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## **Status of English as a Foreign Language Teachers from their Perspectives According to the Professional Competency Model**

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### **Abstract**

This mixed-method study investigated the various competencies English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers require by examining a model. To fulfill the study objectives, the grounded theory was adopted in the qualitative phase to explore EFL key informants' articulations and concerns about the issue; therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 Iranian EFL teachers recruited by purposeful sampling. In the quantitative phase, a researcher-made 103 item questionnaire was extracted based on the interview codes. After being piloted, it was administered to 382 Iranian EFL teachers to validate the results obtained in the qualitative phase and investigate Iranian EFL teachers' professional competency and their preferences about its dimensions. Three dimensions were discovered in the qualitative phase, which was not favourable among EFL teachers in the quantitative phase. Meanwhile, factor analysis about the EFL teachers' dimensions yielded three factors according to priority: a) attitudinal competency, b) management competency, and c) language competency. The researchers concluded that attitudinal competency is regarded as the most highly valued of the three dimensions by Iranian EFL teachers. Language competency is regarded as the least priority, which justifies the fact that despite showing eagerness and enthusiasm to teach, these teachers do not possess enough linguistic competency and do not tend to develop it. Accordingly, the researchers suggested some practices for

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developing EFL teachers' professional competency, emphasizing that all dimensions are essential and EFL teachers should have a balanced combination of them.

**Keywords:** Attitudinal competency; EFL teachers; Language competency; Management competency; Professional competency

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## INTRODUCTION

In education systems, the quality of education as the primary purpose is progressively under detailed judgment by shifting attention to the achievements of learners- what they learn and how well they learn it (Kulshrestha & Pandey, 2013). Many studies conducted to understand how this purpose is achieved. De Grauwe and Varghese (2000) argued that textbooks are the critical factors for developing the quality of education. However, in some of the literature, teacher competence is singled out as the main reason. For example, Crick (2008) argues that to achieve success in their teaching and lead the learners to efficient acquisition, English teachers should be aware enough and equipped with a range of domains of competencies (Crick, 2008). She describes "competence" as a complex combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that resulted in effective achievement in a specific domain.

Some studies are suggesting a notable degree of overlap of needed competencies among all teachers. However, there are still some critical differences between competent and qualified English language instructors and teachers of other disciplines. This may stem from the fact that the learners in a foreign language setting need both linguistic and knowledge scaffolding. The complicated concepts of

content knowledge become clarified through the use of the foreign language. In other words, EFL teachers get the support of professional knowledge to associate the demands of language to the content of teaching successfully (Neeta & Klu, 2013). Another issue is that in the EFL setting, the learners do not directly contact the target and target language and culture. Hence, EFL teachers, in such a context, are mainly the only source of a foreign language and culture, and this makes their role more significant than teachers in other fields (Drakulić, 2013).

Nowadays, English is regarded as an international language. In Iran, however, it is predominantly known as a foreign language. The students commonly learn English along with other subjects such as physics and chemistry, and it is no longer extensively applied in education as a language of instruction, and business or government activities. So, to present an adequate input for learners' English development, EFL teachers have more obligation to support them with various kinds of English exposure.

The present mixed study attempts to investigate three central dimensions of professional competencies required for EFL teachers along with their underlying components through presenting a model and examining it on Iranian EFL teachers to study their status and priority for the dimensions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Four key knowledge-based competencies are recognized in the teacher Education Curriculum Development Document (TECDD) (2012), as common for the teachers in all fields: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and general (support) knowledge.

However, in the field of English teacher competency, content knowledge is the knowledge of subject matter and is regarded as what EFL teachers teach. Differently, regardless of the subject matter, pedagogical knowledge refers to the knowledge and skills about generic teaching practices, attitudes, and strategies like creating motivations among learners, correct decision making, and managing the classroom. Also, how of representing the subject matter in different ways that lead to learners' acquisition is categorized as pedagogical content knowledge. And finally, general knowledge is best described as various knowledge and skills which contribute to our teaching. Unlike pedagogical knowledge and general knowledge which are common in all majors, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are specific to each discipline.

Al-Seghayer (2017) in his review report, identified some key competencies which guarantee EFL teachers' professional success as cognitive knowledge, knowledge, and skills of language teaching, disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, technological pedagogical knowledge, English proficiency, and personal competencies and emphasized that a professional competent teacher should acquire enough amount of all the mentioned

competencies.

In the same vein, Drakulić (2013) categorized foreign language teacher competencies as; communicative language competency; pedagogical/psychological competency; interpersonal/ intrapersonal competency; and intercultural competency respectively.

Zamani and Ahangari (2016) in their paper reported an investigation about the required competencies by English language teachers from by Iranian English language learners' point of view. After analyzing the data statistically, the results indicated that the learners prefer their English teachers to have the ability to make proper relationships with learners, to strengthen students' self- confidence, and to establish discipline in their class atmosphere as the most important qualities.

Similarly, to identify the teachers' competencies from the learners' perspectives, Thakur and Shekhawat (2014) in their descriptive research study, after conducting a survey and giving questionnaires to 100 learners, concluded that most of the learners are in favor of developing their instructional, personal, social and pedagogical competencies respectively for qualified teachers.

## **METHODS**

### **Participants**

### **Qualitative phase**

The population in the qualitative phase of the study consisted of 21 EFL teachers determined by adopting the saturation principle.

The purpose of conducting key informant interviews according to UCLA research center (1994) is that these groups of experts, because of their particular knowledge and understanding are the best source of insight into the nature of the phenomenon in question (Brown, 1995). They can also have the capacity to give guidance and suggestions for solutions. The participants included 8 females and 13 males (11 Ph.D. holders; 4 Ph.D. candidates, and 5 M.A. holders in the fields of teaching English, translation, linguistics, and literature) who were invited to participate in this study. The invitation spread and snowballed. As a result, 21 participants came from different language educational centers and universities in Tehran and Karaj.

### **Quantitative phase**

Quantitative phase of this study includes some EFL teachers in high school and English language centers in Iran. Based on the convenience sampling technique, a total number of 382 EFL teachers teaching in high school and English language institutes from eight cities were recruited as participants. The participants were both genders with different university degrees (Ph.D. holders, Ph.D. candidates, M.A. holders, M.A. candidates, and B.A. holders) in the fields of English teaching, literature, linguistics, and translation). Participants of the study, also had 8 to 30 years' experience in language related activities. Based on geographical distribution, the country was then divided into five districts: north, south, east, west, and center. Then, in each district, two cities; and, in each city eight

high schools and three English language centers were chosen randomly, and finally, EFL teachers were recruited.

### **Instruments**

#### **Qualitative phase**

Ten main questions were constructed according to the purpose of the study and in line with G-theory coding paradigm (Appendix A). Then, six academics in ELT departments at two universities were required to give their opinion and check the feasibility of the data collection instrument. After receiving suggestions for some revisions, the researchers started the interview. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. The interviewees were required to articulate, reflect on, and describe their issues about their phenomena under question.

Validity- "Respondent validation" or "member checking" was adopted to ensure the generalizability of findings (Dörnyei, 2007).

Reliability- To ensure reliability, the researchers used the "in-subject agreement method" and "test-retest reliability".

#### **Quantitative phase**

After confirming strong agreements between the items extracted from the literature and the themes discovered from the interviews, the researchers developed a 103-item questionnaire (Appendix B) with a five Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

**Validity-** To determine the validity of the questionnaire, face, content, and construct validity were estimated.

**Reliability-** The reliability was estimated through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The coefficients of all variables were 0.70.

**Pilot study:** The questionnaire was piloted with 30 EFL high school and English language institute teachers in Karaj and Tehran who were chosen based on their similarity to the target sample. The Cronbach's reliability of the questionnaire in the pilot study was 0.86.

### **Procedure**

To complete the data from the literature review, semi-structured interviews with EFL expert teachers were conducted to identify the dimensions of EFL professional competency. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. After analyzing, identifying, and categorizing the codes and themes, the researchers presented their model based on the grounded theory. In the second phase, based on the themes that emerged from the interviews, the researchers developed a 103-item questionnaire with a five Likert scale. After ensuring the validity and reliability, the questionnaire was piloted. Next, 382 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among EFL teachers teaching in high schools and the teachers in English language institutes in eight cities of Iran- Tehran, Arak, Rasht, Sari, Mashhad, Neyshaboor, Kermanshah, and Hamedan. Finally, the degree of the fitness of the model (the strength of the relationships between the variables and their causal relationships) was

determined through exploratory factor analysis and SEM analysis techniques utilizing SPSS and LISREL, and the status of the dimensions, effective factors, and consequences of professional competency and their priority among Iranian EFL teachers were investigated.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Qualitative phase**

A grounded theory approach was adopted in this study. Three types of coding were used to analyze the data obtained from the interviews as well as the theoretical foundations: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The analysis of interviews was conducted by adopting MAXQDA.

#### **Quantitative phase**

In the quantitative phase, tests such as Pearson correlation and one-sample t-test were used to answer the research questions using SPSS-v21, Smart PLS-v2, and Lisrel-v8 software.

Also, the researchers adopted confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis, and the analysis of structural equation modeling (SEM) to validate the fit of the model using such indices as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (SRMR).

### **RESULTS**

#### **Components of EFL teachers' professional competency**

The analysis results showed that out of the 103

available indicators, 31 main components could be identified. Based on the literature and the

themes that emerged during interviews, the dimensions are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
*Components identified after adopting existing literature and theories*

Concept	Dimensions	Component	No. of indicators
Professional competence	Cognitive/language skills competence	Self-cognition/language knowledge	5
		Knowledge of the learner	4
		Knowledge of the learning process	5
	Attitudinal-behavioral competence	competence-based on values and ethics	3
		Competence-based on attitudes	3
		Competence-based on interests	3
	Managerial competence	Competence related to classroom	4
		Competence related to the educational atmosphere	4
		Performance competence/development competence	4
	Effective Factors	Individual characteristics	Responsibility
Self -efficacy			3
Curriculum		Engagement	3
		planning	4
		Accomplishment	3
		Evaluation	3
Management		Support	3
		Monitoring	3
		Lawfulness	3
Information technology		Being up-to-date	3
		Being suitable	3
		Ease of implementation	3
		Policymaking	3
Community		Family	3
		Media	Knowledge sharing
Consequences		Job engagement	Social media
	Interaction		3
	Vigor and satisfaction		3
	Growth and development	Dedication	3
		Absorption	3
		Personal growth/development	3
		Educational growth/Development	3

Based on the above-identified factors, the final conceptual model of the research is as follows:



*Figure 1. Professional competency model obtained from the qualitative phase*

**Question One-** How is the status of identified consequences of promoting professional

dimensions, effective factors, and competency among EFL teachers?



**Table 2**  
**One-sample t-test to check the current status**

Variable	Dimension	Test value = 3				
		t-value	Sig.	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					lower	upper
Professional competence	Cognitive-language/skills competence	8.48	0.000	0.33	0.25	0.41
	Attitudinal-behavioral competence	5.39	0.000	0.23	0.15	0.32
	Management competence	5.70	0.000	0.22	0.15	0.30
Effective Factors	Individual characteristics	5.29	0.000	0.20	0.13	0.28
	Curriculum	7.14	0.000	0.29	0.21	0.37
	Management	6.48	0.000	0.26	0.18	0.34
	Information technology	7.42	0.000	0.31	0.23	0.39
	Community	2.49	0.013	0.10	0.02	0.18
	Media	3.46	0.001	0.14	0.06	0.21
Consequences	Job engagement	3.56	0.000	0.15	0.07	0.23
	Development & growth	0.06	0.953	0.00	-0.09	0.09

To know the status of the identified consequences of promoting professional section, considering that the scale is 5 degrees,

the researchers considered the numerical value to be 3 for comparison with the t-statistic.



The following is the hypothesis of the t-test for the question.

$$H_0: \mu = 3$$

$$H_1: \mu \neq 3$$

The results of the t-test are given in Table 2 above.

The results showed that the level of significance in all dimensions except "development and growth" in "consequences" is less than 0.05 (Table 2); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected with 95% confidence for these dimensions, and the research hypothesis is confirmed.

However, for the dimension "development and growth", considering that its significance level is more significant than 0.05 and its mean difference is zero, it is concluded that its mean is

equal to the theoretical mean; so, the status of this component is not good at all.

**Question Two-** How are the causal relationships between identified dimensions, effective factors, and consequences of promoting professional competency among EFL teachers?

**Question Three-** How is the prioritizing of identified dimensions, effective factors, and consequences of promoting professional competency, among EFL teachers?

To answer the above questions, confirmatory factor analysis was used. Also, before performing the factor analysis, considering that the scale was a distance measurement and also the data distribution was normal, appropriate parametric tests (Pearson correlation) were adopted, the results of which are given in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation between factors*

		Professional competence	
Effective factors	Individual characteristics	Correlation	0.832
		Sig.	0.000
	Curriculum	Correlation	0.858
		Sig.	0.000
	Management	Correlation	0.806
		Sig.	0.000
	Information technology	Correlation	0.776
Sig.		0.000	
Community	Correlation	0.702	
		Sig.	0.000
	Media	Correlation	0.827
		Sig.	0.000
Consequences	Job engagement	Correlation	0.815
		Sig.	0.000
	Maturity and development	Correlation	0.752
		Sig.	0.000

The above table indicates that there is a direct relationship between the variables: effecting factors, dimensions of professional competency, and the consequences at 0.01 level. The intensity of the relationships among the variables is also evident. Also, the model of confirmatory structural equations was adopted.

After drawing the structure, adding the model constraints, and selecting the maximum likelihood method, the implemented model and the fitting path diagram were obtained. All the values of the model parameters are shown along with the loading factors and path coefficients in Figures 2 and 3.

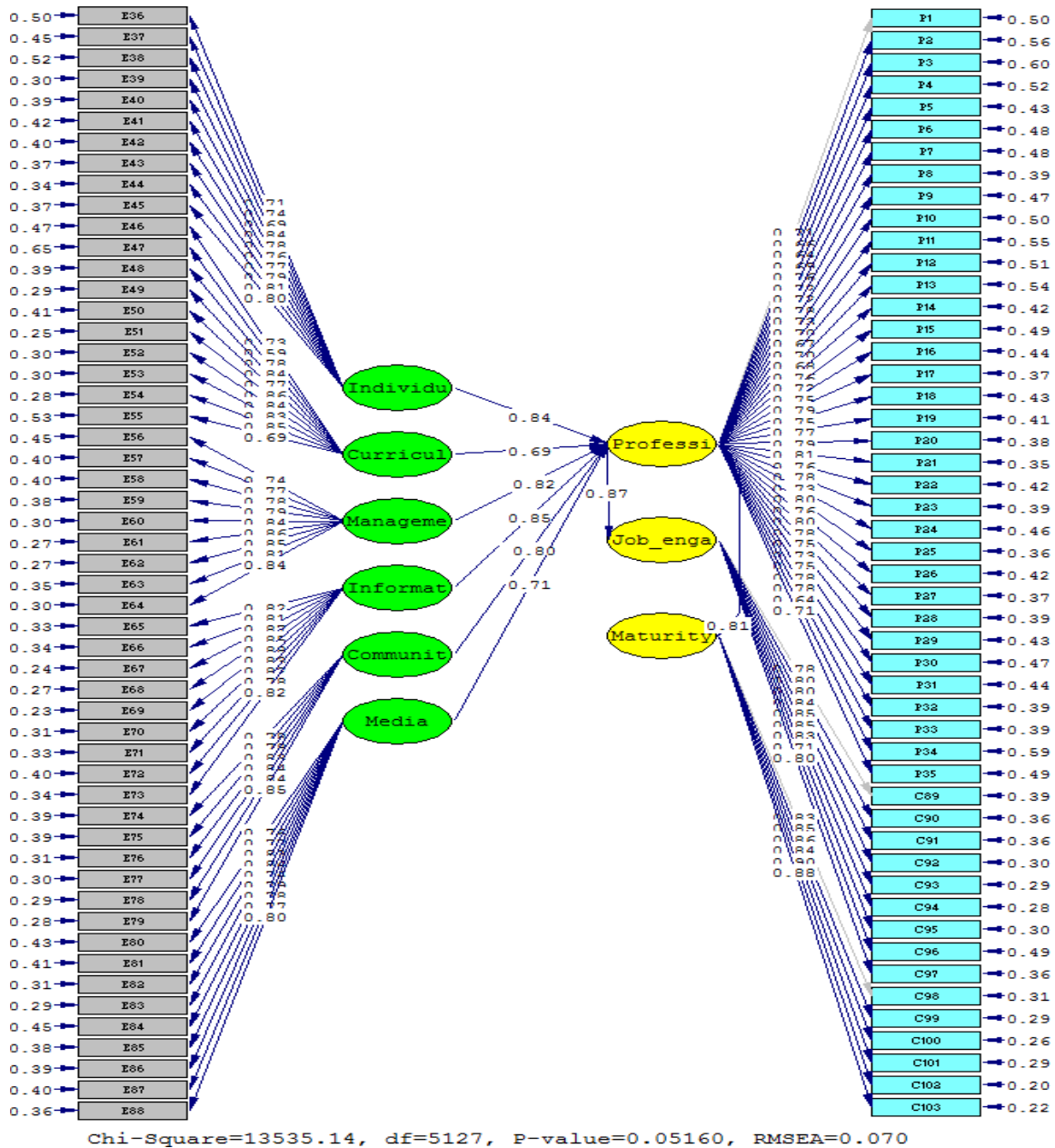


Figure 2. Structural model of research in the form of standard coefficients



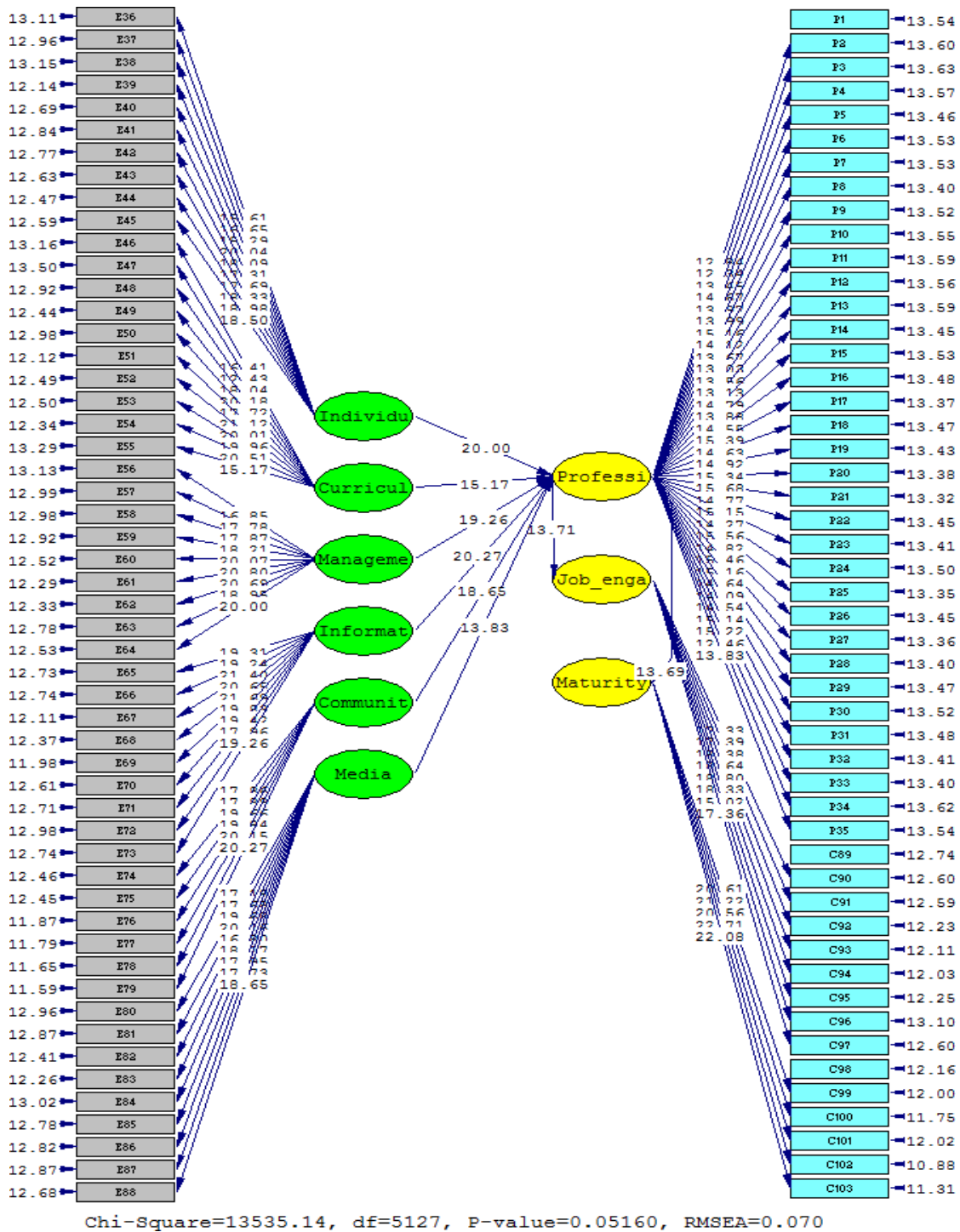


Figure 3. Structural model of research in the significant state of coefficients

According to the values of standard coefficients and significance coefficients of t obtained in the above figures (values of t above 2.58), it can be inferred that there is a direct

relationship between the factors. As the Chi-square and RMSEA indices show, all the pattern fit indices are in good status. The model outputs are examined in the table below.

**Table 4**  
*Indices of model path analysis*

Index	Fit indices	
	Value	Limit
Chi-square/df	2.64	less than 3
RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)	0.070	less than 0.1
CFI (Confirmatory Fit Index)	0.98	greater than 0.9
NFI (Normed Fit Index)	0.97	greater than 0.9
GFI (Goodness of fit)	0.94	greater than 0.9
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of fit)	0.92	greater than 0.9

Also, in Table 5 the path coefficients are given along with significant values. As is

evident, all paths are accepted. The factors are ranked by their path coefficients, too.

**Table 5**  
*Path coefficients, significant values, and their status as well as the rank of each factor*

Path	Path coefficient	t-value	Status	Rank
Individual ... >>>	0.84	20.00	confirmed	2
Curriculum >>>	0.69	15.17	confirmed	6
Management >>>	0.82	19.26	confirmed	3
Information ... >>>	0.85	20.27	confirmed	1
Community >>>	0.80	18.65	confirmed	4
Media >>>	0.71	13.83	confirmed	5
Professional >>>	0.87	13.71	confirmed	1
competence >>>	0.81	13.69	confirmed	2

The final question about the priority of variables of dimensions of EFL professional competency can be answered with the help of factor analysis and path coefficients (Table 5).

**Table 6**  
*Confirmed items of EFL professional competency*

Item	Item Label	Factor Load	t-value	Status	Rank	C. Name	Factor Load Mean	Rank
Question 1	P1	0.71	16.04	confirmed	25	Cognitive/ language-skills competence	0.71	3
Question 2	P2	0.67	14.65	confirmed	33			
Question 3	P3	0.64	3.85	confirmed	34			
Question 4	P4	0.70	15.57	confirmed	29			
Question 5	P5	0.76	17.48	confirmed	11			
Question 6	P6	0.72	16.26	confirmed	23			
Question 7	P7	0.73	16.37	confirmed	20			
Question 8	P8	0.78	18.21	confirmed	6			
Question 9	P9	0.73	16.48	confirmed	19			
Question 10	P10	0.70	15.74	confirmed	27			
Question 11	P11	0.68	14.88	confirmed	32			



Question 12	P12	0.70	15.65	confirmed	28			
Question 13	P13	0.68	15.10	confirmed	31			
Question 14	P14	0.76	17.35	confirmed	15			
Question 15	P15	0.72	16.09	confirmed	24	Attitudinal-behavioral competence	0.77	1
Question 16	P16	0.75	17.00	confirmed	17			
Question 17	P17	0.79	18.40	confirmed	5			
Question 18	P18	0.76	17.40	confirmed	14			
Question 19	P19	0.77	17.76	confirmed	9			
Question 20	P20	0.80	18.70	confirmed	2			
Question 21	P21	0.81	19.32	confirmed	1			
Question 22	P22	0.76	17.59	confirmed	10			
Question 23	P23	0.78	18.19	confirmed	7			
Question 24	P24	0.74	16.70	confirmed	18			
Question 25	P25	0.70	18.65	confirmed	26			
Question 26	P26	0.76	17.44	confirmed	12			
Question 27	P27	0.80	18.70	confirmed	3			
Question 28	P28	0.72	18.19	confirmed	22			
Question 29	P29	0.76	17.44	confirmed	13			
Question 30	P30	0.73	16.0	confirmed	21			
Question 31	P31	0.76	17.31	confirmed	16			
Question 32	P32	0.78	18.16	confirmed	8			
Question 33	P33	0.79	18.57	confirmed	4			
Question 34	P34	0.63	13.5	confirmed	35			
Question 35	P35	0.70	15.56	confirmed	30			

As shown in Table 6 above, all the items have an at-statistic greater than 1.96. Therefore, none of the items were removed from the model. Another point in table 6 is that "attitudinal/behavioral competence" (with factor load mean 0.77) was regarded as the highest valued dimension among the other dimensions; "management competency" (with factor load means 0.74) and "cognitive/language skills competency" (with factor load means 0.71), respectively.

Also, Table 5 above shows that the pattern fitting indices are in good status. In the table, the path coefficients are given along with significant values, and all the paths are accepted. Meanwhile, the factors are ranked by their path coefficients. Based on the path coefficients, among the factors that affect EFL professional competency, "information technology" has the most effect (with path coefficient 0.85) and "curriculum" the least effect (with path coefficient 0.69). Also, "job engagement" is shown to be the more attained consequence (with path coefficient 0.87) in comparison to "development and growth" (with path coefficient 0.81) of EFL professional competency.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Dimensions and components of professional competency**

According to Table 1, the results of the semi-structured interview revealed three main dimensions of professional competency: (a) cognitive/language skills competence; (b) attitudinal/behavioral competence, and (c)

management competence. "Cognitive/ language skills competence" is the explicit awareness of EFL teachers of their cognitive knowledge and skills, and includes the EFL teachers' language proficiency and content knowledge and skills which may be disciplinary, pedagogical, and technological.

"Attitudinal/behavioral competence" which covers the personality traits that the EFL teacher brings to the classroom, is represented by such characteristics as patience, understanding trusting, flexibility, supportiveness, responsibility, accountability, and motivation and commitment to self- development. It is these intrapersonal features that are mostly regarded as important indirect determinants of EFL teacher-learner relationships.

"Management competence" helps EFL teachers to be successful in maintaining discipline, maximizing the available class time, establishing order, and appropriate behaviors. However, classroom management competence goes beyond mere class management so that it can inspire EFL teachers to promote their teaching by working with their colleagues, parents, professionals, and community members.

With some minor differences, previous studies referred to the nearly similar categorization. For example, Kulshrestha and Pandey (2013) in their review article clarified three main domains namely instructional competencies, organizational competencies, and evaluative competencies. These findings also second the result of another study by Selvi (2010) who indicated that teachers' professional competency under four major categories:



curriculum competency, life-long learning competency, social-cultural competency, and emotional competency (Selvi, 2010).

### **The status of identified dimensions, effective factors, and consequences of promoting professional competency among EFL teachers**

Considering the mean difference which are positive numbers shows that the status of these components is average; though not favorable.

This can justify the fact that EFL teachers in Iran have gained relative competency (ability and skills) for teaching English which may mostly due to their preservice training. also, during their service as EFL teachers, their knowledge and skills have been under the effects of influential factors for professional competency such as their characteristics, curriculum, management, community, media, and information technology.

The same result can also be seen for the component of "engagement" as the consequence of professional competency. the level of EFL engagement in their teaching seems almost acceptable which proves that most EFL teachers in Iran are dedicated to teaching and feel responsibility and commitment to learners. the created eagerness and enthusiasm for English teaching may in turn provide better teaching support and classroom management (Kunter et al., 2013).

However, for the dimension "development and growth" in "consequences", the results clearly illustrate that despite motivation and interest seen among EFL teachers in Iran's high

schools and English language institutes, they donot have enough opportunity to mature and "develop" their professional competency. By development Hoque et al. (2010) means developing the techniques applied in teaching, expanding the content knowledge and promoting their language proficiency, and acquiring the latest knowledge to make the learners occupied based on the needs of today's society (Hoque, Alam, & Abdullah, 2011). one justification for this problem may be that many Iranian EFL teachers, in particular, seem to consider growth and development for their job unimportant to participate in professional development practices and to search for new chances for new knowledge and skills; although as EFL teachers they are supposed to be aware the latest improvements and changes in the field. the next reason for this weakness may be the fact that the status of professional competency dimensions and components in most EFL teachers as stated above is not ideal and developed, and according to Richards (2011) and Ahmad and sultana (2019) growth and lifelong learning occur in the higher status of these dimensions (Ali, Busch, Qaisrani, & Rehman, 2020; Jc, 2011). Along with the findings of the present study Rahayu (2014) also argue that because of the continuous changes happening in the circumstances of the organization and training environments, promoting the teachers' competencies is as crucial as acquiring them (Rahayu & Hizriani).

### **Causal relationships between the identified dimensions, effective factors, and consequences, and of promoting professional**

### competency among EFL teachers

According to the values of standard coefficients and significance coefficients of *t* obtained, it can be inferred that there is a direct and intense relationship between the factors (Table 3). The figures also indicated that the pattern fitting indices are in a favorable status (Table 4).

Therefore, significant relationships between factors influencing professional competency (teachers' characteristics, curriculum, management support, information technology, community, and media); EFL teachers' professional competency (cognitive/ language skills competency, attitudinal/behavioral competency, and management competency), and the consequence of gaining professional competency (engagement, and development and growth) by EFL teachers in Iran is evident. This result matches the results of all of these studies in a way or another. Rozdi et al. (2016), Elwood and Bippert (2020), and Harahap and Rusdinal (2017) all highlighted the relationships between management support, EFL teachers' characteristics, and IT on the prompting of their professional competency. Also, Safa and Azarnejad (2017), Valmori and De Costa (2016), and Selvi (2010) all confirmed the strong association between EFL competent teachers' professional competency and their engagement and improvement in teaching practices.

### The priority of identified dimensions, effective factors, and consequences, and of promoting professional competency among EFL teachers

### The priority of EFL professional competency dimensions

The factor analysis about the EFL teachers' professional competency yielded three factors which according to priority are a) attitudinal/behavioral competency; b) management competency, and c) cognitive/skills competency. According to table 6, attitudinal/behavioral competence was regarded as the most highly valued of the three dimensions by Iranian EFL teachers (with factor load means 0.77). The second dimension in priority is recognized as management competence (with factor load means 0.74). Finally, the cognitive/ language skills competency of EFL teachers was regarded as the least highly valued of the three dimensions (with factor load means 0.71). One reason for considering attitudinal/behavioral competence as the priority may be the fact that EFL teachers may consider the mentioned features as a prerequisite for creating a healthy and positive classroom interaction to present enough and appropriate input. Meanwhile, although some research indicated a considerable connection between EFL teachers' cognitive ability and their effectiveness, other studies conducted by Aloe and Becker (2009) and Yeh (2009) reported zero correlation between them. Another reason may be that EFL teachers regard the three dimensions of professional competency as interrelated so that empowering one, will enhance the other two. They believe that EFL teaching is not just a cognitive challenge; it is also socially and emotionally demanding. Therefore, by strengthening their tendency and interests in teaching, they can

easily make progress in language proficiency, content knowledge, and pedagogical aspects of cognitive/language skills competency and may better conduct or manage the class environment. The learners' expectations from the teachers may be another justification for this priority. Some contemporary studies have shown that for many EFL learners, the nature of the relationships with their teachers is as valuable as or even more valued than the actual classroom practice (Borg, 2006). Being aware of the fact that the many EFL learners give more importance to teachers' intrapersonal features and building interpersonal relationships with their teachers, it is perhaps to be expected that Iranian EFL teachers place more priority on empowering attitudinal/behavioral competence as a prerequisite to other two dimensions. The same reason may be justified for the priority of EFL teachers' management competency over cognitive/skills competency. This finding corroborates earlier previous research by Zamani and Ahangari (2016). In their paper, they showed that by preferring EFL teachers' personality competency, the learners expect an English teacher to have the ability to develop proper relationships with students, to build students' confidence, and to maintain discipline in that classroom as their prior competencies. However, this finding is not completely congruent with the results of Thakur and Shekhawat (2014), Drakulić (2013), and Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015) who reported the preference of instructional dimensions of EFL professional competency over attitudinal and management dimensions.

### **The priority of influential factors**

About the priority of influential factors on EFL professional competency, based on the path coefficients shown in Table 5, "information technology" has the most effect (with path coefficients 0.85) and curriculum has the least effect (with path coefficients 0.69). Meanwhile, "individual characteristics" (with path coefficients 0.84), "management support" (with path coefficient 0.82), the role of "community" (with path coefficient 0.80), "media" (with path coefficient 0.71) are placed within, respectively.

The reason for this priority may be the fact that up-to-date information technology which is in line with global changes leads to EFL teachers' creativity and ability in problem-solving and higher-order thinking. Also, IT can help affirm and strengthen the connections between EFL teachers and learners; among colleagues themselves, and also between teachers and those people involved in EFL education, suggest and make approaches to teaching and collaboration, lessen accessibility gaps, and adapt teaching experiences to meet the needs of learners.

Similar results were found in the report of Tambunan (2014), Hamzah et al. (2019), and who put forth the view that rich exchange of ideas and the opportunity for consensus identification of research topics and collaboration between different nations and cultures are done through information technology.

### **Priority of consequences**

In investigating the priority of consequences of

promoting professional competency among EFL teachers, based on the path coefficients shown in table 5, "job engagement" was considered to be a more important result (with path coefficients 0.87) than the component "growth and development" (with path coefficients 0.81) by Iranian high school English teachers and instructors of English institutes.

This result may be indicative of the fact that although EFL teachers in high schools and English language institutes reflect desirable engagement, dedication, and immersion in their job as the consequence of promoting their professional competency, the important point here is that according to the findings of the research, in the current situation, they do not have enough job maturity (Table 4.20) and show inefficiency in their development. It seems that these teachers are not trying to develop and improve their careers. It is as if they have accepted the situation in which they find themselves and do not try to improve their personal and educational knowledge and skills. This may be partly because of the priority they give to attitudinal/behavioral competence in comparison to cognitive/language skills competence (Table 6). Another justification for the lack of development may be due to insufficient supervision, support, and appropriate and timely feedback to EFL teachers. In other terms, most of the teachers' professional development takes place during their careers overtime after experiencing different in-service programs and exchanging information. So continuous and purposeful activities and appropriate monitoring and coaching will likely offer EFL teachers an approach to practicing

their profession that could last them for a lifetime of professional growth and development.

The results of the study match the results of all of these studies in a way or another. According to Desimone (2009), and Mahdian and Beleghezadeh (2015) EFL teachers' competency can be maintained by ensuring that licensed teachers continue participating in professional development activities throughout their carrier.

## CONCLUSION

After a retrospective overview, as the conclusion, the researchers list some key issues and practices as applicable recommendations in English teaching contexts to promote EFL teachers' professional competency some of which are extracted from the study finding; and others are generally due to the relevance to this study.

1. Being equipped with subject/ linguistic knowledge and being fluent and accurate in English as a foreign language, does not guarantee EFL teachers' professional competency. After passing at least four academic years, the young teachers are now faced with some pedagogical aspects of classes. Hence being exposed to post-graduate/in- service programs and practices, will surely be helpful for new EFL teachers to reflect on their teaching activities according to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes achieved through these programs. After some time, they would be able to develop necessary competencies based on the commonalities they are faced with while attending these courses.

2. By describing the three dimensions of EFL teachers' professional competency, one may infer that these competencies are interrelated so that

empowering one may have an impact on the others. For example, having positive intrapersonal traits and attitudes (attitudinal/behavioral competency) will enhance EFL teachers' responsibility and commitment toward teaching which in turn, enabling them to create a conducive and welcoming learning environment and to manage the learning process effectively (management competency). Besides, promoting EFL teachers' cognitive/language skills knowledge and proficiency gives them self-efficacy as the result of positive class experience and authority for class management (management competency) and also motivates them for lifelong development. According to Valmori and De Costa (2016), cognitive/language skills knowledge is a matter of personal pride and warranty through gives confidence and authority to EFL teachers. In sum, in this study, EFL professional competency is regarded as the integration of three interrelated and essential dimensions: personality-related, cognitive/skills related and management related dimensions, and all EFL teachers should possess a balanced combination of them.

3. Connecting theory to practice: Novice teachers during their pre-service education can be allowed to experience English teaching in real contexts earlier to connect and apply what they have theoretically gained to real settings of English teaching. In this way, they would have enough time to draw their inferences about actual teaching Atmaca (2017). Of course, this parallelism of pre-service instruction and practical courses for EFL teachers needs collaboration between universities with schools

and language centers. Besides, as confirmed by the results of the in-depth interview in the qualitative phase, the advantage of transferring knowledge to EFL teaching contexts can be attained through applying the medium such as collaboration, classroom action research and inquiries, observation and critical analyzing of class practices along with the helpful guide, monitor and feedback provided by teacher trainers.

4. Dynamicity: Nowadays, because the main purpose of education is to equip the learners with capacities to cope with all changes efficiently, it is of vital importance to redefine and revise EFL teachers' needed competencies and investigate for new effective competencies to empower them for achieving better results in their profession. According to Desimone (2009), participating in professional development activities is an efficient way for new licensed EFL teachers to maintain these new needed competencies.

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**Appendix A. Interview questions**

No.	Question
1	What constitutes foreign language teachers' professional competency for you? (How do you define the professional competency of EFL teachers?)
2	What are the indicators of EFL teachers' professional competency?
3	What are the components of EFL teachers' professional competency?
4	Do you think your professional competency is affected by some factors? If yes, which factors, and how?
5	Do you think teaching affects/ed your professional competency?
6	What are the main challenges in promoting professional competency?
7	What are the barriers and facilitators in promoting professional competency?
8	What activities do you think are useful/available to promote your professional competency? (What solution(s) do you suggest for enhancing EFL teachers' professional competency?)
9	How important is it for you to achieve professional competency?
10	What is your experience as a teacher of the foreign language regarding professional competency and promoting it?

**Appendix B. Professional competency among EFL teachers' questionnaire****Demographic information**Gender: male  female Degree: BA in English  MA in English Ph.D. in English  others 

Years of teaching experience: .....

**Dear Participants:** The aim of designing this questionnaire is to determine the professional competency among EFL teachers. Please check the box that best describes your view on each item. Thank you in advance. The numbers 1 to 5 stands for:

Strongly disagree	disagree	undecided	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Row	questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	I know enough about my abilities, values, and interests and how my cognitive skills are developed.					
2	I am proficient in using the knowledge, abilities, and interests of students in the classroom.					
3	I have enough language proficiency and knowledge in all 4 English language skills and subskills					
4	I am skilled in using appropriate teaching methods related to the subject of the lesson.					
5	I have enough intercultural knowledge(ICC) and know the linguistic/ and cultural similarities and differences between L1 &L2 ).					
6	I am aware of the students' learning capacity and their background knowledge and experience and can change or correct them while working.					
7	I understand how different teaching methods can meet students' individual needs.					
8	I know how to design learner-centered instruction to encourage the learners' self-regulation and metacognition.					
9	I am aware of how to organize and present subject knowledge and to vary it according to meet students' learning needs and the language learning context.					



10	I know different learning/ teaching strategies and resources.					
11	I can design instruction to build learners' higher-order thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills.					
12	I am efficient in updating and adapting my knowledge with new findings, ideas, and theories.					
13	I have the knowledge and skills to use information communication technology(ICT) in the learning/teaching process.					
14	I can keep detailed assessment information to guide students' learning process.					
15	I am committed to teaching students and serving the school as a professional member of the teaching profession community.					
16	I believe that EFL teachers' sense of responsibility and accountability is based on their value/ attitude.					
17	I recognize and respect students' ethnic, cultural, and religious differences.					
18	I love students and English language teaching.					
19	I have high regard for each one's right to education and treat all students fairly.					
20	I am committed to the values and rules of society to respect the social, linguistic, and cultural diversity of students and their community.					
21	I motivate students' curiosity, tolerance, honesty, and kindness by engaging them in active listening, dialogue, and questioning to facilitate and support learning.					
22	I believe in lifelong learning.					
23	I have a sense of humor, cheerfulness, and flexibility.					
24	I can create a safe and effective learning environment for all students.					
25	I can apply different strategies for managing students' behavior.					
26	I can set learning goals, plans, and organize, and manage lessons.					
27	I can adapt to new teaching situations and changes.					
28	I can motivate students' interests in learning utilizing different strategies.					
29	I can make the best use of time.					

30	I can engage students in lifelong learning.					
31	I can communicate and work with other teachers, parents, and the local community to improve the learning environment for EFL learners.					
32	I can collaborate with colleagues and work together to develop my practice by learning from other teachers.					
33	I know the importance of inquiry and research-based learning to improve teaching practice.					
34	I can create, select, evaluate, and use university and community resources to advance learners.					
35	I can analyze, evaluate, and reflect on my activities, evidence, and data and self -assess to strengthen students' effectiveness.					
36	EFL teachers have a sense of internal obligation and accountability for their duties.					
37	EFL teachers accept ownership over their students' performance and learning outcomes.					
38	At high school, EFL teachers collaborate.					
39	The EFL teachers fully understand the feelings of their colleagues and sympathize with them.					
40	EFL teachers know social etiquette and actualize it in their social interactions.					
41	EFL teachers are committed to their job and feel a sense of belonging.					
42	Most EFL teachers have self-esteem.					
43	Most EFL teachers put insight and wisdom into their job.					
44	EFL teachers possess a critical self-judgment and regard the criticism of others positively.					
45	EFL teachers have professional knowledge appropriate to their teaching level.					
46	At high school/ language institutes, EFL teachers discuss their teaching with colleagues.					
47	Learning is provided to students with planning.					
48	There are tutorials for the courses and the EFL teachers follow them.					
49	The learning objectives are quite obvious, and all EFL teachers are moving toward those objectives.					

50	In addition to the usual learning methods, unplanned learning is also provided to students.					
51	EFL teachers try to give meaning to students' learning experiences in different ways.					
52	EFL teachers try to encourage students to live, learn, and study.					
53	EFL teachers consider evaluation very important.					
54	Curriculum evaluation is done formatively.					
55	Self-assessment is one of the methods that EFL teachers use for themselves and encourage students to do so.					
56	The institute administration is constantly looking for change and improvement (creating a good environment, improving technology).					
57	The principal is always accessible and establishes ongoing, and open communication among EFL teaching staff.					
58	The institute principal offers special facilities for outstanding and creative EFL teachers.					
59	The principal believes in product-based evaluation.					
60	The principal applies process controls to evaluate EFL teachers.					
61	The principal considers learners' reflection to evaluate English teachers' performance.					
62	The law is enforced by principals.					
63	The principals always encourage EFL teachers to follow the rules.					
64	The principals use legal methods in schools' affairs in various ways.					
65	EFL teachers are constantly striving to learn new technologies					
66	EFL teachers get help from technology experts.					
67	Equipment suitable for the age of information technology is available for EFL teachers.					
68	Social networks have been officially offered to and established among EFL teachers.					
69	The institute's technological infrastructure is being facilitated by EFL teachers.					
70	Information technology services at this institute are relatively good.					

71	The level of commitment of the IT unit to the response of EFL teachers is favorable.					
72	The principal supports the technical services provided at (this) school.					
73	EFL teachers try to provide up-to-date services at (this) institute.					
74	Society has always supported policies to improve EFL teachers' knowledge.					
75	To strengthen and support EFL learning quality, policies are being implemented to expand language schools.					
76	The government has a well-written plan to improve the quality of English language teaching in the community.					
77	Families invest in their children's English language learning.					
78	Families value learning a second language.					
79	Families are more likely to send their children to schools with skilled EFL teachers.					
80	EFL teachers use different media tools to develop their competencies.					
81	EFL teachers share their language knowledge with their colleagues.					
82	EFL teachers use media to promote their knowledge through informal learning.					
83	Social media sites have gained popularity among EFL teachers.					
84	EFL teachers use social media to teach and learn.					
85	EFL teachers spend many hours using English sites on daily basis.					
86	Interaction through social sites has a significant impact on EFL teacher's competence.					
87	Teachers usually use social media to communicate with each other.					
88	EFL teachers flip the classroom by posting questions and asking the students to contribute					
89	I feel satisfied and pleased with my teaching.					
90	I feel strong and empowered when I teach.					
91	When I wake up in the morning, I feel like( have a desire for)teaching.					



92	I feel happy and satisfied after a busy day of teaching.					
93	In class, I'm immersed in my teaching					
94	I devote all my time and energy to teaching.					
95	I am eager for my job.					
96	Teaching inspires me.					
97	I am proud of what I do.					
98	I believe that as a teacher, I have an impact on my students.					
99	I do my best to continue my career by accepting responsibility and fulfilling my commitment.					
100	I have made adherence to professional ethics.					
101	I try to develop training programs for myself and my colleague and participate/contribute to program improvement efforts.					
102	I believe in researching academic issues.					
103	I believe in connecting professional learning to instructional practice by implementing what I have learned and refining practices.					

### **Biodata**

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