

Probing the bond between EFL teachers' emotional literacy skills and professional development

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ABSTRACT: The emotional side of second/foreign language (L2) education has been widely explored in the past decade. However, the way English as foreign language (EFL) teachers' emotional literacy (EL) influences their professionalism has remained unaddressed. Against this shortcoming, this study examined the association between EFL teachers' EL skills and professional development. To do so, two online questionnaires were disseminated among 350 Iranian EFL teachers. The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) and correlation analysis revealed that all the five components of teacher EL skills were significantly correlated with teacher professional development, with social skills ($r = .419$) and emotional awareness ($r = .417$) having the strongest correlations. Moreover, the results of regression analysis indicated that teacher EL predicted 25.0% of the variance in teacher professional development. Of the components, three significant predictors were detected, namely emotional awareness, social skills, and self-regulation. Emotional awareness was the best predictor ($\beta = .268$, $p = .000 < .01$) that uniquely explained 7.18% of the variance in teacher professional development. Social skills and self-regulation were the other significant predictors of teacher professional development. The study ends in some conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research on teacher emotions in L2 teaching and professional development.

Keywords: EFL teacher, emotional literacy skills, professional development, emotions, SEM

Sondeando el vínculo entre las habilidades de alfabetización emocional de los docentes de EFL y el desarrollo profesional

RESUMEN: El lado emocional de la educación de una segunda lengua/lengua extranjera (L2) ha sido ampliamente explorado en la última década. Sin embargo, la forma en que la alfabetización emocional (EL) de los profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) influye en su profesionalismo no se ha abordado. En contra de esta deficiencia, este estudio examinó la asociación entre las habilidades de EL de los profesores de EFL y el desarrollo profesional. Para hacerlo, se distribuyeron dos cuestionarios en línea entre 350 profesores iraníes de EFL. Los resultados del modelo de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM) y el análisis de correlación revelaron que los cinco componentes de las habilidades de EL de los maestros estaban significativamente correlacionados con el desarrollo profesional de los maestros, con

habilidades sociales ($r = .419$) y conciencia emocional ($r = .417$) teniendo las correlaciones más fuertes. Además, los resultados del análisis de regresión indicaron que los docentes de EL predijeron el 25,0 % de la variación en el desarrollo profesional docente. De los componentes, se detectaron tres predictores significativos, a saber, la conciencia emocional, las habilidades sociales y la autorregulación. La conciencia emocional fue el mejor predictor ($\beta = .268, p = .000 < .01$) que explicó de manera única el 7.18 % de la varianza en el desarrollo profesional docente. Las habilidades sociales y la autorregulación fueron otros predictores significativos del desarrollo profesional docente. El estudio finaliza con algunas conclusiones, implicaciones y sugerencias para futuras investigaciones sobre las emociones docentes en la enseñanza de L2 y el desarrollo profesional.

Palabras clave: profesor de EFL, habilidades de alfabetización emocional, desarrollo profesional, emociones, SEM

1. INTRODUCTION

Parallel with the changing face of teaching languages over the past decades, many teachers have now found it essential to renew their knowledge and instructional practices, especially in light of several emotions involved in education (Derakhshan, 2022; Derakshan et al., 2022; Dewaele et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022). To survive the challenges of L2 education, language teachers need psycho-emotional support, mentoring, new competencies, and professional development (PD) so that the quality of their instruction constantly improves (Butler et al., 2004; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Fu & Wang, 2022). PD is one of the most influential means of boosting teachers' professional abilities and enhancing learning outcomes (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Estaji & Molkizadeh, 2022). According to Nawab (2020), PD refers to natural learning experiences including all the (un)planned actions, which are designed to directly or indirectly contribute to educational accountability and pedagogical effectiveness. The concept of PD has attracted a great deal of attention over the past few decades (Borg, 2018; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Estaji & Molkizadeh, 2022; Nazari et al., 2019). In light of these developments, the traditional approaches to teaching and PD, which lacked follow-up supports and discussions, are now replaced with continuous, dialogical, long-term, need-oriented, reflective, and updated alternatives of the field (Bowe & Gore, 2017). PD is no longer taught for teachers, but with teachers, who are active agents of the educational process (Youngs & Lane, 2014). Given these changing perspectives, PD is influenced by many internal and external factors (Kirkgoz, 2013). One such important factor that may significantly contribute to effective PD is emotional literacy. This is due to the nature of language teaching, which resembles "an emotional rollercoaster" (Gkonou et al., 2020).

The concept of emotional literacy (EL), as defined by Claude Steiner (1979), concerns one's ability to understand, express, and regulate emotions in social contexts (Alemdar & Anılan, 2020). Likewise, Steiner (2003) referred to EL as being aware of our emotions, personal strength, and life quality as well as the life quality of other people. Thus, the most significant characteristic of an emotionally-literate person is to be able to handle emotions in a way that improves his/her life quality and those of others. As argued by Alemdar and Anılan (2020), this definition of EL highlighted the term and turned it into a major area of interest in various studies.

Despite these developments, few studies, if any, have focused on the connection between language teachers' EL and PD. A large number of the research on PD have examined the

role of teacher-related characteristics (e.g., effectiveness, autonomy, and agency) in shaping and directing PD (Estaji & Molkizadeh, 2022), yet the emotional side of PD has remained under-explored. Teaching as an emotional job requires emotionally literate teachers (Benesch, 2017; Her & De Costa, 2022; Zembylas, 2003), yet this critical type of literacy and competency has not been sufficiently studied in language educational contexts. To address the highlighted gap and given the importance of EL in L2 education and teacher PD state and status, the current study aims to probe the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' EL and PD.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Emotional literacy

Over the past decades, research and theory on teacher PD have moved from a merely cognitive perspective toward a sociocultural conceptualization of teachers' socio-cognitive growth (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). This developing body of knowledge has opened the room for acknowledging the role of different professional constructs in teachers' development including agency, identity, motivation, and emotions (Dewaele & Wu, 2021; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). From among these constructs and following the affective turn and positive psychology in L2 education (Pavlenko, 2013), research has extensively examined the emotional side of language teachers' work (Derakhshan, 2022; Dewaele & Li, 2021; De Costa et al., 2018; Song, 2022). This developing knowledge base is increasingly examining how emotions relate to teachers' personal repertoires, institutional exigencies, and sociocultural particularities (Her & De Costa, 2022). It has thus become pivotal, as Song (2016) argued, to study emotions in light of the professional competencies that teachers possess as well as of how such emotional dynamics feature within in-class and institutional spheres.

A significant part of teachers' emotions is the extent to which teachers are aware of their emotional knowledge and how such knowledge is employed at the service of professional practices (Benesch, 2018; Rachmajanti et al., 2020; Zembylas, 2003). Within the pertinent literature, the awareness of emotions has been discussed under the umbrella term of EL (Eraldemir-Tuyan, 2019). The construct of EL reflects teachers' awareness of their emotions (Steiner, 2003). However, as Steiner (1996, 2003) held, EL moves beyond just an awareness of emotions and encompasses how such awareness is used for enhancing the quality of life both personally and interpersonally. From this perspective, EL has five dimensions according to Steiner (2003), as "being aware of one's own emotions, being able to sympathize sincerely, knowing how to manage emotions, being able to restore emotional damage and being able to develop emotional interaction" (p. 85).

Following this conceptualization of EL, research has extensively explored the concept across various educational settings (e.g., Alemdar & Anilan, 2020; Kliueva & Tsagari, 2018; Akbağ et al., 2016; Yeigh et al., 2016). For example, Alemdar and Anilan (2021) explored the impact of teachers' emotional labor behaviors and EL skills on their social capital. Seven different schools were selected and 399 teachers were selected as the research participants. Using structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationship among the study constructs, the authors found that "there are positive effects of emotional literacy on emo-

tional labor and emotional labor on social capital” (p. 1). Additionally, Kliueva and Tsagari (2018) explored the relationship between trait emotional intelligence and EL strategies of teachers from Cyprus and other countries. To this aim, 102 teachers were administered the questionnaires of the two constructs and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 teachers. The results revealed a strong relationship between trait emotional intelligence and EL. Moreover, the qualitative findings revealed that the educational setting (university versus school) serves as a key factor in teachers’ use of these educational strategies.

Moreover, Perry et al. (2008) explored the perceptions and practices of English teachers in primary schools of the UK. The study drew on questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and classroom observations for data collection. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed several aspects of EL as: (1) the teachers’ definition of EL corresponded with the earlier scholarship, (2) the teachers showed EL in their classes to enhance students’ social skills, and (3) most of the teachers focused on barriers to developing EL than the facilitators. Overall, prior research calls for more studies on EL in language educational contexts and how connected the concept is to social issues. Hence, the present research can be significant for connecting EL to teacher PD.

2.2 Teacher professional development

The issue of teacher PD has been a persistent concern in academic circles because various conceptualizations have been proposed regarding how to train teachers (Freeman, 2021; Johnson, 2016). In this sense, theory and research on PD have attempted to develop models that could effectively characterize the content of teacher learning. In one of the most widely-known models, Kennedy (2005) provided a comparative account of teacher PD, organized around nine models as (1) training (transmitting knowledge), (2) award-bearing (prize-based purposes), (3) deficit (addressing professional problems), (4) cascade (snowball knowledge dissemination), (5) standards-based (teacher learning-student learning mode of teacher education), (6) coaching/mentoring (novice-experienced teacher initiatives), (7) community of practice (group-based learning), (8) action research (problem-based programs), and (9) transformative (inquiry-based approaches). These nine areas cover most of the areas that have been proposed for teacher education since the era when teacher education was done primarily based on transmission-oriented approaches to those that are concerned with inquiry-based approaches.

In the context of second language teacher education (SLTE), teacher PD has been widely influenced by research on teachers’ cognitive processes (Borg, 2019). As Freeman and Johnson (1998) argued, the knowledge base of SLTE should come to terms with understanding the personal, institutional, and sociocultural dimensions shaping teacher learning. Following this shift of conceptual focus, the line of thinking on SLTE has opened room for a focus on the role of cognitive processes, institutional policy and planning, and macro-level social and cultural issues in teacher learning. For example, Johnson (2016) argued that there are three issues that should be borne in mind in conceptualizing SLTE, namely the content of the course, the socio-emotional capitals that teachers bring to the course, and the way the course is enacted by teacher educators.

Perspectives of teacher PD has increasingly argued for paying focal attention to the role of teachers' personal characteristics and sense-making processes in their growth (Beijaard, 2019; Guskey, 2002; Korthagen, 2017). The argument lying in this line of thinking is that for PD to be effective, it needs to relate to their personal, practical, and professional characteristics. Recently, L2 researchers have paid a growing attention to how emotions feature in teachers' PD (Freeman, 2021; Johnson & Golombek, 2021; Song, 2016). However, most of this knowledge base has remained at a theoretical level and the scope of research on how emotions relate to PD needs more empirical evidence.

Research on teacher PD has considered the wide range of social and educational aspects in teachers' professional practices. For example, Nawab (2020) explored the perceptions of Pakistani stakeholders (school leaders, teachers, departmental officials, and PD representatives) about teacher PD. Data were collected through surveys and questionnaires. The study findings revealed that "majority of stakeholders associate PD to external learning opportunities provided to the teachers" (p. 1). Additionally, Bayram and Bikmaz (2021) explored how Turkish teachers perceive lesson study as a professional development tool. Four university teachers were asked about how they engage in planning, implementing, analyzing, and reporting stages of lesson study and data were collected from reflective reports, interviews, group discussions, and classroom observations. The findings revealed that besides the benefits and challenges, lesson study "poses challenges in finding a topic and research question, determining the lesson design and teaching style, making student thinking observable and analyzing qualitative data" (p. 1).

In sum, a careful examination of the previous literature shows that emotions are significant parts of teachers' PD because emotions form the basis for teachers' socio-emotional performances. Furthermore, it is now widely acknowledged that research should explore further lines of how emotions relate to teachers' professionalism (see Song, 2022). In response to this scientific call and the importance of emotions in teacher PD, the present study aims to unveil the connection between PD and EL in EFL contexts. Since EL moves beyond capturing emotions at personal levels and situates emotions at an interpersonal level, its juxtaposition to PD adds to the rigor of the study. The study addressed the following questions:

- 1: Is there any statistically significant relationship between EFL teachers' emotional literacy skills and professional development?
- 2: Do EFL teachers' emotional literacy skills predict their professional development?

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The participants of this study included an initial sample of 350 Iranian EFL teachers, who filled out two questionnaires. After data screening, 323 were kept as gleaned data (Table 1). The age of the participants ranged from 24 to 50 ($M = 35.85$). The majority of the participants were teaching in either public/private schools (41.2%) or private institutes (33.4%), while others were private tutors (19.1%), university lecturers/professors (3.7%), and others (2.2%). Moreover, 34.1% of them reported that they had 1-5 classes per week; 53.9% had

1-6 classes and 12.1% had more than 10 classes. Their self-reports also indicated that 9.9% of them were teaching less than 10 students per week, 32.2% between 10 and 30, 15.8% between 30 and 50, 13.8% had 50-100 students, and 28.5% were teaching more than 100 students per week. The participants were informed of the goal of the study and reassured of their privacy and identity concerns. They completed the questionnaires willingly after filling out a written consent form before collecting the data.

Table 1. *Demographic Features of the Participants*

Feature	Category	N	Percent
Gender	Male	82	25.4
	Female	234	72.4
	Prefer not to specify	6	1.9
	Other	1	.3
Major	(Applied) Linguistics	27	8.4
	English Language Literature	33	10.2
	English Language Translation	21	6.2
	Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language	208	64.4
	Other	34	10.5
Degree	Diploma	27	8.4
	Associate of Arts	9	2.8
	Bachelor of Arts	122	37.8
	Master of Arts	100	31.0
	Ph.D.	12	3.7
	Other	53	16.4
Years of Experience	1-5	134	41.5
	6-10	53	16.4
	11-15	64	19.8
	16-20	35	10.8
	More	37	11.5

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. *The emotional literacy skills scale*

In order to gauge the participants' EL skills, Alemdar and Anılan's (2020) questionnaire was used. It includes 31 items divided into five sub-categories of motivation, empathy, self-regulation, emotional awareness, and social skills. The scale follows a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "never true" to 5 "almost always true". The overall reliability of the scale, obtained by Cronbach's alpha, has been reported to be .85, which is an acceptable level.

3.2.2. *Teacher professional development questionnaire*

The second instrument used in this study was teacher professional development questionnaire (TPDQ) developed by Estaji and Molkizadeh (2022). The questionnaire encompassed 76 items, which be responded through a 5-point Likert scale from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The items were distributed among 7 sub-components, namely method, motivators, obstacles, beneficiaries, needs, beliefs, and means. Concerning the reliability index, the results of Cronbach’s alpha indicated that the questionnaire had a high level of reliability and internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$).

3.3. **Data collection procedure**

In order to gather the data, the researchers created an online version of the questionnaires using Google Forms. The links were then disseminated over social networks (Telegram, Whats app). Before commencing the data collection, the respondent were informed of the purpose of the study and a written consent form was obtained. They were also assured about their freedom to leave the study, stay anonymous, and be of a confidential identity. Next, the researchers waited for 2 months (from January 8 to February 7) for the completion of the online questionnaires. The respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaires during non-instructional and rest times within two weeks. However, some of them were busy with their works and studies. Hence, more time was allocated to them without any push that might damage the data. After two months, the researchers collected 350 completed questionnaires and closed the links. Afterwards, the data was sorted and double-checked for typos and inconsistencies in the Excel spreadsheets. Finally, the data went through statistical analyses by the second author, who is an expert data analyst in the field. The results were then illustrated via Tables and Figures.

3.4. **Data analysis**

In order to answer the research questions posed in this study, a structural equation modeling (SEM) using ABM AMOS (version 24) was performed. First, the construct validity of the two questionnaires was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. The convergent and discriminant validity for the model was examined and the correlation between EL skills and professional development was calculated. Then, a measurement model was created to measure the predictability power of teachers’ EL skills over their professional development.

4. **RESULTS**

4.1. **The first research question**

Initially, data was screened for unengaged responses. To do so, the initial 350 cases were inspected for odd patterns. As a result, 21 cases with constant/increasing/decreasing patterns were spotted and excluded. Moreover, through examination of the standard deviation

of the answers for each respondent, 6 more cases with low standard deviations (below 0.5) were excluded as they were considered unengaged respondents. This left our final sample with 323 cases.

Before answering the research question, a CFA was run to make sure of the construct validity. The standardized loadings of the items are presented in Appendix. As reported, three items (L08, L16, and L23) from the EL skills and three other items from (Q05, Q41, and Q49) from the professional development scale had standardized loadings below 0.5. These items were excluded from the model as they may endanger the convergent validity (Kline, 2016). Then, the modifications suggested by the software that would cause parameter changes above 15 were taken into account, providing that they did not contradict with the literature. The final CFA model is presented in Figure 1.

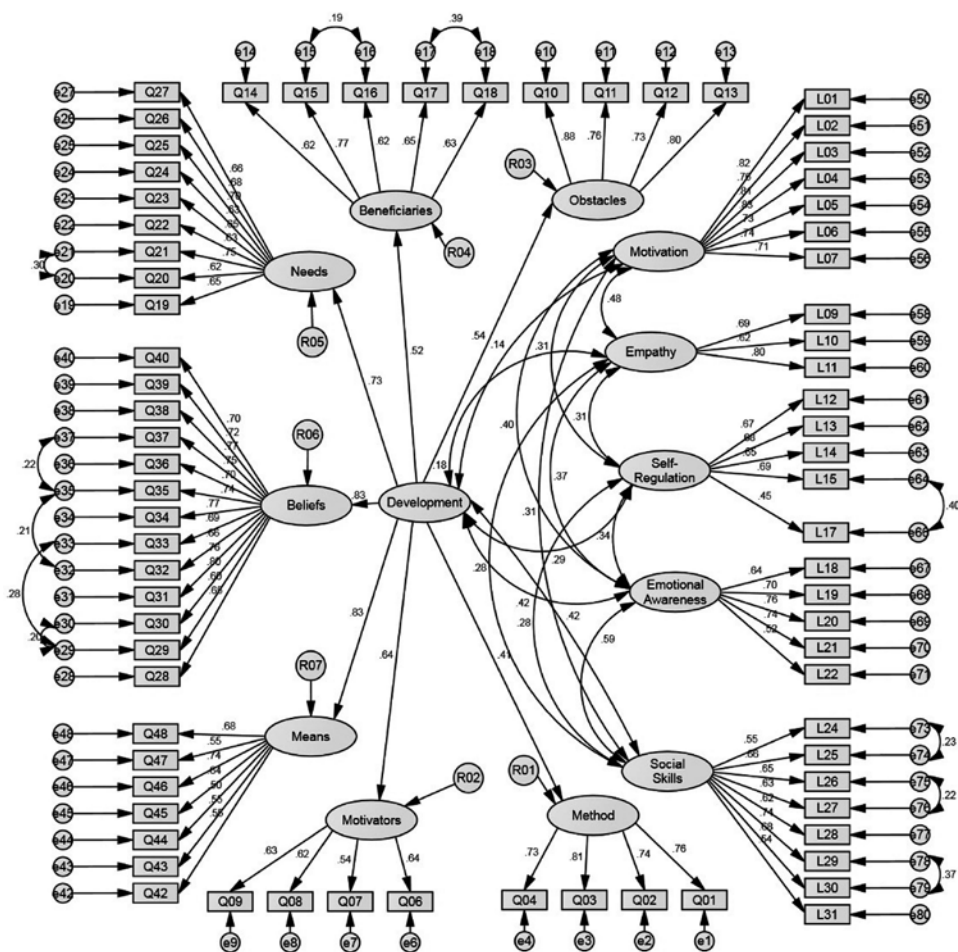


Figure 1. The Final CFA Model

According to Hu and Bentler (1999), in order for the model to have a goodness of fit, a number of criteria have to be met. These criteria are minimum discrepancy function by degree of freedom (CMIN/df), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The threshold for each criterion alongside the estimated values obtained from the data, are reported in Table 1.

Table 2. *Goodness of Fit Measures*

Criteria		Threshold			Evaluation
		Terrible	Acceptable	Excellent	
CMIN	4394.71				
df	2594				
CMIN/df	1.694	> 5	> 3	> 1	Excellent
RMSEA	.046	> 0.08	< 0.08	< 0.06	Excellent
CFI	.911	< 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.95	Acceptable
TLI	.905	< 0.9	> 0.9	> 0.95	Acceptable
PNFI	.665	< 0.5	> 0.5	> .06	Excellent
SRMR	.067	> 0.1	> 0.08	< 0.08	Excellent

As reported in Table 1 all obtained values represented acceptable to excellent goodness of fit indices. Having made sure of the model fit, the reliability and discriminant validity of the model were examined (Table 2).

Table 3. *Composite Reliability and Discriminant Validity*

	CR	AVE	MSV	Fornell – Larcker Criterion					
				Motivation	Empathy	Regulation	Awareness	Social	TPD
Motivation	0.913	0.600	0.226	0.775					
Empathy	0.748	0.500	0.226	0.476**	0.707				
Regulation	0.767	0.402	0.114	0.308**	0.314**	0.634			
Awareness	0.806	0.458	0.349	0.401**	0.369**	0.337**	0.676		
Social	0.842	0.403	0.349	0.307**	0.279**	0.280**	0.591**	0.635	
TPD	0.817	0.411	0.176	0.145*	0.177*	0.286**	0.417**	0.419**	0.641

* Correlation is significant at p < 0.05

** Correlation is significant at p < 0.01

As reported in Table 3, all of the variables had composite reliability (CR) values above 0.7, which reveals acceptable reliability. For all components in the model, the maximum shared variance (MSV) was above the average variance explained (AVE), which is an indication of convergent validity. Moreover, the square root of AVE (the bold values in the table) was above inter-correlations of the factors, indicating discriminant validity, according

to Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 3 also shows the correlations among the factors. According to the results, all five components of teacher EL were significantly correlated with TPD. While strong correlations were found between TPD and social skills ($r = .419$) as well as TPD and emotional awareness ($r = .417$), TPD’s relationship with self-regulation was medium ($r = .286$) and its relationships with motivation ($r = .145$) and empathy ($r = .177$) were weak.

4.2. The second research question

In order to answer this research question, which sought out how EL and its five components predict TPD, a regression analysis was performed. To do so, a regression imputation was used to calculate the total scores for each of the components in the model. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of the scores after imputation.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of the Scores*

		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness
Emotional Literacy	Motivation	1.19	5.24	3.0669	1.00364	-.158
	Empathy	1.38	4.68	3.2066	.73629	-.063
	Self-Regulation	1.29	4.25	3.6118	.49576	-1.482
	Emotional Awareness	1.83	4.42	3.6664	.46951	-.588
	Social Skills	1.61	3.93	3.1165	.42076	-.218
	Total	2.30	5.15	4.1805	.46930	-.529
Professional Development	Method	1.25	4.97	3.8092	.63268	-1.531
	Motivators	1.54	5.36	4.0109	.70685	-.285
	Obstacles	1.39	5.32	4.0020	.87106	-1.157
	Beneficiaries	.92	3.95	2.3779	.65764	.176
	Needs	1.02	4.26	3.1619	.43687	-.753
	Beliefs	1.46	4.20	3.5117	.53821	-1.027
	Means	1.59	3.57	2.8611	.40661	-.556
Total	1.13	2.64	2.1115	.25797	-.721	

Valid N (Listwise): 323

The imputed data was used in a SEM model to run a multiple linear regression. The measurement model is presented in Figure 2. In addition, Table 5 reports the results of the analysis.

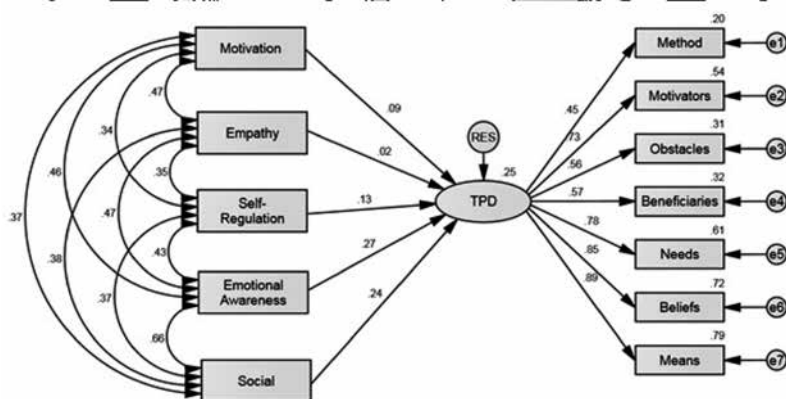


Figure 2. The Measurement Model

Table 5. Results of Multiple Linear Regression with SEM

		Weight	S.E.	C.R.	P	β	Multiple correlation R ²
TPD	← Empathy	.006	.024	.241	.809	.015	.250
TPD	← Regulation	.074	.035	2.143	.032	.130	
TPD	← Awareness	.162	.049	3.310	.000	.268	
TPD	← Social	.159	.050	3.163	.002	.235	
TPD	← Motivation	.024	.018	1.377	.168	.086	

As reported in Table 5, after taking into account the covariance among the predicting variables, the five components of teacher EL jointly predicted 25.0% of the variance in TPD. Two of the predicting variables, i.e., motivation and empathy, failed to make a significant contribution to the prediction of the TPD. Among the three significant predictors, emotional awareness was the best predictor ($\beta = .268$, $p = .000 < .01$) uniquely explaining 7.18% of the variance in TPD. Social skills ($\beta = .235$, $p = .000 < .01$) and self-regulation ($\beta = .130$, $p = .000 < .01$) were the other significant predictors, uniquely predicting 5.53% and 1.69% of TPD’s variance, respectively, could only have a unique prediction of 1.44%.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study was a bid to unpack the relationship between EFL teachers’ EL skills and PD. The results indicated that all the components of EL were significantly correlated with TPD. While strong correlations were found between TPD and social skills ($r = .419$) as well as TPD and emotional awareness ($r = .417$), TPD’s relationship with self-regulation was medium ($r = .286$) and its relationships with motivation ($r = .145$) and empathy ($r = .177$) were weak. Theoretically, the results lend support to positive psychology perspectives that highlight the role of emotions in language teaching (Derakhshan, 2022; Dewaele et al., 2019) as well as emotional intelligence theory, which accentuates one’s capacity to

perceive, understand, and manage emotion-laden encounters (Goleman, 1995). Empirically, the results of the study are in line with previous research (Alemdar & Anilan, 2020; Kliueva & Tsagari, 2018), which contend that EL is closely connected to the range of social and institutional issues that define teacher professionalism. More specifically, the findings concur with Kliueva and Tsagari (2018), who argued that EL in language contexts could be a significant predictor of PD.

Moreover, the results of the study are in tune with Korthagen (2017) and Nawab (2020), who argued that teachers' PD should embrace the whole socio-cognitive and emotional dimensions of teachers' professional practice. In this regard, Guskey (2002) stated that PD courses should be able to connect to teachers' daily practices and theoretical issues that are key to their professional work. The results can be attributed to the EFL context of Iran in which the consideration of psycho-emotional factors is gaining more attention. The participants regarded EL skills and PD as highly correlated probably because of their psycho-pedagogical knowledge and expertise that envisioned L2 education as an emotional endeavor. Another reason can be Iranian EFL teachers' previous training and PD programs that they had gone through to recognize the strong bond between emotions and education.

In this study, it was also identified that the five components of EL skills jointly predicted 25.0% of the variance in TPD. Of the five components, emotional awareness was the best predictor of TPD by uniquely explaining 7.18% of its variance. Social skills and self-regulation were the other significant predictors. However, motivation and empathy failed to significantly predict TPD. The results are on a par with prior research (e.g., Alemdar & Anilan, 2020, 2021; Kliueva & Tsagari, 2018; Akbağ et al., 2016; Yeigh et al., 2016), which considered emotional awareness as a key component of EL. Likewise, the results echo that of Eraldemir-Tuyan (2019), who ran an EL development for EFL teachers in Turkey and maintained that teachers' EL and emotional awareness foster their development. Furthermore, the results are consistent with Rachmajanti et al. (2020), who contended that for L2 teaching as a social practice, EFL should be socially competent enough. They also claimed that teachers' social competencies and skills influence their PD. The interface between self-regulation and TPD is also comparable to Butler et al. (2004), who described how self-regulation and collaboration could lead to professionalism. The results could be due to Iranian EFL teachers' high social intelligence, emotional intelligence, and knowledge of communicative competence, which highlight social skills and emotional awareness. Another justification can be the changing trends in L2 education in EFL contexts, which are shifting toward sociocultural perspectives and a situated L2 education. These demand EFL teachers to be professionally, socially, and emotionally competent.

Moreover, weak correlation between motivation, empathy, and PD can be ascribed to the vagueness of these concepts to the participants. They might have confused motivation with students' motivation. Additionally, it might be because of teachers' weak knowledge and practice of empathy in Iran as a predictor of TPD. In sum, while this study provided useful insights about the correlation between EL skills and TPD, it is not clear that this bond is due to teachers' perceptions and practices or intervening factors like demographics, experience levels, of institutional factors. This is left to future researchers as many teacher-related variables are affected, shaped, and directed by other pertinent factors.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In light of the obtained results in this quantitative study, it can be concluded that working on EFL teachers' EL skills, especially their emotional awareness, social skills, and self-regulation leads to their professionalism and PD. As teaching is a highly emotional profession, many aspects of teachers' practices hinges upon their perceived emotions. Therefore, it can be asserted that having ample literacy regarding teacher and teaching emotions brings about academic growth, pedagogical success, and goal achievement on the part of teachers. In these regard, the study can offer implications for EFL teachers, teacher educators, institutional policymakers, and program designers.

Regarding teachers, the findings could inform them of how they can engage in self-inquiry approaches that are structured around their emotions. In doing so, teachers gain a self-aware of their emotions that ultimately contribute to students' learning. EFL teachers can also provide an emotionally secure environment in which student grow socially and emotionally. Moreover, teacher educators may find the results beneficial in that they can run TPD courses that specifically address the role of emotions in L2 education, especially the intersection of EL skills and teachers' professional work. Furthermore, a focus on emotional awareness of EFL teachers in pre-service and in-service TPDs could enhance teachers' personal and interpersonal skills, especially in institutional terms. In addition, institutional policymakers can benefit from the findings of this study by embedding policies related to the emotional side of teachers' work. They can modify and revisit their plans and decisions regarding the nature of teaching and education. Teaching is by no means emotion-free and TPDs must allocate times and practices to its affective side. This requires a change of policies at micro and macro levels. In case these objectives are met, all the students and teachers could benefit from the academic environment that is institutionally created because there will be alignment between policies and practices. Finally, the results may have clear implications for L2 TPD program designers in that they can understand the personal, social, and professional aspects of L2 education from an emotional lens. Thus, TPD designers could use these perspectives to positively shape language teachers' professional growth.

This study offered fruitful ideas regarding the interface between EL skills and TPD in EFL context. However, it suffered from some limitations, as other studies. The data were collected only via questionnaires while the complementary instruments like interviews and observations could provide richer data and interpretations. The design was exclusively quantitative. Future studies can employ mixed-methods, longitudinal, case study, and qualitative research designs. Moreover, further research is invited to examine the role of cultural disparities and norms in the interplay of EL skills and TPD. Additionally, the dynamics of EL skills and TPD can be explored through experimental studies in which the participants go through treatments regarding EL and PD. Likewise, future research can be carried out on the role of teachers' EL skills in L2 assessment practices, especially alternative assessments like learning-oriented assessment and dynamic assessment (see Banitalebi & Ghasvand, 2023; Derakhshan & Ghasvand, 2022). Finally, the contribution of EL skills to EFL teachers' assessment literacies and identity construction can be scrutinized in the future (see Estaji & Ghasvand, 2021; 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

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