




Original article

## EFL Teachers' Views on the Competencies of an Effective English Language Teacher

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### Abstract

Teacher competencies are expressed as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers need to have to fulfil their profession effectively and efficiently. Since competency is directly linked with efficient implementation in complex situations and is thought to serve as a contributing factor for success, concepts such as performance and achievement can be associated. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to investigate the views of English language teachers working in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education on the competencies of an effective English language teacher. The research was designed as a phenomenological study with 27 English teachers selected by convenience sampling through a written interview form administered face-to-face during a local in-service training program in the academic year 2023-2024. An inductive method was used for data analysis along with content analysis of the written reports. The results showed that the participants mostly emphasized competencies related to the teacher's instructional delivery and management of learning and teaching processes. In addition, teachers mostly emphasized competencies such as professional development approaches, communication with students and mastery of subject area knowledge. The data also showed that teachers needed to develop their language skills and teach them effectively together with the effective use of digital technologies in the teaching and learning processes.

**Keywords:** EFL Teachers, Effective Teacher, Competencies.

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## INTRODUCTION

The tremendous technical advancements of the twenty-first century and the accompanying social transformation require the adaptation of all civilizations to the ever-shifting conditions of the Information Age. This significant societal shift emphasizes the need for high-level cognitive abilities such as communicating effectively, cultural recognition, high-level collaboration, global competency, and solution-focused thought. Accordingly, new responsibilities are imposed on teachers. In addition to being a profession that can carry many duties in general, many competencies become compulsory to fulfil these responsibilities. The fact that teachers are considered to have a wide range of qualifications, professional knowledge, and abilities forms the basis of competencies.

To shed light on the ‘competency’ issue, it is defined as the characteristics that must be possessed to successfully fulfil the requirements of a profession (Şişman, 2009). Competency is also defined as features that give people the power to play a specific role or the absence of features preventing them from playing it. In terms of the teaching profession, teacher competencies are expressed as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers must have to fulfil their profession effectively and efficiently (MONE, 2017). Therefore, competency standards are based on teachers’ professional principles and concerns about implementing professional experience and expertise in the workplace.

Teacher efficacy is determined by how well a teacher performs in the classroom. It is also significantly related to the teacher’s competency. Many variables influence teaching performance, including teachers’ professional competency, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching and learning, curriculum knowledge, teaching experience, and certificate status (Shulman, 1986; Westera, 2001). According to Varvel (2007, p.2), a competent teacher is “one who effectively and efficiently accomplishes a task in a given context using appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities that have adjusted and developed with time and needs.” Moreover, Arshad (2009) proposed that a qualified teacher is one who has in-depth subject knowledge, efficient verbal and nonverbal communication skills, completes work on time, takes initiative, makes reasonable choices, adjusts in any case, believes in learning, and has a constructive attitude toward students, colleagues, parents, and administrations. The literature also emphasizes the value of a quality instructor with well-developed subject knowledge, pedagogical material awareness, and curriculum knowledge for student success. Miguel and Barsaga (1997) reported factors influencing student success, analysing instructor, student, parents, and neighbourhood variables. They concluded that the teacher had an enormous influence on student achievement. As a result, it can be argued that the quality of teachers relatively determines the quality of education, and that training is critical to improving the quality of education in schools.

There seems to be a clear connection between teacher competencies and successful teaching. According to Wade and Moore (1992), teachers need pedagogical skills and preparation to establish

themselves as adept teachers who are trusted in their abilities and the capacity of their students. Powell (1992) and Hollingsworth (1989) reported that content knowledge and the capacity to communicate shape the basis of effective teaching in the eyes of preservice students. Liu and Meng (2009) investigated teacher views in China compared with those in the United States, taking the topic a step further by seeking to internationalize their research. They discovered that students, teachers, and parents preferred teaching ethics, professional skills, professional development, and student academic achievement. These studies underline the results of an essential link between the teacher's professional skills, interest in professional development, and perception of an effective teacher.

The views of practising and prospective teachers on teacher competencies are explored in the literature, and studies on current working teachers have drawn attention. For example, Brosh (1996) researched language teachers and students to examine the perceived features of a successful language teacher. According to the findings, effective teachers should have a) adequate command of the subject matter, mastery of four basic language skills and understanding, b) the ability to transmit information quickly and memorably, c) behaving students, and equally, d) the ability to organize, explain, and clarify, and the ability to maintain motivation and engagement for teaching. Teachers' subject matter knowledge significantly impacts student achievement. It boosts teachers' trust and helps students respect them more. Less experienced teachers cannot meet the demands of their students' learning, making them ineffective in their field.

Similarly, in terms of content knowledge, comparable findings were reported in the research of Yüksel (2014), who sought to discover preservice English language teachers' perceived teaching competencies in her study of 40 preservice EFL teachers. According to the results, the participants had the highest level of competence in content knowledge and the lowest level of competence in classroom management. It can be concluded that an in-depth experience of the subject matter that teachers can teach allows them to use different methodologies that are best suited to implement it. They are secure in their choice of teaching methods and skills that are better for students' comprehension because they comprehensively understand the material. Some students need detailed clarification on any subject, which is only possible if the teacher knows about it. The teacher's experience and up-to-date awareness of content have a significant positive effect on the teaching-learning environment. It enables students to read, exercise, and apply knowledge and skills daily.

In addition to content knowledge, another critical competency is that a teacher equips this knowledge with pedagogical skills and presents it in a form suitable for the target audience. Moradi and Sabeti (2014) performed an analysis to identify and compare EFL teachers' (N= 34) and students' (N=122) understand

ing of highly successful teaching. According to the findings, both teachers and students valued pedagogical knowledge over teaching experience. Another research result was that students agreed more than teachers did on the significance of holistic teachers, relating their teaching to learners' lives, interests, objectives, and preferences, responding to their English proficiency levels, and being equal to those of learners. Similarly, Malikow (2006) examined college students' (N=361) impressions of highly successful teachers and discovered that the most frequently quoted personal qualities were challenging/having relatively high expectations; a good sense of humour, enthusiasm, innovation, and communication; explaining complex material well; and having a flexible teaching style. In light of these studies, teacher competency is a multilayered and important concept.

### **Aim of the Study**

For many years, studies examining the relationship between education and development have emphasized that a country's growth depends on the allocation of resources to education. Research has recently dominated education studies on the relationship between development and education quality (Chabbott and Ramirez, 2000; Petrakis and Stamatakis, 2002). Practitioners, namely, teachers, interpret any change that occurs in the field of education. As a result, teachers can be accepted as having an effective impact on education. Thus, having highly qualified teachers is a necessary condition for educational reform to take place. Considering these ideas, the researchers investigated the following research questions in the present study:

1. What do inservice EFL teachers think about the competencies an effective English language teacher needs to have?
2. 1.a. Do they think they have these competencies as teachers?
3. b. In which areas do they find themselves more competent and successful?
4. If they were to participate in an in-service training (inset) program to develop their competencies, which subjects would they choose?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The current study adopts a phenomenological approach to investigate how English language instructors perceive their level of competence as teachers. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that is especially well suited to this study, as it explores participants' thoughts, feelings, and personal narratives in an effort to capture the core of human experiences (Churchill, 2022; Smith et al., 2021). Phenomenological research aims to document people's lived experiences to provide researchers with a more profound grasp of reality as experienced by those who have firsthand experience with the phenomena they are studying. Phenomenological studies are very useful in educational research because

they provide comprehensive, in-depth accounts of participants' viewpoints, life experiences, and emotional reactions to a range of events (Koopman, 2017). This method provides insight into the complexity of teaching practice via the voices of individuals who engage with it on a daily basis, making it particularly pertinent for understanding teachers' self-assessments and perspectives on their professional competencies. This research intends to add to a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a successful English language teacher, anchored in the real-world experiences of practitioners, by interacting with the subjective experiences of teachers of English (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

### Sampling

Qualitative data were collected from 27 EFL teachers recruited via a convenience sampling method. Demographic information related to the participants can be found in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Demographic data of the participants

Participants	Gender		School Type		
	Female	Male	Primary	Secondary	High School
27	20	7	5	12	10

Table 1 clearly shows that 74.07% (n=20) of all the participants were female teachers, whereas only 25.9% (n=7) were male teachers. Notably, the majority of the participants were secondary school teachers, with the fewest participants being from the primary school level.

### Data collection tool

To gather data from the participants, a written interview form was administered to 27 English language teachers during an in-service teacher training program. The purpose was to gain insights into their perceptions of subject area competencies, understand the areas in which they feel more or less competent, and identify the areas in which they require professional development to enhance their competencies. The interview form consisted of eight questions designed to elicit responses on the basis of the teachers' perspectives and their teaching experiences. The types of questions are outlined in Table 2 below:

**Table 2.** Questions in the written interview form

Question Types	Wh-questions		Yes/No Questions		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Background questions	1	16.67	-	-	1	12.50
Transition Questions	1	16.67	1	50.00	2	25.00
Key Questions	3	50.00	1	50.00	4	50.00
Closing Questions	1	16.67	-	-	1	12.50
Total	6	100.00	2	100.00	8	100.00

According to Table 2, most Wh-questions are found in key questions (50%), whereas transition questions exhibit the second highest frequency (25%) within this category. Additionally, Wh-questions account for 16.67% of both the background section and the closing questions. Yes/no questions are equally distributed between transition and key questions. Overall, the key questions had the highest percentage (50%) among all the question types.

In the background questions, educators were asked to articulate their understanding of the concept of 'competency.' Background questions serve as informative tools to aid in understanding a topic. These questions typically revolve around one or two concepts and do not necessitate the same approach as research-based or evidence-based questions. In the transitional phase, teachers responded to whether they had been informed about the general competencies expected of a teaching professional and the field-specific competencies established by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MONE). Additionally, they were required to share their perspectives on the competencies of an effective English teacher during this phase. The question addressed in the study is a critical interview question. This part of the interview comprises four questions, including whether educators perceive themselves as competent, the areas in which they consider themselves more/less competent, the areas in which they feel they need to improve, and the actions they take to enhance their competencies. The concluding part delved into the subjects for which they would require support to develop their competencies if they were to participate in another in-service teacher training program.

### **Data analysis**

In the present qualitative investigation, an inductive method was used for data analysis in conjunction with a content analysis of written reports from EFL teachers. Content analysis is a research technique for the arbitrary interpretation of text data content through methodical coding and theme or pattern identification procedures (Kyngäs, 2020). Furthermore, this kind of study makes a substantial contribution to a better comprehension of other people's experiences and views (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

### **Trustworthiness of the study**

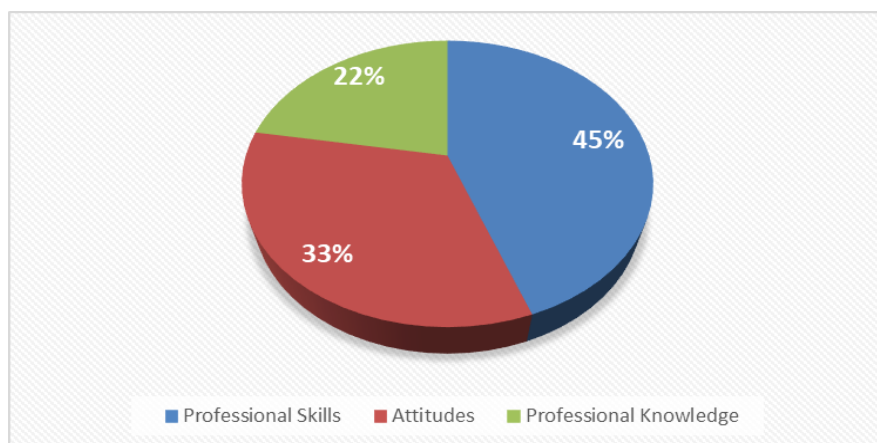
In this study on EFL teachers' views on competencies, several measures were undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. Data were collected from participating teachers during the CEFR CV Training Course, organized in accordance with the official letter of the Adana Provincial Directorate of National Education, dated November 14, 2023, and numbered E-19372713-774.01.01-89700362. A written interview form, incorporating pretested questions, was utilized to ensure consistency in data collection across all participants. To enhance content validity, the questions were aligned with established frameworks, including the Turkish Ministry of National Education's competency standards for teachers. Member checking was conducted by sharing the findings with

participants to confirm that their perspectives were accurately represented. Additionally, thick descriptions of the participants' demographic backgrounds, teaching contexts, and the research methodology were provided to contextualize the findings and strengthen their credibility and transferability to similar educational settings.

Ethical considerations were rigorously observed throughout the research process. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing an explanation. Furthermore, the participants were briefed on the study's scope and objectives, and confidentiality was strictly upheld. They were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that the information they provided would not be shared with any third parties. These measures ensured ethical compliance and promoted an environment of trust and transparency in the study.

## RESULTS

The first research question aimed to address teachers' perceptions of the subject area competency of an effective English language teacher more deeply. Twenty-seven English teachers working at public schools completed the written interview form meticulously prepared by the researcher. The findings, which encapsulate the key competencies perceived by these educators, are visually summarized in Figure 1 below. This figure not only presents the overarching themes but also includes direct quotations from the teachers, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of their perspectives.



**Figure 1.** Competencies of effective EFL teachers

When teachers were asked what the competencies of an effective English teacher are, the answers given were analysed via thematic analysis, and three different areas emerged. As shown in Figure 1, teachers emphasized professional skills the most (f: 12; 45%). The teachers agreed on the most often stated competencies regarding professional skills, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

*'...S/he can adapt the opportunities of the digital world to the lessons. S/he also gives practical situations used in daily life to students without boring them with details.'*

*'...It is important to present the introduction, development, and conclusion parts of the activities related to the subjects required by the course, without interruption, and logical errors.'*

*'A successful EFL teacher becomes aware of the holistic approach of four skills together with grammar and vocabulary.'*

*'..... transferring knowledge effectively in a creative way'.*

*'I think it means being able to express yourself and convey what you know correctly. It is also important to keep up with the technology and new approaches required by the age of students.'*

As excerpts indicate, the participants' statements are more related to the instructional delivery of the teacher and the management of the learning and teaching processes. This means that the knowledge of an effective English teacher is presented to the student in a fun and holistic way, in line with the student's interest and knowledge level, to carry out the learning and teaching processes effectively. Other perceived competencies are attitudes that effective English teachers are supposed to have (f: 9; 33%). The participants stated their opinions in the following excerpts:

*'In my opinion, an effective English teacher should be a teacher who can adapt to different conditions, is open to continuous improvement of his competencies, maintains his professional development, and is open to innovation.'*

*'...most importantly, these competencies include attracting students' interest and love to learn a foreign language culture'.*

*'Being able to communicate well, open to all kinds of development, tolerant, making students love English, contributing to their students' language development and guiding them'.*

By examining excerpts about competencies covering attitudes, one can understand that teachers mostly underline competencies that include approaches to professional development as well as communication with students. The statements underlining the guidance that supports the development of students also emphasized the need for teachers to have a positive attitude towards their own personal and professional development. In addition, the participants developed some effective teacher competencies covering the mastery of subject area knowledge (f: 6; 22%).

*'Being an effective English teacher requires being aware of language mastery, current language teaching methods and techniques, adaptation issues.'*

*'... If we work with small groups, some reading should be done on "young learners," and current developments should be followed.'*



*'They know the developmental characteristics of the age group they teach, know how they learn best, and get down to students' levels.'*

As evidenced by the excerpts above, effective English teachers are expected to be well informed about the theories and methodologies of the subject area. They are also required to have a broader understanding of pedagogical content knowledge to transfer the knowledge properly and efficiently while taking into account the developmental characteristics of students.

After receiving opinions on the competencies of an effective English language teacher, the areas in which the participants considered themselves competent in their profession were investigated with another research question. Thus, this study aimed to understand their self-awareness of their competencies in this field. Before answering this research question, the teachers were asked whether they considered themselves competent in teaching English. Among the 27 teachers who filled out the written interview form, two teachers stated that they definitely saw themselves as competent and thriving in this field. Fifteen teachers answered 'yes' to the self-competency question in language teaching. While five teachers stated that they see themselves as 'usually' competent, two teachers classified their competency levels as 'partially'. Two teachers did not want to answer the question because the perception of 'I am competent' would have side effects that might slow down the active teaching and learning process.

When asked in which areas of foreign language education they consider themselves competent, two main competency areas were highlighted. The most underlined area of competency of teachers is professional skills, which include planning educational instruction, creating learning environments, and managing the learning and teaching process related to teachers' in-class practices, as emphasized in the excerpts below:

*'I focus on reading and listening skills, and I ensure that my students are motivated. I place a lot of emphasis on my students' pronunciation. Last, the use of authentic material forms an essential part of my lessons.'*

*'My digital skills are at a good level. I find myself successful in producing and implementing projects, time management, classroom management, language teaching methods, and techniques.'*

*'I think that I can successfully cope with undesirable behaviours and situations in the classroom by attracting students' attention, especially with the use of different Web 2 tools and smartboard.'*

*'I find myself successful in making lessons more fun with the use of interactive games and songs without depending on the textbook alone. The contribution of the e-Twinning projects I am involved in is important.'*

*'... material preparation, time management and using different methods in my classes.'*

In addition, another self-perceived competent area is professional knowledge, which consists of the required subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge regarding the teaching profession. Notably, the knowledge of integrating different strategies, methods, and techniques that can be used in English teaching and integrating the understanding of students' development and learning characteristics into the teaching process stands out, as seen in the following excerpts:

*'... I find myself successful in language proficiency, expressing myself to students, and, most importantly, conveying what I know to my students.'*

*'I think I am good at knowing the periodic characteristics of the primary school group, being able to go down to their level, patience, knowing how they learn.'*

*'I think I can say that I am competent enough to teach English to children trying to grammar teach fun with simultaneous development of other skills, too.'*

Finally, the teachers expressed themselves on the competencies that include the general attitudes and values of the teaching profession, approach to students, and approaches to professional development, as stated in the excerpts below:

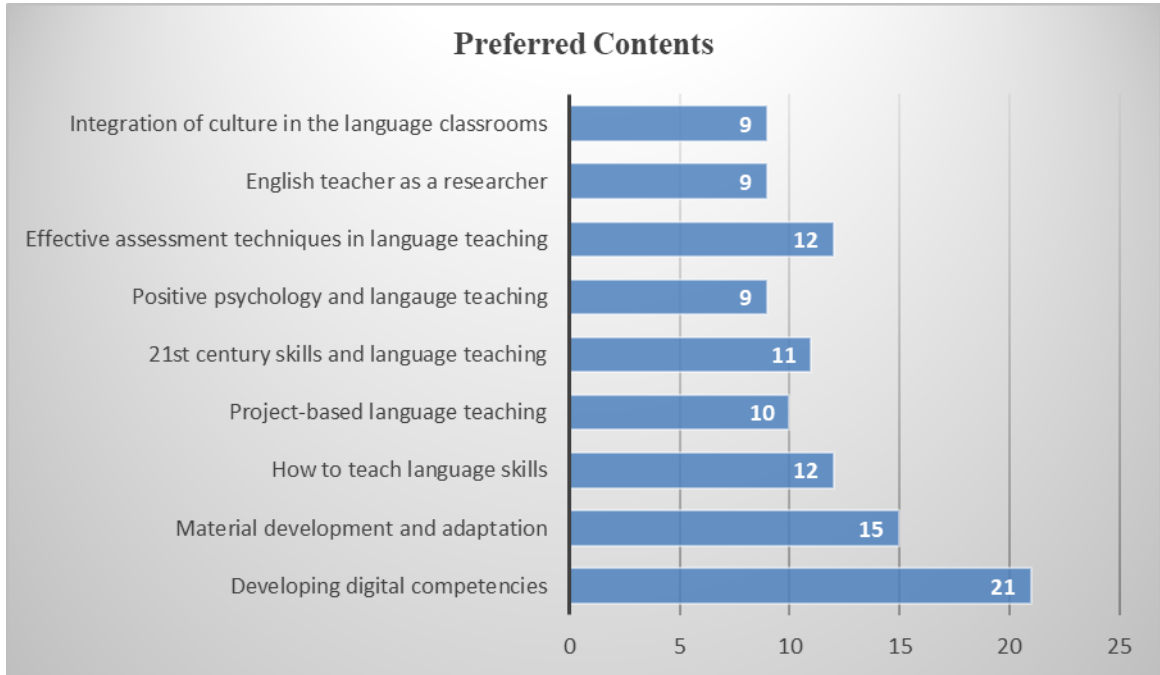
*'I can say that I am open to learning new concepts and methods related to my field, sharing them, and trying to apply them in appropriate teaching environments.'*

*'I especially find myself competent in using language, conducting research, professional development, and adapting what I learn in my classes.'*

*'I try to ensure that my students are motivated. I can guarantee that students have "intrinsic motivation" for assessment and evaluation.'*

*'... I am very good at communicating with my students and classroom management.'*

Considering all these statements, the teachers were asked what subjects they would need to support their competencies if they were participating in an in-service training programme. In addition to presenting some subject alternatives, the option 'other' was added, and teachers were given the right to make more than one choice. Figure 2 shows the results obtained from the written interviews regarding this research question.



**Figure 2.** Preferred contents of an INSET program

As shown in Figure 2, the most preferred subjects among the possible alternatives suggested to improve the competencies of teachers in an in-service training program are ‘developing digital competencies’ (f:21), ‘material development and adaptation’ (f:15), ‘how to teach language skills’ (f:12) and practical assessment techniques in language classrooms’ (f:12). The data obtained from the written interview showed that teachers needed to develop their language skills and teach them effectively. Another highlighted less competent area is the effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning processes. Thus, teachers should effectively carry out teaching and learning processes as professional skills.

## DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The current study investigated the self-awareness of English teachers regarding their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Twenty-seven English language teachers answered the written interview form that the researchers had already created.

As the extracts showed, it was evident that the participants’ responses were primarily concerned with how the teacher delivers instruction and how to manage the teaching and learning processes, both of which are connected to the teachers’ professional skills. This result implies that to carry out the learning successfully and teaching processes, the information of an effective English teacher is provided to the student pleasantly and comprehensively, according to their interest and knowledge level. According to Loughran and Russell’s (1997) research with preservice teachers, professional knowledge about teaching how to learn is fundamental, as a teacher is expected. Concerning teaching methods, Zhu Chang et al. (2013) also conducted research that correlates teachers’ innovative teaching approaches

with teacher competencies. According to this research, four basic competency concepts exist, including learning, teaching, and social and technological competencies. The mentioned basic competency is directly related to teachers' innovative teaching approach, which shows parallelism in this study. Moreover, in Mammadova's (2019) study comparing teacher quality and teaching quality, teachers who manage a qualified teaching process by integrating their skills and knowledge into teaching positively affect students' outcomes. The material and approach used in creative teaching should be customized depending on the students' interests, previous knowledge, and existing skill levels (Russ, 2003). Instead of being limited to particular and predetermined materials, the teacher adds, adjusts, incorporates, develops, and diversifies the teaching content to suit their students' needs and learning tasks (Chen, 2009).

In addition to the quality of instruction, providing adequate teaching materials and creating healthy and secure learning settings in which successful learning may be attained for all students is critical in terms of EFL teachers' professional skills, as evidenced by the utterances of the participants. Accordingly, Hsieh (2002) reported that upgrading the entire EFL environment increases student motivation: providing students with what they need and informing them about it encourages them to achieve more independently. Furthermore, Dornyei (1994) discovered that second-language motivation is closely related to the venue or location where the language is studied. Labrie and Clement (1986) also supported the presumption that low academic proficiency results from inadequate genuine immersion or an authentic environment, which leads to a lack of dedication of Taiwanese students to effective learning and the accompanying motivation for learning English. For this reason, both the quality of the language education offered to the student, the environmental conditions in which this education is given, and the variety of activities constitute an important place in terms of the professional skills of an EFL teacher.

Another conclusion drawn from the findings was that teachers emphasize competencies regarding attitudes, such as approaches to professional development and interaction with students. According to the participants' statements, effective English teachers follow innovations to keep themselves up to date with a very positive approach to their professional development. The subject of continuing professional development, which constituted the main point of this research, was thus expressed by the research participants. To explain better, Pettis (2002) posited that the teaching profession necessitates the adoption of lifelong learning by teachers. She identifies key characteristics of an expert teacher, stating that teachers should continually try new methods to improve themselves professionally based on their prior expertise. Additionally, she added that a teacher needs to be personally devoted to advancing his or her profession. Other findings of the study conducted by Babanoğlu and Yardımcı (2017) corroborate the results of the current study, suggesting that all the participants had highly favourable attitudes toward professional development topics, particularly lifelong professional development and self-confidence in

their professions. Thus, professional development is seen as an undeniable way to maintain and increase the quality of teachers. In addition, the acquired knowledge not only improves the teaching process but also leads to career development.

Among the characteristics that an effective English teacher should have, the teachers' attitudes towards the students were also outlined. The participants' attitudes towards the students were also specified as characteristics that an effective English teacher should have. These positive features contribute to the development of positive attitudes toward learning English, being tolerant, and behaving in a motivating way. As Jones (2007) emphasized, a student-centred classroom is not a place where students determine what they want to learn and what they want to accomplish. Instead, this is an environment where their needs as a group and as individuals are recognized and where they are constantly encouraged to engage in the learning process. On the other hand, Murphy, Delli, and Edwards (2004) list the essential qualities of an ideal teacher: showing interest in students, being patient and polite, teaching fun, and avoiding excessive prescriptiveness. These findings also comply with the statements about the approach to students in the 'Teaching Profession General Competencies' document published by the Ministry of National Education in 2017.

Finally, the participants developed several effective teacher competencies that also addressed subject-matter expertise. Effective English teachers are supposed to be knowledgeable about the ideas and teaching methods of the topic, as shown by the excerpts. To transmit information to students effectively and correctly, they also need to understand pedagogical content knowledge better. Although the sentences about the competencies in this field were the least expressed by the teachers, some studies draw attention to the subject-matter competency in the literature. In her empirical study, Brosh (1996) looked at the qualities of an excellent foreign language instructor. The participants included 406 ninth-grade high school students from 10 different schools and 200 English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew teachers. The results revealed that the teacher and student viewpoints were very close. Language ability was deemed the most crucial quality by both educators and students. The capacity of the teacher to communicate information in a way that is intelligible to students was also deemed to be the second most crucial quality.

Additionally, in Tarajová and Metruk's (2020) study, more than half of the participants (53.1%) stressed the need for effective teachers to have a high level of knowledge in the subject area they are teaching, together with a strong love for their work. These results align with the excerpts that the participants in the current study also underlined mastery of language and knowing the developmental characteristics of the group they teach. However, although the 'General Competencies for the Teaching Profession' report prepared by the Ministry of National Education includes legislative knowledge, the participants of this study did not express such knowledge as the qualities that an effective English teacher should possess.

After comments on the qualities of successful English language teachers were gathered, the areas in which the participants considered themselves competent in their chosen profession were examined via the subresearch question ‘In which areas do they find themselves more competent and successful?’ with an emphasis on their personally perceived competencies in language teaching. Professional skills, which include organizing lesson plans, designing learning environments, and monitoring the teaching and learning process concerning teachers' in-class activities, were the teacher competencies highlighted most frequently by the participants. With respect to their professional skills, teachers consider their most competent feature to motivate their students, adopting opportunities in the digital world, including interactive games, and making lessons more enjoyable via smart boards in the classroom. Emphasizing project-based language teaching, they also gave the use of authentic materials as an example, not only depending on the textbooks.

In addition, the professional knowledge of the teaching profession, which comprises the necessary subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, is another area where self-perceived competence is mentioned. The ability to incorporate various teaching strategies, methods, and approaches, as well as the knowledge of how to consider students' developmental and learning characteristics, has emerged. At this point, they expressed their ability to convey what they knew, especially considering the developmental and cognitive characteristics of the target group of students they taught. In parallel with this finding, Hansen (1995) stated that the ability to adapt the knowledge to be taught to the students in a fashion that might be readily comprehended is a crucial competency that a teacher should possess. The teacher's capacity to help the students comprehend the content knowledge in a meaningful way should be included in teaching in addition to the skilful exposition of the teacher's knowledge.

Finally, the teachers mentioned their skills, which involve basic attitudes and values of the teaching profession, approaches to students, and ways to professional development as their effective self-perceived competencies. Two issues they especially emphasize in this field stand out as their professional development by continuously researching new concepts and methods and, simultaneously, the positive relationships they have established with their students. Teachers undeniably need to be active in professional development activities that are vital in improving the learning process. Guskey (2002) reported that teacher professional development is crucial in improving educational quality through supporting teacher competency. Many researchers (Guskey, 2002; Putnam & Borko, 2000) believe that structured professional development activities are one of the essential variables in increasing the quality of teachers' and students' accomplishments.

Another example is the research performed by Cordia (2003) to explore how teachers and students perceive a good language teacher. According to the students, traits such as patience, kindness, fairness, dedication to teaching, willingness to learn from mistakes, and openness to change and improvement

are all needed for a competent English teacher. Thus, professional development and approach to students may be interrelated as necessary attitudes in this study. On the other hand, even though having good communication with students and a positive attitude towards professional development were underlined, cooperation with colleagues and national, moral, and universal values were not mentioned by the participants.

Finally, the teachers were asked what courses they would need to reinforce their competencies if they were registered in an inset program. In addition to offering particular topic possibilities, the option 'other' was also introduced, and teachers were given the option of making several choices. According to the findings, the most chosen subjects among the potential possibilities included developing digital competencies, developing materials and adapting, and teaching language skills. In addition to these two main issues, the teachers indicated that they need to expand their skills in lesson planning, project management, research, material development, and classroom management as additional content. English teachers need to improve themselves in many areas, such as being more effective in the classroom, responding to the needs of students, using the material effectively, knowing how to use digital tools in the lesson when necessary, and researching innovative foreign language teaching techniques and methods.

The current study has several limitations that merit consideration. First, the sample size of 27 English language teachers, selected through convenience sampling, may raise concerns about the representativeness and generalizability of the findings to a broader population of EFL teachers or different educational contexts. The reliance on a qualitative, phenomenological approach provides valuable insights but inherently limits the objectivity and replicability of the results, as the data interpretation depends significantly on the researcher's perspectives. The data collection method, based on written interview forms, might have constrained participants from articulating complex or nuanced perspectives, which could have been better explored through in-depth interviews or focus groups. Furthermore, the study primarily examines teachers' self-perceptions of their competencies, which are susceptible to personal bias and may not fully align with objective measures of effectiveness, such as classroom observations or student outcomes. It also does not sufficiently address external influences, such as institutional support or policy constraints, that could shape teachers' professional development. While the study highlights the importance of digital competencies, it falls short of exploring potential barriers, such as limited access to resources or training, that teachers may face when integrating technology into their practice. Addressing these limitations in future research would provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of EFL teacher competencies and their impact on language education.

The findings from the study emphasize the importance of enhancing EFL teachers' competencies through targeted professional development programs and rationally determined frameworks. One

critical area is the integration of digital tools into teaching practices, as teachers expressed a strong need for improved digital competencies. Training modules focusing on using interactive platforms, gamified applications, and online assessment tools can equip teachers to create engaging and effective learning environments. Additionally, workshops on material development and adaptation are essential to help teachers customize resources for diverse student needs, ensuring cultural and contextual relevance. Furthermore, skill-specific training sessions that explore innovative methodologies, such as task-based learning for speaking and scaffolding for writing, are vital for strengthening the teaching of core language skills. To support these efforts, competencies should be determined at rational and optimum levels, which can not only reveal teachers' professional development needs but also guide the creation of targeted performance and proficiency indicators. These indicators, when used realistically in evaluations, can enhance teacher quality and foster continuous growth (Tosuntaş, 2020).

Beyond technical skills, developing attitudinal competencies and classroom management strategies is crucial for holistic teacher development (Zhang & Tian, 2024). Teachers highlighted the need for strategies to maintain student motivation and manage classrooms effectively, suggesting a focus on evidence-based techniques and the use of interactive games or project-based learning. Lifelong professional development must also be promoted through mentorship programs and online communities, enabling teachers to share best practices and stay informed about emerging trends. Incorporating reflective practices into professional development can help teachers assess and improve their attitudes, empathy, and adaptability (Warren, 2018; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018). Pre-service teachers, in particular, should be made aware of the profession's required competencies and encouraged to engage in self-assessment. Furthermore, restructuring competencies to serve both as a guide and an evaluation criterion for teachers and teacher candidates could create a more coherent and supportive framework for professional growth. Finally, immersive techniques, such as virtual exchanges and collaborations with native speakers, can address the lack of authentic language environments, while training programs aligned with the developmental needs of students can help teachers tailor their approaches effectively. Collectively, these strategies establish a comprehensive roadmap for enhancing teacher competencies and improving educational outcomes.

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