that

nothing is ever-lasting except change and adopting flexible habits is a must. In fact, as Smith (2007) asserts, when people are called upon to make decisions, two devils set about tempting them. One says: Make up your mind fast and cling to it; the other says: Do not make a mistake, wait until you are certain. A flexible mind turns a deaf ear to these two demons, decides in conformity with a tentative hypothesis, and invites reappraisal and reconstruction of judgment. The flexibility of thought requires creativity. Namely, after all choices were dwelled on in the two earlier phases, i.e. comprehensiveness and penetration, it is time to brainstorm and decide which one(s) to select in the final stage. Therefore, with no stiffness and limitation, one shows flexibility and keeps swinging among the choices and then selects the more reasonable one(s). Putting it differently, when in ambiguous situations one option is formed and deliberated upon, one simultaneously takes notice of other options and reappraises them. It should be added that when no comprehensive look is directed towards different facets of a problem, no space is created for the basics to be penetrated and in consequence, no condition is set to evaluate varying alternatives for making decision. In other words, if there are no indications of comprehensiveness, as the first dimension of philosophic mindedness, the other two dimensions cannot be claimed (according to the very framework) to exist.

Following the above-said points, one's mentality is regarded to be philosophical if it possesses the three afore-mentioned components, otherwise, it is not. This can be clearly depicted in Figure 3.
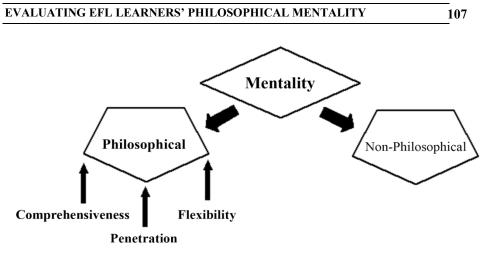
Figure 3. Philosophical vs. non-philosophical mentality

The need for using Smith's framework

It must be noticed that up to the present, no framework with these dimensions, to the researcher's knowledge, is proposed. The rationale behind revisiting this framework can be the role its three unique dimensions may fulfill in the world of today in different political, cultural, religious, and social interactions. Throughout history, we have witnessed the prejudiced, fanatics, and extremists who have regarded their own ideologies superior and those of others inferior. Such dogmatic people (unlike the advocates of the schools of liberalism, individualism, and relativism in the pluralistic and multicultural world in postmodern era) have disregarded individual autonomy, personal freedom and the supremacy of individual right. Following totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and absolutism, they contend that individuals should accept ideas proposed as truth by authorities without resource to reason. They do not give right to the essence and self-realization of individuals. These people's lack of tolerance of their opposing ideas has led to conflict, terror, genocide, racism, ethnic and religious hatred which all have been the concern of the experts in the field of Peace Education (Harris, 2004). Hence, in order to avoid bigotry and narrow-mindedness whatever seems to be needed to be

cultivated is a) a comprehensive mind to consider all ideologies when facing them b) a penetrating look to plunge into every single ideology to discover and reach the roots; and c) a flexible outlook to switch among the ideologies to creatively permit all to exist.

Besides, the framework clearly manifests itself in philosophy in general and in the school of Philosophy for Children (P4C) in particular. In other words, the final aim of P4C and philosophical discussions is to help children (the negotiators) achieve the three dimensions of this framework. In fact, the cornerstone of P4C is Community of Inquiry (CI) which is founded on Vygotsky's (1984) social interaction and Dewey's (1983) democratic learning. In social interaction, meaning is created through a constructivist activity in which the participants by using Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding develop their mental and language capacity. In democratic learning, the participants via Socratic dialog negotiate subjects in a free atmosphere, empathize with others, respect the rights of others and work together on rational problem solving (Schmuck, 1985). As such, CI assists the negotiators in philosophical discussions to learn a) to take different views into account and broaden the scope of their comprehensive outlook b) to penetrate or think deeply about diverse views; and c) to show flexibility in their decision making upon dissimilar views based on mutual respect.

Given the above-mentioned points, an urgent need is felt to utilize and apply the framework. For, as Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) hold, there is nothing that can more effectively prepare students to combat indoctrination and to have bilateral view than philosophy and in this respect, Smith (2007) stresses out nurturing these three dimensions for enriching philosophical thinking.

It is evident that those who are in the habit of thinking philosophically and tend to delve into the depth of phenomena, their answers differ from routine/superficial ones addressed by the ordinary people. In this vein, as Lipman (1993) relates, a means by which philosophical mentality can be

assessed is one's capability in supplying philosophical answers to philosophical questions. Viewed from this angle, given the fact that a philosophic mind begets philosophical answers, the present paper, based on Smith's (2007) framework, intends to evaluate the participants' philosophical mentality through analyzing their responses to philosophical questions and in this way determine the extent they enjoy philosophic mind. Accordingly, the research question appears below:

- Are the responses, provided by the participants, philosophical? If yes, how are the responses identified to be philosophical?

Literature Review

Inspired by the above theoretical framework, the status of philosophical mentality is investigated in different disciplines. In this regard, Talebpour et al. (2008) examined philosophical mindedness among managers, trainers, and supervisors in various sports teams. Benefiting from random-stratified sampling, 250 subjects from all universities in Iran participated in this research. The data collection tool was a philosophical mindset questionnaire developed on the basis of Smith's (2007) framework. The questionnaire consisted of 60 Likert-scale questions related to comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility. The results unveiled that the philosophical mentality of the participants was at a moderate level but managers possessed higher degree of philosophical mindset. In addition, among the three aspects of philosophical mindedness, penetration was approved to have a higher mean score.

To investigate the philosophical mindset of sports teachers and trainers, Nikkhah (2008) carried out a descriptive-correlational study. 75 sports teachers and trainers in Golpayegan, Iran, took part in the research using convenience and random sampling. The findings, based on the above philosophical mindset questionnaire, showed that there was a moderate level of philosophical mentality among the sports teachers and trainers. In addition, the mean score of sports teachers was higher than sports trainers.

Comprehensiveness obtained the highest score among the three dimensions. In addition, education had a substantial role in improving the participants' philosophical mentality.

As a part of their study, Nouri, Fayyaz, and Seif (2013) examined the philosophical mentality of third-grade male and female students of Hamedan junior high schools, Iran. From among 8229 students of junior high schools in 2011-2012, 367 students were chosen via stratified sampling. The data collection instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire based on Smith's (2007) model. The Cronbach's alpha reliability index of the instrument was 0.86. The findings revealed that the philosophical mentality of female students was higher than that of the male students. Furthermore, females outperformed males in all components of philosophic-mindedness (i.e. comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility).

In an attempt to realize the philosophic-mindedness preferences of Iranian physical education and sports science lecturers, Ghorbanalizadeh Ghaziani et al. (2014) randomly distributed 150 questionnaires in state and free universities, Iran. 123 completed questionnaires were returned to the researchers and 98 were ratified. According to the findings, comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility were the participants' preferences in order. It was concluded that there was an unequal status in the dimensions of philosophical mindset among the lecturers and that they needed to enhance the three components evenly to gain a mature philosophical outlook.

Nouri (2016), using Cam's (2006) analysis framework of classification of different types of questions, performed research on the status of Iranian EFL learners' philosophical mentality. Inspired by Lipman (1993), the founder of P4C, who believes that one way of realizing philosophic mind is one's capability in producing philosophical questions, she strived to determine to what extent the questions produced by the participants are philosophical. To select the participants, convenience

sampling was used. A group of 50 B.A. sophomore and junior students (31 female and 19 male) at Shiraz University, Iran attended the study. The participants ranged in age from 19 to 30. To this end, the participants were asked to read two texts and make any kind of question (text-based, beyond the text, etc.) that would come to their mind in essay-type format. The findings showed the number of philosophical questions produced by the participants was very low and that the participants were in the habit of reading the lines, not between the lines.

Khosravian (2018), following Nouri (2016), investigated the same status with the same data collection procedure, among Iranian EFL students in graduate degrees. To this aim, a convenient sample of 51 EFL students including 24 English Literature students and 27 Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) students in M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, both male and female, participated in the study. Content analysis of the types of questions produced by the participants revealed that from among the overall percentage of the questions, only 9% of the questions was philosophical. Although the overall percentage of the philosophical questions produced by the participants was extremely low, English Literature students produced more philosophical questions than those of TEFL. Besides, the students in Ph.D. degree in both majors produced more philosophical questions than the students in M.A. degree.

On the one hand, the above literature indicates that the first four studies are quantitative endeavoring to assess the participants' philosophic-mindedness and preferences in various disciplines, except EFL, through survey-based research. The last two studies, however, are qualitative attempting, through Cam's (2006) classification of different types of questions, to evaluate EFL students' philosophical mentality via their producing philosophical questions. On the other hand, the findings demonstrate that the philosophical mentality among the participants under investigation is moderate to low and that comprehensiveness has a higher mean than penetration and flexibility. Moreover, the participants in higher

positions, like managers and those in higher degrees like Ph.D. students, outperformed the rest.

The present paper, however, by employing Smith's (2007) framework, intends to shed light on the status of philosophical mentality from a new perspective. That is, as the first attempt, it seeks qualitatively to examine EFL participants' philosophic-mindedness through analyzing their answers to philosophical questions.

Method

Design

The design of the study is qualitative, employing content analysis to determine and describe the participants' (non-) philosophical answers to the questions provided.

Participants

The participants were selected based on convenience sampling in one intact class. A group of 40 BA junior EFL students (21 female and 19 male) who were of the same educational background and studied English Literature at Shiraz University, Iran participated in the study. The participants aged 19 to 35. The rationale for selecting junior students was mainly on the grounds that they had already passed two basic courses, i.e. Reading and Writing, and reached enough maturity in terms of both knowledge and age to view issues from different perspectives. Besides, since senior students learn to criticize ideas through courses like Literary Criticism which demand critical thinking and that such courses may have an effect on honing their high-order thinking skills, to keep that effect to a minimum they were decided not to be selected for this research. It is noteworthy that though gender serves no role in philosophy and philosophical communities of inquiry and everyone, regardless of their gender, is equal before philosophy, yet this variable was included in the study.

Materials

The materials were two simple short passages of different types, story, and non-story, with the criterion of having the potentiality of being subjected to philosophical inquiry. Two passages were utilized so that the participants get enough chance to handle further questions and were of differing types to furnish them with ample opportunity to respond questions on two varying themes. Simple short passages were chosen to be easily and fully followed. The philosophical potentiality of the texts was determined depending on the criteria put forward by Cam (1995). As he relates, any text holding the needed capacity to raise or explore any general question, concept, issue or problem beneath its surface that does not look as if it could be settled simply by observation, by calculation, or by reference to established facts, then that text is almost certain to be philosophical. Besides, two specialists in the field of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education certified the philosophical potentiality of the texts. The texts were: 1) *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902) which has been translated into 36 languages and is one of the best-selling books (see Appendix A). It should be noted that though this story is written for children, it can be viewed and analyzed from varying perspectives by people at any age. 2) *Ladan and Laleh Bijani* ("Ladan and Laleh Bijani," n.d.) who were two Iranian Law graduate twin sisters conjoined at the head (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

The participants first were required to read individually the two texts and then, while having a coffee refreshment, write their answers in English, in essay type, to three philosophical questions accompanying each text (see Questions 1-6 at the end of the texts in Appendixes A and B).The questions were known to be philosophical on the basis of such criteria as defining concepts (Qs. 1, 3, 4, 6), making judgment about concepts (Qs. 1, 2, 6), ontology (Q. 5), and epistemology (Q. 3) which were enumerated

earlier by Smith (2007), Hirst and Peters (1970), Cam (1995), and Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980). It is noteworthy that the questions were confirmed to be philosophical by specialists in the field of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education. Furthermore, the first three questions on the first text were adopted from Kennedy's (1992) list of philosophical questions on the tale of Peter Rabbit. The data collection session lasted about three hours.

Data Analysis

Different types of answers, issued by the participants, were subjected to content analysis and their frequency was tallied individually by the present two researchers. The analysis criterion was three characteristics of comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility. The reliability of the coding was examined by inter-coder agreement. To this aim, the two raters' coding was compared and resulted in 92% of agreement. The answers analyzed were then verified by the same specialists in the field of Philosophy and Philosophy of Education to increase the credibility and confirmability of the data. Finally, the results were descriptively reported.

Result and Discussion

The answers provided were discovered to be both philosophical and non-philosophical. With respect to the first part of the research question, their types and frequencies are mirrored in Table 1.

Table 1.

Type and frequency of the answers provided by the participants

Participants	Answers to 6 questions						No of Non-phil. Answers	No of phil. answers	Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6			
P1	-	-	-	-	✓	-	5	1	6
P2	-	-	✓	-	-	-	5	1	6
P3	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	3	3	6
P4	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	4	2	6

Participants	Answers to 6 questions						No of Non-phil. Answers	No of phil. answers	Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6			
P5	✓	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	6
P6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P7	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	4	2	6
P8	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	4	2	6
P9	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	4	2	6
P10	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	4	2	6
P11	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P12	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	4	2	6
P13	-	-	-	-	-	✓	5	1	6
P14	-	-	-	✓	-	-	5	1	6
P15	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	2	4	6
P16	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	3	3	6
P17	✓	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	6
P18	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	4	2	6
P19	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P20	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	2	4	6
P21	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	4	2	6
P22	-	-	-	-	-	✓	5	1	6
P23	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	2	4	6
P24	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	4	2	6
P25	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	4	2	6
P26	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P27	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P28	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	4	2	6
P29	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	3	3	6
P30	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	4	2	6
P31	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	4	2	6
P32	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	0	6
P33	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	4	2	6
P34	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	1	5	6
P35	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	2	4	6
P36	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	3	3	6
P37	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	2	4	6
P38	-	-	-	✓	-	-	5	1	6
P39	-	-	✓	-	-	-	5	1	6
P40	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	4	2	6
Total							**164**	**76**	**240**

- = non-philosophical answers

✓ = philosophical answers

As it is exhibited, the participants provided the answers of which the minority (76 out of 240) are philosophical and the majority (164 out of 240) are non-philosophical. Simply put, 32% of the responses are philosophical, whereas 68% are non-philosophical which can be portrayed more vividly in Figure 4:
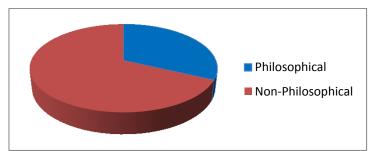

*Figure 4.*Comparing responses in terms of type and percent

Although the present qualitative research sought to identify the status of the participants' philosophical mentality through analyzing their responses and the two qualitative studies carried out by Nouri (2016) and Kosravian (2018) attempted to follow the same goal through analyzing the participants' questions, the results can be in line with each other. That is, the EFL students showed poor performance by providing and raising a low number of philosophical responses and questions, respectively. Besides, the findings of the current research are approximately in accordance with those of Talebpour et al. (2008) and Nikkhah (2008) who came up with a moderate-to-low level of philosophic-mindedness among their participants.

Addressing the second part of the research question, the answers were identified to be (non-) philosophical based on three characteristics of comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility. The following philosophical answers connote that the participants have spared a profound thought on the texts and questions to achieve a comprehensive,

penetrating, and flexible outlook. In what follows, a brief sample of outlined answers (those related to the first questions of each text, i.e. questions 1 and 4, and those displaying comprehensiveness) along with their corresponding analyses are dealt with.

Answer to Q.1. I don't see the world in black and white. People do their best to live their lives and try to protect their properties. I would call some characters gray. Mr. McGregor is only trying to protect the product he has endeavored to grow and if the rabbit eats his product then he and his family will go hungry. I should also say that killing the rabbit is not the best sort of solution, but if we put ourselves in his shoes, we may understand that he is worried that if he doesn't kill the rabbit, it will come back even with its friends and steal all his product. (Participant 34)

Answer to Q.1. He is a complex person having both elements of good and bad (like most humans). He cannot be considered bad because all people have the right to protect their lives and properties. This right is widely exercised against human beings let alone a rabbit. In spite of this, he cannot be considered a good person either. He showed such hate and anger towards a small rabbit which only took so small from his garden that he wanted to kill it. (Participant 37)

Answer to Q.1. I believe answering 'good' or 'bad' to this question would be like taking either side of an extreme. So to avoid binary thinking, it seems that what Mr. McGregor did or was about to do was justifiable as long as he didn't kill Peter. (Participant 35)

The analysis of the above responses indicates that the respondents first possess comprehensiveness—the most obvious characteristic of a philosophic mind. That is, when they were questioned if McGregor was good or bad they did not immediately jump into conclusion and see him as black and white (either/or). Rather, the first thing pictured in their mind was a vast and extensive grasp of McGregor's character as both good and bad NOT either good or bad. They preferred to avoid bias and see

McGregor from both McGregor and Peter's view. According to them, he was good because he had right to take care of his products against an intruder (the rabbit) and was bad for being so relentless, stony-hearted, and horrifying towards a small rabbit that he wanted to terminate its life. Second, after viewing McGregor from different perspectives, they started pondering and penetrating both sides of good and bad. That is to say, they thought deeply about different aspects of the two terms and their relativity and raised various reasons for his being good and bad (for word limit I ignore citing the reasons). Third, in the final stage which is decision making, swinging between good and bad, they, because of their preceding comprehensive and penetrating outlook, away from rigidity, showed flexibility and drew the inference that he could be both good (as a protector or defender) and bad (as a merciless or even a killer). To put it simply, when one side was sketched in their mind, they did not leave the other side unnoticed but let it be reappraised and reconstructed.

On the contrary, the following non-philosophical responses are shallow, immediate, and particular depicting that the majority of respondents were unfairly prejudiced, deemed McGregor too narrowly and failed to view him from varying standpoints.

Answer to Q.1. He is bad. He didn't have the right to kill anyone. He could punish the rabbit but not kill it. It is not necessary to kill someone just to protect your garden. (Participant 21)

Answer to Q.1. Of course, McGregor was bad. It is not a good and reasonable excuse to kill someone in order to save yourself. In every situation, we need to use our logic and emotion to reach a pleasant outcome. (Participant 26)

Answer to Q.1. I think he is good. He is just protecting his garden against natural problems. He may have a family and he should feed them. (Participant 10)

Answer to Q.1. In my opinion, McGregor was a good man. It was his right to protect his garden and his properties. He didn't want to kill Peter, he just wanted to scare him. (Participant 38)

The above responses unveil that the participants' vision towards McGregor is none but unilateral. They appear to be rigid in their perceptions and have the form of can-know-for-sure. Those who are undoubtedly certain that McGregor has made a big mistake and deserves to be called bad, have not paid considerable attention to the point that he has the right to keep his property safe. It seems that they have sighted the story solely from the rabbit's point of view. It is not unusual for us to kill an animal to avoid its (further) damages. Besides, if the rabbit is not killed, it may return to his garden and take other animals too. Those who have one-sidedly regarded McGregor to be good, have failed to think of his severe violence and that he, though was right to safeguard his land, treated a small rabbit in a very harsh and scary way. He ran after to put an end to its life no matter how and with what instrument. It was also probable that he just wanted to eat it later as Peter's father was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor earlier. Hence, they have made instantaneous and conspicuous answers which are superficial and have no sizeable depth. In fact, their certainty and dogmatism have prevented them to activate their philosophical mentality. On this account, it can be asserted that no or little effort has been exerted by these participants to explore beyond the limits. This being so, in can be concluded that the above responses lack comprehensiveness and when no comprehensive look is launched at the issue, no space is left for the roots to be dug and penetrated and in consequence no condition is set for flexibility to reappraise varying alternatives for making decision. In other words, when comprehensiveness does not exist, the other two features do not exist either.

With respect to question 4, the following philosophical responses on the definition of 'fate' imply that the respondents have attempted not to give cursory and trivial answers but to take into account at least two facets

of the issue, probe into that, and then evaluate its bilateral sides so as to come up with the right impression.

Answer to Q.4. Fate, as far as I know, is the outline of one's individual life. I think that everyone can have his very own interpretation of fate. To me it exists, but in my own way! It should not result in any sort of reluctance of doing works and activities. If it is to result in the fatalism in the form of determinism I strongly oppose it. (Participant 20)

Answer to Q.4. I believe that people have a certain and specific destiny in their lives. God has determined the fate of all the creatures in the world. In addition to this determined fate, we have free will. We can choose which path to go. (Participant 23)

Answer to Q.4. Fate is a combination of our choices in life and what has been predetermined by supernatural forces. To some extent fate exists. There are some things that are out of our control and some things that are under our control. The combination of both makes your fate. (Participant 15)

To shed light upon the reasons behind the above responses, first it would be fruitful to notice how 'fate' is defined. Fate is the circumstances that befall a person (Merriam-Webster, 2016) or the development of events outside a person's control regarded as predetermined (Oxford, 2016). Going to the extreme, some hold that it controls all events so that you cannot change or control the way things will happen (Cambridge, 2008). Some, however, maintain that in addition to the factors such as birth, luck, ancestors, land, sex, race, class, etc. settled in advance; other factors like one's decision, action, choice, performance, effort, etc. are influential in one's life as well. In other words, they remark that success or failure are in one's hands. That is, they are achieved or learned rather than merely endowed with or fallen upon. Accordingly, the aforementioned responses are all comprehensive. Because when asked what fate is, the whole scope of the concept such as God, determinism, free will, supernatural forces, choice, extrinsic and intrinsic markers

occurred the respondents' minds. Putting it differently, each one away from superficiality and shallowness has viewed the concept from two strands: something both under and out of control. Second, each stance is penetrated and cogitated and then the relevant rationales are put forward (for word limit I skip them). Third, upon decision making they have shown flexibility in a way not to bias towards or suffice to only one impression of the issue at hand. They have, thus, esteemed life neither as absolute determinism nor total freedom but a mix of two.

Unlike the above responses, the following ones are non-philosophical:

Answer to Q.4. Fate is exactly God's will. He is our Creator so you can't say please I want this or that. This is He who decides and all uncontrollable events are in line with God's will. (Participant 31)

Answer to Q.4. Whatever God wants will happen whether we like it or not. In my opinion, fate is what God wants. (Participant 4)

Answer to Q.4. I think everything is related to your mind and the power of your mind can determine your destiny and your fate. (Participant 9)

Answer to Q.4. I think fate is the result of our actions and decisions. (Participant 5)

From the answers, it is deduced that the participants are not granting multiple aspects of the term. They seem to be stiff and dogmatic and do not manifest the awareness of possible options and alternatives simultaneously embedded within the concept. They are restricted in their outlooks and have cast a cursory look upon the concept. Having either religious or non-religious (cause/effect) belief, they have not been able to make a link between the two. To them, it seems that the only factor they are referring to constitutes 'fate'. In fact, a single and one-sided narrow definition does not permit another scenario to be outlined in their minds. To put it another way, those who ascribe life to only God, have failed to see a wide gamut of factors like mind, decision, option, attempt, etc. as

influential. And those who indicate that 'fate' is the result of action and decision, have restricted the definition to one single element neglecting other uncontrollable and unpredictable factors such as parents, genetics, environment, inheritance, etc. that happen before lifetime and impact the life. Therefore, the responses are devoid of comprehensiveness. As such, no space is automatically created for the respondents to doubt, penetrate the roots to find fundamental relations in depths and in turn no room is allowed for flexibility to assess and select a choice from available options.

Conclusion

The research findings, firstly, imply that the majority of participants are in the habit of shallow and superficial thinking. They seem unable to go beyond the narrow scope of their world view and afford themselves a profound insight into the issues they encounter. They also signified the rigidity and stiffness of their minds. To sum, they appear to lack the salient characteristics of philosophic-mindedness, i.e. comprehensiveness, penetration, and flexibility. The minority, on the other hand, away from bias, avoid having a shallow/unilateral vision and reappraise varying strands of subjects upon settling on the final decision. Secondly, the dimensions of philosophic-mindedness recommended by Smith (2007), can be utilized as an apparatus to realize a person with (non-) philosophical mentality. Each dimension is thoroughly and transparently elaborated and makes it easy to follow and apply the framework in needed circumstances. Thirdly, since the three dimensions are interwoven and comprehensiveness stands first among the three, its absence will lead to the absence of the other two. For upon facing an issue, if different alternatives (comprehensiveness) are not structured in mind right from scratch, no opportunity is created for the respondents to delve into them (penetration) and in turn, no guarantee is ensured for the most appropriate choice to be reappraised and selected (flexibility) out of them. Therefore, lack of comprehensiveness alone can simply assure lack of philosophic mind.

Implication of the Study

Respecting the crucial role philosophical thinking can occupy in enhancing the cultivation of mind, it seems urgent that prior to nurturing this type of thinking its status be investigated within individuals in various educational fields. Hence, the findings of the present research may benefit the policy makers to realize the status quo of beyond-routine thinking, in general, and the Iranian EFL learners' philosophical mentality, in particular. Moreover, "since philosophy is characteristically a question-raising discipline" (Lipman, 1993, p. 677), one way one's philosophic-mindedness can be investigated is to see if s/he is capable of providing philosophical answers to philosophical questions. As such, the technique of asking philosophical questions and analyzing (non-) philosophical answers can be fruitful in determining one's philosophical mind. Furthermore, the findings can make curriculum planners, material developers, and test makers aware of the necessity of finding ways to improve students' reflective thinking power. And finally, the framework can be implemented to assess if educationalists themselves possess comprehensive, penetrating, and flexible look when they face challenging situations calling for reasonable thinking and judgment.

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Appendix A
The summary of the tale of Peter rabbit

There were four little Rabbits and their names were: Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter. They lived with their mother. Mrs. Rabbit one morning said: "You can go into the fields but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden: your father had an accident there. He was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor."

Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail, who were good little kids, went to gather blackberries, But Peter who was very naughty, ran away to Mr. McGregor's garden. He ate some fruits and then he went to eat some vegetables. On his way, he met Mr. McGregor. Mr. McGregor was planting cabbages but he jumped up and ran after Peter, waving a rake and calling out, "Stop thief!" Peter was most dreadfully frightened and started crying; he rushed all over the garden, for he had forgotten the way back to the gate. Mr. McGregor was after him in no time and tried to put his foot upon Peter, who jumped out of a window. The window was too small for Mr. McGregor, and he was tired of running after Peter. He went back to his work. Peter sat down to rest; he was out of breath and trembling with fright but he did not know which way to go.

An old mouse was carrying peas to her family in the wood. Peter asked her way to the gate, but she had such a large pea in her mouth that she could not answer. She only shook her head at him.

He went back towards storehouse. The first thing he saw was Mr. McGregor reaping onions. His back was turned towards Peter, and beyond him was the gate! He started running as fast as he could go, along a straight walk behind some vegetables. Mr. McGregor caught sight of him at the corner, but Peter did not care. He slipped underneath the gate, and was safe at last in the wood outside the garden. He never stopped running or looked behind him till he got home to the big tree.

He was so tired that he fell down on the floor and shut his eyes. His mother was busy cooking; she wondered what he had done with his

clothes. His mother put him to bed, and made some tea and gave a dose of it to Peter! But Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail had bread and milk and blackberries for dinner.

Answer the following questions.

1. Is McGregor good or bad? Why?

2. Can something be good and bad at the same time?

3. How do you know when something is a theft? Can you call an animal a thief?

Appendix B
Ladan and Laleh Bijani

Ladan and Laleh Bijani (January 17, 1974 – July 8, 2003) were Iranian law graduates. They were conjoined twin sisters, joined at the head, who died after their complicated surgical separation. They were born in Shiraz, a city in southwest Iran. The Bijani sisters were lost in a hospital. The Bijanis' parents did not find them until several years later in Karaj, where Dr. Alireza Safaianhad adopted them. Even though their father won the possession against Safaian, the sisters chose to spend their childhood with Safaian.

They studied law for four years at Tehran University. They faced some difficulties because of their conjoined nature. Since they had to study together, they needed to choose a common working path. Ladan wanted to be a lawyer, while Laleh wished to become a journalist; in the end, they agreed on Ladan's choice. Most other personal decisions also had to meet each other's approval. For these and other reasons, they had wanted to be separated since they were children. Laleh hoped that she could then move to Tehran, the capital city of Iran, to study journalism, while her sister continued with graduate studies in law and then moved to Shiraz. In addition, the sisters had different hobbies. While Laleh liked to play

computer games, Ladan preferred computer programming. Ladan also described her sister as more introverted and herself quite talkative.

In 1996, they traveled to Germany, trying to get doctors there to separate them; the German doctors however rejected to operate, saying that the risk of separation surgery would be too high for both of them. In November 2002, the Bijani sisters traveled to Singapore. Even though they were warned by the doctors that the surgery to separate them would still be very risky, the sisters were very determined.

After seven months in the Southeast Asian country, they went to the operating table under the care of a large team of international specialists, composed of 28 surgeons and more than 100 support staff. The attempt to separate the twins turned out to be difficult, because their brains not only shared a major vein but had fused together. The separation was achieved on July 8, 2003, but it was announced then that the twins were in critical condition, both having lost a large volume of blood due to complications of the operation.

The separation stage of the surgery completed at 13: 30. Ladan died at around 14:30 and her sister Laleh died a short time afterwards at 16:00. The sisters were buried in separate tombs, side by side in Lohrasb. The sisters willed their property to blind and orphaned children.

Answer the following questions.

Q. Is the sisters' misfortune tied with their fate or other factors? (Note: This question was only raised as an introduction to prepare the respondents to answer question 4. So, it was neither analyzed nor reported).

4. What is fate?

5. Does fate really exist?

6. Which one is more important: "to be" or "not to be"?