



Developing and Validating an Assessment Scale for Foreign Language Teacher Agency*

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Abstract

Foreign language (FL) teacher agency, as a significant part of teachers' professional development, encompasses self-organized efforts to augment professional growth. This study aimed to develop an ecological FL teacher agency model through a sequential exploratory mixed methods design based on which an assessment scale measuring FL teachers' agency value was developed. In the qualitative phase, developing and validating the FL teacher agency model, firstly, an interview guide was developed and piloted in a group of 10 TEFL teacher educators from Farhangian Teacher Education University in Tehran. Then, 30 in-service EFL teachers were interviewed. The data were analyzed through MAXQDA to find the components of the tentative conceptual model of teacher agency. Based on the interview analysis, the preliminary draft of the EFL teacher agency scale was developed. The refined EFL teacher agency questionnaire encompassing the three components of Autonomy, Freedom, and Choice was administered to 354 randomly selected EFL teachers. The scale's reliability was gained through Cronbach's alpha, and its construct validity through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The study findings could be used by foreign language teachers, teacher educators, and TEFL teacher agency researchers.

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Introduction

Within the domain of teachers' continual professional development (CPD), their Professional Agency (PA) takes significance (Green & Pappa, 2021) because it helps them conceptualize and implement their scholarship and practices actively (Loughran, 2014). Teacher professional agency (TPA) is the teachers' ability to handle their professional life consciously within the contextual established boundaries (Sewell, 1992). Teacher agency differs from and draws on PA within the literature (Biesta et al., 2015; Fu & Clarke, 2017; Pantić, 2021). Following Sewell (1992) and Hilferty (2008), in their description of TPA, Quinn and Carl (2015) utilize both terms, teacher and professional, to refer to TA as teachers' ability to both control and direct their professional life in an active educational environment.

Foreign language TA growth is bound to the interplay among teachers, students, colleagues, and educational officials. EFL teachers' PA encompasses engagement in professional activities in the educational domain and their negotiations to advance their work and improve its quality (Ruan, 2018). Hence, the emergence of the agency is directed to specific individuals or institutions and under specific conditions (Green & Pappa, 2021). Those teachers who think that the outcome of the homework activities will be contingent on the measures in the classroom will experience some aspects of controlled agency and *agency competence* (Bandura, 1997, 2006). In addition, TA can be manifested in teachers' tendency to search for educational news, bound to job satisfaction factors and develop a sense of commitment to the educational context (Amiri et al., 2023), which in turn, can protect teachers against burnout and might increase their job satisfaction and Professional Development (PD) (Malmberg & Hagger, 2009). It is argued that EFL teachers *commissioned agency* can be developed as part of their PD. In the present study, following seminal previous studies (Amiri et al., 2023; Hull & Uematsu, 2020; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011) *teacher agency* is defined as EFL teachers' capacity to take focused actions implying choice, autonomy, and freedom in selecting teaching materials and teaching strategies, deciding about educational policies, and having control over different aspects of teaching -learning process in the L2 classroom context.

Within the domain of TA, is embedded the notion of teacher leadership. While teachers' agency is related to the teachers' behavior in crises and how they act in accordance with their own beliefs and classroom goals, teacher leadership in the classroom refers to a teacher going above and beyond the call of duty to mentor, advocate for, or spearhead initiatives on behalf of other members of the school community (Damsa & Jornet, 2017; Edwards, 2021).

EFL teachers' critical role in the educational growth (Metz, 2018) can be supported by second language (L2) educational research with TA and PD as its focal points (Hull & Uematsu, 2020). Nonetheless, Metz (2018) recommends that L2 teachers be constantly assessed in their professionalism, accountability, and agency as critical parts of their PD. Moreover, it is also crucial not to overlook the importance of sociocultural variables in a person's growth, including EFL teachers. It is assumed that within an ecological and glocalised atmosphere, EFL teachers' agency, as a crucial part of teachers' PD, is promoted. The responsibility-taking atmosphere created by teachers' agency and consequently, teachers' feeling of social effectiveness can develop a network of EFL teachers who struggle for their

autonomy, freedom, and choice in their profession (Hull & Uematsu, 2020). Such teachers are assumed to struggle for success and having control over their situational and environmental forces, try to enhance their digital literacy, identity, and social status (Molla & Nolan, 2020).

Although perceived teacher agency has been researched in other disciplines by different scholars (Cong-Lem, 2021; Damşa et al., 2021; Green & Pappa, 2021; Hull & Uematsu, 2020; Tao & Gao, 2021), studying EFL TA has recorded only a few cases (Amiri et al., 2023; Kordabadi & Davatgari Asl, 2021; Motlagh et al., 2024) and it has not well been documented in the Iranian EFL context (Razmjoo & Tajik, 2023). Concerning the paucity of studies on the nature of EFL TA and its connection with CPD among Iranian EFL teachers, developing a localized and ecological model of TA for EFL teachers takes significance. Hence, the following research questions were raised.

1. What are the components of the Iranian EFL teacher agency?
2. To what extent do components of the EFL teacher agency scale contribute to the scale's reliability?
3. To what extent does the EFL teacher agency scale enjoy construct validity?

2. Theoretical Framework

Because teachers' technological abilities, practices, professional development, and perceived agencies are the result of interconnected and complex processes manifested in their behavior in the classroom, which is a sociocultural setting in and of itself, the current study draws on Social Practice Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the ecological viewpoint this theory presents (Arabahmadi et al., 2023; Tao & Gao, 2017, 2021). Moreover, TA factors such as teachers' will, autonomy, freedom, and choice are embedded in teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). As a result, EFL teachers are expected to have control over what is taught and how it is taught (Hull & Uematsu, 2020), whereas EFL students require control over what they learn and how it is learned. A teacher with a low sense of agency, on the other hand, may feel controlled in this regard by the educational system (Biesta et al., 2015; Wei & Chen, 2019), school colleagues (Biesta et al., 2015), or students' expectations (Biesta et al., 2015; Hull & Uematsu, 2020). The present study, relies on the sociocultural model of TA in which *agency* is posited as an interplay among personal capacity, disposition, and available agency resources in a given socio-cultural context (Philpott & Oates, 2017).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teachers' Agency

According to educational philosophy, *agency* can be defined as the relationship between human beings and educational structures (Sewell, 1992). Such a relationship can consider both rules and human resources as significant factors. In the educational context, learners and teachers are considered agents (Davydov et al., 2003) hence, their knowledge and information can play roles in developing agency in the EFL classroom context (Damşa et al., 2021). In addition, agency can be manifested in the teachers' capacity to interpret and mobilize resources needed in the educational context in terms of specified rules and actions other than those that initially establish the basis of teaching a specific course (Eteläpelto et al., 2013).

Davydov et al. (2003) define instructors as agents who can enhance their expertise, recognize the boundaries of their knowledge, and find appropriate ways to increase their knowledge regarding pedagogy, material, and technical in the context of L2 teaching and learning. As a result, "perceived teacher agency denotes a sense of control over what is taught and how it is taught" (Hull & Uematsu, 2020, 51). Teachers with low agency feel highly controlled and restricted by their colleagues (Biesta et al., 2015; Hull & Uematsu, 2020), the educational context (Wei & Chen, 2019), and the combination of factors such as students, course books, and the issued rules and regulations (Biesta et al., 2015; Hull & Uematsu, 2020). Teachers' disinterest in enhancing their agency is mainly brought about by the highly totalitarian and centralized educational systems, which leave no room for teachers' sense of autonomy in changing the issued programs based on their classroom needs and rely on their creativity (Damsa & Jornet, 2017; Smith, 2005). Teachers' attempts to act effectively under special conditions such as wars, crises, floods, earthquakes or any other disaster could be an example of their agency (Virkkunen, 2016). Another example of a teacher's agency was recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic when the almost global closure of universities and schools took place (Damsa et al., 2021). Teachers with a high sense of agency started online courses relying on their amenities (Damsa & Jornet, 2017).

The concept of agency held by EFL teachers is more expansive than conventional sociological notions (Biesta & Tedder, 2006), frequently characterized by conflicting viewpoints. According to an individualist viewpoint, agency opposes structure, with the individual acting solely as the decision- and action-maker. In a holistic perspective, emphasis is placed on the prevalence of routine behavior due to the previously existing order (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1991). Such dualist positions are dispelled by a relational viewpoint, providing room to discern different levels of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Humans might act at different levels, such as consciousness, self-regulation, goal orientation, and volitional acts (Bandura, 1997). In the same vein, human actions can fall into three different domains: a) working as an agent who carries out the activity or task, like a teacher or a student who has some duties to follow; b) as a means, which can encompass skills and strategies employed to support learners improve their abilities in the classroom environment, and c) as an end, which shows goals of learning for the learner (Malmberg et al., 2004).

2.2. Studies on Teachers' Agency

Following the introduction of the concept of agency to the teacher education arena (Sewell, 1992), educationists began researching different aspects of teacher agency. Teachers' agency beliefs are conceptualized regarding support and instruction domains (Hull & Uematsu, 2020). Malmberg and Hagger (2009) found that teachers' beliefs and agency views could be changed when exposed to a practicum-based teacher education program. In the same vein, Reeve and Tseng (2011) found that while the teachers' instructional agency belief increases with time, supportive agency belief remains high and constant, pointing to a positive impact of teacher education.

Several studies have focused on different aspects of teacher agency from theoretical and operational lenses: Pyhältö et al. (2015) and Rasti and Sahragard (2017) assert that teachers' individual and collaborative work activities significantly improve when they possess agency.

According to Philpott and Oates (2017), professional agency is defined as the ability to have an impact, make decisions, and take a stand. According to Kordabadi and Davatgari Asl (2021) and Ursin et al. (2020), agentic endeavors have the potential to alter working environments through the adoption of new methods and the formation of existing work circumstances.

According to Arabahmadi et al. (2023) and Wilcox and Lawson (2018), school leaders' views of teachers as professionals are consistent with their innovative practices. Conversely, the values, experiences, attitudes, social expectations, demands, and their own beliefs and perspectives influence the professional agency of teachers (Razmjoo & Tajik, 2023). Gaining insight into teachers' agency might help us understand their decision-making processes and how these decisions impact their professional performance (Rezaee & Seyri, 2021). Thus, Royaei et al. (2023) broadened the definition of agency to assist EFL educators to think about their work in terms of loyalty, efficacy, and effectiveness rather than just knowledge.

EFL teacher agency has been researched in different countries, as if it is a glocalized concept requiring global theoretical perspectives and local practical considerations (Amiri et al., 2023). Studies on TA in the Finish EFL context revealed inevitable impacts of a large-scale national educational change on teachers' professional agency (PA) (Pyhältö et al., 2015) and identity development (relational agency) (Green & Pappa, 2021). Moreover, teachers with high levels of TA could promote learners' responsibility-taking and purposiveness (Molla & Nolan, 2020). Similarly, Cong-Lem (2021) reported that a critical pedagogical framework for TA seems necessary. Moreover, concerning the diversity of learners with economic, social, and educational backgrounds in a single classroom, language teachers are expected to be aware of such aspects as part of their agency (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Arabahmadi et al., 2023). This urges teachers' expertise, agency, PD, and socio-political and sociocultural advancements. Other studies such as Kramer (2018) in the Australian context and Amiri et al. (2023) in the Turkish context, have argued that official agencies stress the significance of standardizing teaching to increase learners' performance and educational settings. This can only come true if teachers rely on their abilities, develop their methods based on their reflective practices, develop autonomy, and use their agency to promote the teaching standards.

Some other studies in China (i.e., Tao & Gao, 2017, 2021), meanwhile, found that teacher agency could interact with ideas like teacher identity, emotion, belief, and knowledge, acknowledging that it does not function in a vacuum. In addition, some studies suggest in-service training courses of agency enhancement for EFL teachers due to their low TA and in line with their professional needs (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Damsa et al., 2021).

EFL teacher agency, which has attracted the attention of Iranian researchers (Rasti & Sahragard, 2017; Arabahmadi et al., 2023; Kordabadi & Davatgari Asl, 2021; Motlagh et al., 2024; Rezaee & Seyri, 2021; Razmjoo & Tajik, 2023), can be considered through an ecological perspective (Tao & Gao, 2017, 2021) energized by Social Practice Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The ecological view advises priority of teachers' achievement in terms of agency over their individuals' capacity (Amiri et al., 2023). The ecological perspective on TA suggests that coping with specific contextual circumstances involving affordances or constraints in decision-making achieves agency, rather than acting as an inherent quality in some people and lacking in others (Tao & Gao, 2021). Instead of viewing agency as something inherent in people, this

perspective sees it as something that arises in response to environmental factors (Arabahmadi et al., 2023; Biesta et al., 2015). Moreover, agency is not an inherent factor and teachers need accomplish it accumulatively (Bandura, 2006; Biesta and Tedder, 2006).

3. Method

3.1. Participants and Setting

Ten TEFL teacher educators from Farhangian Teacher Education University in Tehran took part in the process of developing and piloting the interview guide used to collect the qualitative data. The main study participants for the interview phase were thirty randomly selected in-service EFL teachers working in different schools in Tehran city and were asked for their views about different aspects of EFL teacher agency. For the quantitative phase of the study, the researchers administered the Likert scale EFL TA questionnaire developed based on the interview results and a thorough literature review manifested in the tentative conceptual model to 354 randomly selected EFL teachers from different provinces of the country who were accessible through social media groups.

3.2. Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in the study; a) a semi-structured in-depth interview, to collect the qualitative data to develop the intended TA model, and b) the teacher agency inventory, which was developed and validated by the researchers. The researchers developed an interview protocol with six items based on a thorough literature review as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Interview Protocol along with In-Text Citations

Purpose: Exploring EFL teachers' attitudes about TA with respect to their immediate educational and social environment (Amiri et al., 2023; Hull & Uematsu, 2020).	
Ethics: In line with confidentiality, the participants' responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes (Creswell, 2021; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, they may choose to withdraw from the interview at any time (Best & Kahn, 2006).	
Duration: This interview will take approximately 10-15 minutes. In the follow up session(s), the participants will be provided with the final summary of the findings so that they could scrutinize the findings and see if the information actually come from their perceptions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).	
Demographics: The study participants will be asked to provide information about their age, gender, and educational background, and teaching experience (Dörnyei, 2007).	
Main Questions	
Purpose	Questions & Citations
Participants' knowledge of TA	1. How do you define teachers' agency? (Amiri et al., 2023; Bandura, 1997, 2006; Edwards, 2015; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Pyhältö et al., 2015; Rasti & Sahragard, 2017; Razmjoo & Tajik, 2023)
Ecological and sociocultural aspects of TA	2. What are the main factors of teachers' agency in the Iranian context? (Amiri et al., 2023; Arabahmadi et al., 2023; Kordabadi & Davatgari Asl, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017, 2021)
Main factors of foreign language teacher agency	3. What are the main factors a foreign language teacher should possess in terms of his/her agency? (Hull & Uematsu, 2020; Motlagh et al., 2024; Rezaee & Seyri, 2021; Razmjoo & Tajik, 2023)

Practicing agency in the class	4. Is it important for teachers to have control over the content they teach at schools? Explain? (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Kordabadi & Davatgari Asl, 2021; Molla & Nolan, 2020; Ursin et al. (2020)
Knowledge and practices of teacher agency	5. How are teachers integrating their knowledge and practices of agency into their classes? (Biesta et al., 2015; Byrd, 2022; Edwards, 2015; Imantsl & Van der Wal, 2019; Loughran, 2014).
Professional Development and agency	6. How do you evaluate your professional development in terms of your agency knowledge? (Damsa et al., 2021; Cong-Lem, 2021; Pantić, 2021)

Then, the interview guide was checked and piloted with ten TEFL teacher educators as informants. They suggested some modifications leading to the omission of question 4, which could be covered in the likely answers given to question five, and finally a 5-item interview form was constructed. In line with Maxwell (2018), the interview guide's credibility, trustworthiness, and dependability were also confirmed through expert judgment with the help of these 10 TEFL teacher educators. Finally, the piloted interview guide was used to interview thirty language teachers as the study participants.

The preliminary EFL TA scale (i.e., inventory) was developed based on the qualitative data analysis results derived out of the interviews. Then, it was put to the scrutiny of ten EFL teacher educators to confirm its Expert Judgment Validity (EJV). Finally, the refined questionnaire encompassing the three components of Autonomy, Freedom, and Choice with 27 items was administered to 354 randomly selected EFL teachers from different provinces of the country. The scale's reliability was gained through Cronbach's alpha, and its construct validity, in terms of its latent variables, was gained through a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Eleven of the 27 items were omitted due to the CFA results. The sixteen items remained shaped the scale in terms of Autonomy (7 items), Freedom (4 items), and Choice (5 items).

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Having piloted the interview items, the researchers initiated the interviews with the 30 FL teacher participants. While they were asked to express their views freely, the study participants were allowed to use Persian or English, which they felt comfortable with.

In line with Maxwell (2018) and Cutcliffe and McKenna (1999), who consider that the enhancement of authenticity or credibility is bound to the results' accuracy, the researchers used a range of techniques to evaluate the validity and trustworthiness of their findings: First, the participants were given the final summary of the findings so that they could scrutinize the findings and see if the information came from their perceptions. Second, the researchers frequently checked different aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, enlisted significant points, and finalized them through the cooperation of two debriefers, other than the researchers and coders, to increase the validity of the research. Third, the researchers asked an external independent editor to review the entire study and scrutinize the whole research process. Having checked the data collection procedure, the transcripts, and the coded data, he finally agreed that the data collection procedure was genuine, and that the coding system was accurate.

Table 2. *Code System, Memos and Frequencies of The Data*

Code System	Memo	Frequency
Codes	Questions answered for the code	Total=173
1. Knowledge of teacher agency	How do you define teachers' agency? What are the main factors of teachers' agency in the Iranian context?	26
2. Feelings about teacher agency	What are the main factors a foreign language teacher should possess in terms of his/her agency?	25
3. Assessing one's TA skills	How do you evaluate your professional development in terms of your agency knowledge?	21
4. Autonomy in TA	How do you integrate your knowledge and practices of agency into your classes in selecting materials, teaching strategies, and controlling the content you teach?	20
5. Leadership and choice in TA	How do you integrate your knowledge and practices of agency into your classes in selecting materials, teaching strategies, and controlling the content you teach?	21
6. Sense of freedom in doing duties	How do you integrate your knowledge and practices of agency into your classes in selecting materials, teaching strategies, and controlling the content you teach?	28
7. TA and Professionalism	How do you evaluate your professional development in terms of your agency knowledge?	15
8. Classroom activities and TA	What are the main factors of teachers' agency in the Iranian context? How do you integrate your knowledge and practices of agency into your classes in selecting materials, teaching strategies, and controlling the content you teach?	17

4. Results

4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

MAXQDA software 24 pro was used to analyze the qualitative data elicited from interviews. Hence, the recorded interviews were transcribed, and 32 datasets were inserted and sorted in the software. Then, the three steps of open, axial, and selective coding were considered. Eight open code and 173 axial codes representing the highest frequencies were the final product of this phase. Table 2 presents the code system, memos and frequencies. In line with Corbin and Straus's (2014) thematic analysis, the researchers developed 27 workable categories (axial codes) following the initial coding (see Table 3). In the final stage, teachers' autonomy, sense of freedom, and leadership and choices were considered as components of EFL TA.

Table 3. *Main Themes and Categories of the Preliminary Model*

Teachers' Autonomy	1. Deciding upon chaining the curriculum when needed
	2. Not allowing someone else to decide on what one teaches
	3. Having mastery over the technology's language teachers need to use in the L2 classroom
	4. Training students in an attempt to gain the most effective results
	5. Feeling responsible for helping students learn
	6. Preferring to select the materials that are most helpful to the learners
	7. Feeling autonomous in having control over what to teach and how to teach it

	8. Being autonomous in designing, developing, and introducing online courses
	9. Taking the risk of making decisions
	10. Using both available equipment and one's creativity
	11. Doing one's best to teach the way one believes and not what is dictated
	12. Thinking that teachers influence the progress of students
	13. Preferring a curriculum that tells the teacher exactly what to do
Leadership and Choices	14. Skipping sections or pointing out to students the parts which are poorly worded, confusing, or wrong
	15. Not using the English textbook(s) the previous teacher used
	16. Carefully considering which English textbook to use in the classroom
	17. Teaching in the way the teacher thinks is best, regardless of what the principal or other teachers might think
	18. Making changes in the classroom's pre-planned programs
	19. Being as innovative as possible
	20. Combining the institutes' suggested textbook and other materials
Sense of Freedom	21. Teaching may suffer because the equipment in the English classroom is outdated
	22. Forcing learners' development at the cost of missing the pre-planned programs
	23. Providing quality education to students
	24. Introducing an effective curriculum
	25. Paying attention to parents' views
	26. Finding personal value in teaching that makes the teacher feel satisfied
	27. Enhancing classroom quality and spending more time and energy

4.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

The EFL teacher agency scale with 27 items was developed based on the results of the qualitative data analysis manifested in the preliminary model. Having been approved through expert judgments, the scale was administered to 354 in-service EFL teachers and the data collected helped the researchers delve into the construct validity and reliability of the scale developed.

4.3. Construct Validity

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was run using the Promax rotation method to explore the construct validity of the EFL TA scale. As shown in Table 5, the elements inside the Component Correlation Matrix were all higher than $\pm.32$. Promax rotation, a member of oblique rotation, was run to extract the factors for the TAG.

Table 4. Component Correlation Matrix for EFL Teacher Agency Scale

Component	1	2	3
1	---		
2	.435	---	
3	-.444	-.371	---

Two sets of EFA's were run on the questionnaire. The first set of EFAs was run through Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) and varimax rotations. In contrast, the second round was run using PAF and varimax or ProMax rotations, depending on the conditions required by these two rotation methods. The main objective of the first round was to identify the items which did

not load under their factors. Once items that did not load under their respective factors were excluded, the second run of EFA's was run to explore the scale's construct validity. Table 5 shows the KMO index of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO index of .905 was higher than the minimum required criterion of .60 (Field, 2024). The significant results of Bartlett's test ($\chi^2 (78) = 1686.23, p < .05$) indicated that the correlation matrix was factorable. For EFA to render meaningful factors, items related to a factor should have high correlations; consequently, they should have low correlations with items loading under other factors. The significant results of Bartlett's test proved that there were meaningful correlations among items.

Table 5. Total Variance Explained for EFL Teacher Agency Scale

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	5.232	40.247	40.247	4.723	36.333	36.333	4.302
2	1.442	11.092	51.339	.945	7.268	43.601	3.054
3	1.234	9.494	60.834	.752	5.787	49.388	2.958
4	.702	5.402	66.236				
5	.587	4.514	70.749				
6	.573	4.406	75.155				
7	.511	3.934	79.090				
8	.500	3.844	82.934				
9	.496	3.816	86.750				
10	.484	3.725	90.475				
11	.434	3.337	93.811				
12	.414	3.182	96.994				
13	.391	3.006	100.000				

Table 6 shows the number of factors extracted and the total variance explained. The SPSS Software extracted three factors, accounting for 49.38 percent of total variance.

Table 6. KMO and Bartlett's Test for EFL Teacher Agency Scale

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.905
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1686.234
	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

Moreover, finally, Table 7 shows the factor loadings of the 27 items of the EFL TA Scale under the ten extracted factors. Except for items (9, 10, 14, 16, 24, 17, 18, 25, 5, 19, and 27), the other items loaded under their respective factors: Items 2, 4, 8, 13, 20, 23 and 26 loaded under the first factor "Autonomy." Its CR and AVE were .858 and .680, respectively. Items 1,

7, 11, 15, and 21 loaded under the second factor "Choice." Its CR and AVE were .752 and .708, respectively. Furthermore, items 6, 12, and 22 are loaded under the third factor "Freedom." Its CR and AVE were .753 and .710, respectively.

Table 7. Rotated Factor Matrix for EFL Teacher Agency Scale

Rotated Factor Matrix for EFL Teacher Agency Scale										
	Factors									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PTAS20	.783									
PTAS23	.698						.409			
PTAS13	.691									
PTAS8	.689									
PTAS4	.688									-.309
PTAS26	.686									
PTAS2	.667									
PTAS6		.798								
PTAS22		.794								
PTAS12		.726								
PTAS3		.714								
PTAS1			.790							
PTAS7			.785							
PTAS11			.738							
PTAS15			.725							
PTAS21			.723							
PTAS10				-.370						
PTAS9				-.309						
PTAS27					.638					
PTAS18						.665				
PTAS19							-			
							.327			
PTAS17								-.369		
PTAS5								-.370		
PTAS25									.356	
PTAS16									.466	
PTAS14										.347
PTAS24										.312

** First Factor = Autonomy, CR = .858, AVE = .680. Second Factor = Choice, CR = .752, AVE = .708. Third Factor = Freedom, CR = .753, AVE = .710.

Items 9, 10, 14, 16, 24, 17, 18, 25, 5, 19, and 27 were omitted as they were not placed under the factors extracted. Hence, the final teacher agency scale has seven items for autonomy, four items for freedom, and five items for choice.

4.4. Reliability

Table 8 shows the Cronbach's alpha reliability indices for the EFL TA scale, and its components were estimated. In line with Field (2024), all reliability indices were higher than .70, indicating that the scale and its components enjoyed "adequate" reliability indices.

Table 8. *Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics for the EFL Teacher Agency Scale*

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Autonomy	.841	7
Freedom	.739	4
Choice	.725	5
Total PTAS	.859	16

5. Discussion

Concerning EFL TA factors, the present study found that a) language teachers' autonomy, b) leadership and choices, and c) sense of freedom are the most significant factors determining Iranian EFL TA. These notions represent the elements of professionalism in teacher education. From this perspective, they align with Tao and Gao's (2017) study, which investigated the TA and identity commitment among EFL teachers in the curriculum reform process in China. In addition to the high instructional commands, language teachers are expected to have, they must take training courses on agency and how to be professional agents. This significant point can take support from different studies (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Amiri et al., 2023; Biesta et al., 2015; Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Damşa et al., 2021) stressing the value of relevant teaching experiences for teachers in developing lesson plans or designing education programs. Likewise, other factors engrossed in teachers' professional qualities and promoting TA, such as their values, job experiences, pedagogic competencies, choice, freedom, and autonomy, have been mentioned in some other studies carried out worldwide (Cong-Lem, 2021; Edwards, 2021; Green & Pappa, 2021; Hull & Uematsu, 2020).

Based on the present study findings, TA components can take support from both the enhancement of TA and the PD of EFL teachers. It was found that teachers with low agency feel much too controlled and depreciated. These findings are in line with a lot of previous studies focusing on the TA and PD (e.g., Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Fu & Clarke, 2017; Imants & Van der Wal, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2021; Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022; Pantić, 2021). This relationship can be supported by Pantić (2021), who found that teachers' reflection on their agency for change significantly correlates with their PD and professional inquiry. Moreover, the present study findings align with Imants and Van der Wal's (2019) results on developing a model of TA in PD, which was conducive to the significance of TA in the CPD and teachers' promotion in their job status. The participants' perspectives on this relationship indicated that the process was dynamic rather than linear, which is worth mentioning. Nevertheless, in some other studies on TA, results were still referred to as "end results" (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Biesta & Tedder, 2006), and in around one-third of the cases, the PD or school reform content was not thought to be a variable. These findings serve as an example of the analytical potential of the TA model, which can forecast CPD.

In this study, we have covered how we created and evaluated a survey to find out how EFL instructors now feel about their own agency. The majority of the education scholars who have examined agency in the field have done so relying on a sociocultural lens (e.g., Biesta et al., 2015; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Smith, 2005). People do not exist in a vacuum, according to Lipponen and Kumpulainen, and agency is not a static feature. Rather, it is something that members of the community of social practitioners do. As a socially

formed experience, agency is inherently relational and cannot exist in a vacuum. Agency is seen as a result of the dynamic interplay between actors and their environments (Biesta et al., 2015). We do not consider it detrimental that our research on perceived agency, which focuses on EFL instructors, may not be able to address the unique requirements of other fields. Researchers utilizing a cognitivist framework often employ surveys similar to ours, which depend on the situational framework of agency. The cognitive viewpoint is based on the theory of individual cognition (Pantić, 2021), which relied on the situated/sociocultural perspective. On the other hand, the situational perspective is based on the theory of social and ecological interaction. While some view the situational framework as the more promising of the two, Green and Pappa (2021) argue that the discipline would benefit most from vigorously developing both viewpoints.

There are a number of factors, including the nature of the instructional activity, that influence how instructors make use of and gain knowledge from text-based curricular materials (Davis & Krajcik, 2005). Therefore, instructors may choose to actively learn from curricular materials for some courses, while for others they may choose to adopt a more hands-off approach. Such nuance is beyond the scope of any specific survey. Regardless of these caveats, surveys such as the one developed and validated in the present study, do provide a window into the respondent's thoughts, which influences classroom practices.

6. Conclusion

The components of teacher agency have been the subject of several studies and published papers in Physics (Hull & Uematsu, 2020), Science (Kramer, 2018; Wei & Chen, 2019), teacher education (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Pantić, 2021), educational psychology (Malmberg & Hagger, 2009), and professional practice (Molla & Nolan, 2020). However, the EFL teacher agency and its relevant model, which could be used in foreign language teacher education, is almost new to the existing literature. Priorities of educational centers in employing teachers with high agency and loyalty can be the source of developing specific standards (Byrd, 2022; Cheron et al., 2022). The findings of such studies can be used to develop standards for recruiting teachers who enjoy high agency. However, agency is considered an accumulative phenomenon for teachers and is shaped and developed through the interaction and mutual conduct of the institute and the teacher (Hull & Uematsu, 2020).

Teacher expertise has been linked to knowing one's subject matter and being able to convey this to others (didactical knowledge); being aware of the process of developing pedagogical knowledge, gaining an understanding of the sociocultural/institutional context, and demonstrating organizational competence, according to the majority of studies (Smith, 2005). More attention should be paid to the EFL teachers' pedagogic competencies in shaping their agency despite emphasizing a knowledge base for teachers (Weng, 2022). As a significant area of inquiry, the EFL teachers' PD takes significance as the teacher agency is in close contact with it. Moreover, with the growing consciousness of teachers about professionalism, they try to improve their abilities in developing strategies to enhance the quality of their teaching (Ping et al., 2018), take part in related conferences and seminars (Koster et al., 2008), do research, publish articles, and share their achievements (Lunenberg et al., 2017).

In conclusion, it is essential to recognize that the field of EL teacher education itself necessitates a set of specialized competencies and knowledge to help teachers be reliable agents as well. Therefore, research emphasizing issues related to TA and standards for EFL teachers as agents is required and should be encouraged so that such abilities, agencies, expertise, and knowledge can be carefully explored and articulated. Moreover, by doing so, opportunities for EFL teachers to further their CPD will emerge, boosting their influence within the field.

7. Limitations

Like any other study, this study had some limitations: First, the present study pursued the assumption that the samples participating in this study represented the population of the working (in-service) EFL teachers of high schools. This might not be entirely true. However, it was impossible to invite all the Iranian English teachers to the present study. Secondly, since this study was conducted in some educational zones of Tehran, some limitations were imposed by the heads of educational zones, such as class time, the number of EFL teachers, and some other implementation obstacles which partially threatened the external validity of the findings. The researcher had no control over the age and gender of teachers and their cultural beliefs. In addition, the sample of the teacher educators taking part in the study were reasonably small (n=10 teacher trainers), which might make it difficult to generalize findings of the present study to the Iranian ELT community.

8. Implications

The present research showed Iranian EFL teachers' views about the integration of teacher agency and their professional development. With respect to the significance and role of EFL teacher agency in teacher education, teacher actuators are also in need of familiarity with the factors affecting teacher agency development and its components. Hence, the present study findings can be used by EFL teacher educators in the Iranian and other similar contexts to enlighten the development of teacher education relying on expanding pre-service and in-service teachers' technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge serving the three agentic factors of autonomy, choice, and freedom among teachers. This is also in close connection with teacher-educators' professional development and cognition (Ahmad & Shah, 2022; Bagherian & Haddad Narafshan, 2023; Golombek & Doran, 2014). Teacher educators with mastery over teacher agency are more successful in their profession and enjoy more widespread cognition in terms of teacher education (Amiri et al., 2023; Borg, 2013).

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