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Toward Designing a Model of Professional Skills for Iranian EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT: Recently, with the growing interest in teachers' professionalism, lots of scholars have focused on different aspects of professionalism in teaching. One of the main aspects of teachers' professionalism, which is related to structural theory and competence-oriented perspective, is teachers' professional skills which is considered as a dimension of effective teaching. This study aimed at developing a model of professional skills for Iranian EFL teachers. To this end, a qualitative design was used. For the purpose of data collection, individual and focus group interviews were conducted. The participants of the study consisted of 25 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who were teaching English at secondary level of high schools in Bandar Abbas, Iran. They were selected through purposive sampling because those teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience at secondary level of high schools were recruited in the study. To collect the data, first, the interviews were conducted. Then, the elicited responses were transcribed and codified according to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) systematic steps of open, axial and selective coding. The findings revealed three major themes (interpersonal skills, principle skills, pedagogical skills), nine categories and twenty-seven subcategories. As an implication of the findings, EFL teachers are recommended to consider professional skills while teaching to improve their teaching as well as their students' learning.

Keywords: Professional skills, Professional development, Professional practice, Teacher effectiveness

Introduction

Recently, with the growing interest in teachers' professionalism, lots of scholars have focused on different aspects of professionalism in teaching (Gupta & Lee, 2020; Mayahi & Mayahi, 2014). According to Sancar, Atal, and Deryakulu (2021), teachers' professional development plays a vital role in students' achievement. They believed that professional development could not be easily defined since it is characterized by a multidimensional structure and changes across a teacher's professional life. In the same vein, Gupta and Lee (2020) considered teacher professional development as an important factor in student achievement.

One of the main aspects of teachers' professionalism, which is related to structural theory and competence-oriented perspective, is teachers' professional skills which is considered as a dimension of effective teaching. Based on the structural theory, to provide a proficient educational ground and cope with uncertainties and antinomies, teachers need to develop some abilities. As an instance of such abilities, teachers ought to develop close relationships with their pupils, and simultaneously maintain a professional distance (Wilden & Porsch, 2017). On the other hand, in the competence-oriented perspective, there is emphasis on teachers' knowledge, competencies, beliefs and a variety of

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characteristics such as motivational aspects which are necessary for effective teaching (Baumert & Kunter, 2013).

According to the Saka and Saka (2009) and Sancar, Atal, and Deryakulu (2021), given that professional skills help teachers improve their personal and general efficacy and consequently their quality of teaching, they need to gain basic knowledge about how to develop their professional skills and adapt them to their teaching process effectively. Moreover, they are of the belief that professional skills help teachers create a warm classroom climate, promote learner willingness, enthusiasm, and motivation and build an interactive teacher-student relationship to enhance learning. Moreover, Nang and Chan (2015) state that since EFL teaching is a complicated and challenging task, it is necessary for EFL teachers to equip themselves with both knowledge of subject matter and different sets of skills to apply in their classes professionally to make foreign language learning a pleasure for their students and enhance their own job satisfaction.

With a view to these discussions, it can be argued that because professional skills play a crucial role in EFL teaching, EFL teachers need to develop these skills by incorporating knowledge of subject matter with different teaching skills and moral values, and combining theories of teaching with teaching methodology and curriculum with co-curriculum to enjoy their teaching (Tudor, 2015).

The ELT literature abounds with studies addressing teachers' professionalism from various perspectives such as teachers' professional knowledge, teachers' professional developments and teachers' professional scales; however, few studies have addressed the importance of teachers' professional skills in EFL area. More particularly, the related studies have just scrutinized only one or a few indicators of professional skills, ignoring the fact that the competence of teachers includes a set of professional skills indicators. Another gap identified in the literature is that there is not any model of professional skills which can be used by EFL teachers or EFL teacher educators to enhance their own teaching and their students' learning effectively (Saberi & Sahragard, 2019). This is while, as put by Rokhyati (2015), professional development is a necessity for a teacher. In the absence of professional development, teachers' knowledge/information may become obsolete and keep them from providing their students with successful and relevant materials. Professional development must be shaped throughout a teacher's career course. This sense of professionalism should be sustained for a teacher to become a professional teacher (Rokhyati, 2015). This means that it is expected that a teacher continues his/her professional development during his/her career if he/she seeks to improve his/her professional competence as an inevitable component of a teaching job.

Moreover, it can be observed that although professional skills of teachers have been addressed in some studies (e.g., Asadi & Motallebzadeh, 2013; Lin, Cheng & Wu, 2015; Saberi & Sahragard, 2019; Wichadee, 2011); EFL teachers' professional skills have not received sufficient attention, at least in the context of Iran. Therefore, the present study tried to draw out the perceptions of EFL teachers about professional skills. This inquiry elicited Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions about professional skills by drawing upon insights from interview to show what indicators of professional skills were used by these

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teachers to promote their own teaching and their students' learning. Thus, the present study aimed to find out answers to the following questions:

Q1: What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards professional skills?

Q2: What qualitative model regarding teachers' perception toward professional skills emerges out of running interview?

Review of related literature

Within the past two decades, various theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted with the aim of shedding more light on the current status of the EFL teacher education programs. A significant issue investigated by TEFL scholars is the concept of teachers' professional skills since by advent of post-method pedagogy in second language (L2) education, there has been a shift of attention from a passive conceptualization of teachers towards a more active and constructivist view of teachers as theorizers and decision makers in the world of classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Scholars have explored professional skills and its indicators from different viewpoints with the aim of improving the status of language teaching education.

For instance, Wragg (2003) was of the claim that teachers' professional skills are pre-requisites for teachers and argued that teachers who possess such professional skills as class management, questioning and explaining maintain consistency in their teaching, are successful in their teaching. Additionally, Cruickshank et al. (2011) believed that professional skills help effective teachers to establish an appropriate teaching condition, provide explicit instruction, monitor students' progress, provide feedback consistently and proficiently increase learning in their classes. Erden (2005) enumerated the following professional skills for teachers: General culture, contextual knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills such as communicational skills, democratic skills, ability to design, ability to prepare teaching process, and ability to prepare suitable learning environments for children with special education needs.

Empirically, Sezer et al. (2019) examined the opinions of school administers toward professional values and professional skills which were required to be gained by classroom teachers. For this purpose, they conducted a qualitative study and interviewed 10 school administrators. They noticed that professional skills include communicational skills, technology using skills, pedagogical content knowledge, planning skills, material designing and using skills.

Zamani and Ahangari (2016) explored Iranian English language learners' perceptions of qualities of an effective English language teacher (EELT). A questionnaire composed of four categories including English proficiency, pedagogical knowledge, organization and communication skills, and socio-affective skills was utilized to collect the data. As shown by the results, English communicative skills were considered as important in teacher effectiveness.

Shahvand and Rezvani (2016) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about effective teaching in foreign language classrooms with the aim of addressing the need for a deep understanding of the role of teaching effectiveness in EFL classrooms. To this aim, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed among 90 Iranian EFL instructors of the English language. The data analysis showed no significant

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difference between male and female Iranian EFL teachers in terms of their teaching effectiveness, no significant difference between experienced and novice Iranian EFL teachers' stated beliefs on their effective teaching, and no significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' beliefs about effective teaching and their effective teaching.

Demiroz and Yesilyurt (2015) compared ELT students' and teachers' perceptions of an effective foreign language teacher. Effective Teacher Questionnaire was used to collect the data. According to the results, ELT students' and teachers' perceptions of an effective foreign language teacher were significantly different.

Kaboodvand (2013) explored perceptions of a group of Iranian young learners, their parents and language teachers about characteristics of effective language teachers in public schools. Data collection instruments were interview and questionnaire. To achieve the objectives, a mixed methods design was employed. Data analysis revealed that interviewees regarded teachers' language proficiency, class management, affective factors, appearance and dressing style and ability to build the right rapport with the students as determinants of teacher effectiveness.

Moradi and Sabeti (2014) attempted to compare teachers' and students' perceptions of effective teaching. A researcher-made questionnaire consisting of five categories including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, communication skills, managing skills and teaching experience were utilized for the purpose of data collection. Findings showed no significant differences between teachers and students in terms of their perceptions of effective English teacher.

Material and Method

Since this study aimed to design a model of teachers' professional skills based on the interview data, it benefited from grounded theory method within a qualitative paradigm.

Participants: The participants of the study consisted of 25 (10 males and 15 females) EFL teachers who were teaching English at secondary level of high schools in Bandar Abbas, Iran. They were selected through purposive sampling because those teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience at secondary level of high schools were recruited in the study. The selected teachers held B.A, M.A and Ph.D. degree. It is worth mentioning that the number of participants was determined based on the data saturation point. In other words, both face to face and focus group interview were continued until no new idea was added to data and data saturation was reached. Out of the original sample who participated in the face to face interview, 8 teachers voluntarily participated in the focus group interview. This number was selected based on the rationale behind focus group interview as stated in research references (Ary & et al., 2014).

Instruments: The present study benefited from semi-structured interviews both in individual and focus group forms. The interviews aimed at uncovering and clarifying the participants' perceptions about teachers' professional skills. It is worth mentioning that interview questions were extracted from existing literature about teachers' skills. All interview sessions were audio-taped for transcription and further analysis. The individual interviews lasted from 20 to 35 minutes. The focus group interview lasted for

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2 hours (each participant could speak 15 minutes). For the purpose of credibility and dependability of interview data, low inference descriptors and member checking were used.

Data collection procedure: To collect the data, first, the sample was selected through purposive sampling. Then, to observe the ethical considerations, the participants' consent was taken. Moreover, they were ensured about anonymity and confidentiality of their personal information. Next, the researcher developed the interview questions through consulting the existing literature. After designing the interview questions, first, individual interviews were conducted. Then, the focus group interview was done. However, before running the interviews, the participants were informed that their responses would be audio-recorded. Also, for their convenience, the participants were free to answer the questions in Persian or English. Then, the audio-recorded data was transcribed for further analysis. It is worth noting that both individual and focus group interviews were administered through WhatsApp Application.

Data analysis: The first step in data analysis was reading and re-reading the data to organize and transcribe them (Ary & et al., 2014). After organizing the data, the next stage was codifying the raw data, and hence, reducing them into manageable codes. In this stage, a considerable number of codes emerged. Once the coding of the transcripts was completed, the next step was assigning similar codes under certain categories and in order to ensure if the codes belong to the same categories, two more colleagues double-checked them. At last, selective coding was employed to generate a grounded theory by interpreting the interrelationships that emerge among categories in axial coding (Creswell, 2013). The aforementioned steps led to the emergence of three main themes.

To establish the reliability and validity of the interview data, low-inference descriptors and member checks were used. Using low-inference descriptors means presenting direct quotations from the interviews which allow the reader to experience the participants' world by seeing the actual words of the respondents. Using member checks involved the researcher's sharing her interpretations of the data with the participants to avoid any miscommunication, identify inaccurate interpretations, and show courtesy to the participants by letting them read what has been written about them. In member checks, the researcher got feedback from the participants about the study's findings.

Results

Regarding the first research question 'What are the perceptions of Iranian EFL teachers towards professional skills?', the first theme that emerged from the data was interpersonal skills, and it had two main categories, namely motivational skills and communicational skills (Figure 1). Each of these categories had some subcategories (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) which will be further explained in subsequent sections.

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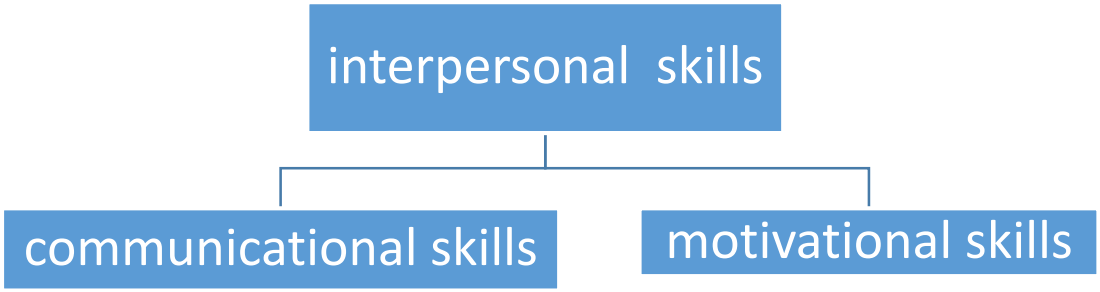


Figure 1 Interpersonal skills and its categories

1.Interpersonal skills

1.1Communicational skills

Emotional interaction

Individual Interview: Teacher 4 said**, "**I prefer to give my students positive energy during my teaching and provide a good relationship with them. I also try to enhance their self-esteem and build rapport with them."

Focus group interview: Teacher 8 commented "I try exclude unpleasant emotions, provide warm atmosphere. Moreover, I try to increase sense of humor in my students."

Verbal communication

Individual Interview: Teacher 1 said, "Obviously, it is clear that providing feedback whether in oral or written form help students to understand their improvement and their gaps in learning. Additionally, to improve speaking I encourage students to negotiate with themselves and me."

Focus group discussion: Teacher 6 discussed that, "Providing feedback let students know their progresses and their weaknesses. I use corrective feedback to let learners know their errors and mistakes. Using ice beaks and negotiation strategies are also helpful ways to have a good relationship with them."

Nonverbal communication

Individual Interview: Teacher 11 said, "Our body movements such as hand movements and our facial expressions help me to transmit my messages better and have a better communication with my students."

Focus group interview: Teacher 2 commented, "Facial expressions, eye contacts and hand movements which we usually use unconsciously help us to send the messages and teaching points more effectively.

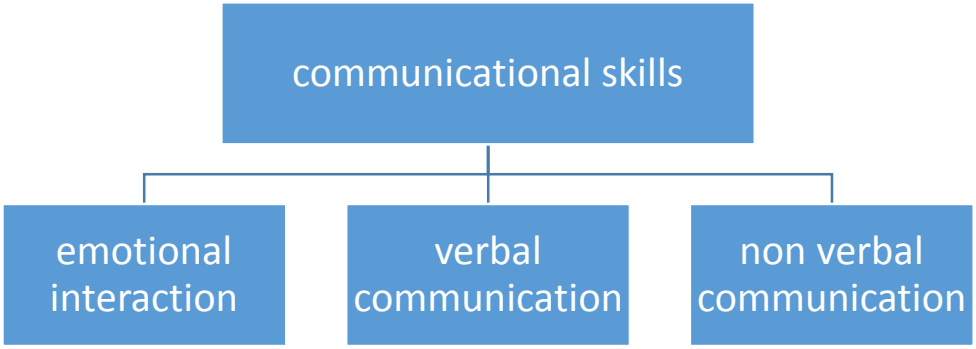


Figure 1.1. communicational skills and its subcategories

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1.2 Motivational skills

Encouragement

Individual Interview: Teacher 17 said "I sometimes assign extra scores or prizes to boost students' eagerness to learning and collaborating but most of the time I use encouraging words or let them to assist me in class activities to do their job well."

Focus group interview: Teacher 5 discussed, "I usually encourage my students by assigning additional marks for their activities. Moreover, I sometimes put the best students head of their groups. But, giving extra marks makes them more active."

Punishment

Individual Interview: Teacher 13 commented, "In spite of using encouragements to motivate students to participate in class activities some students are still less active so I deduce their marks."

Focus group interview: Teacher 4 commented," Some students don't attend in class regularly or when they are in class they are not active and don't participate in class activities; so, I punish them in different ways for example by deducing their marks or calling their parents."

Improving students' self confidence

Individual Interview: Teacher 8 said**, "**By considering the aim of learning a new language, we should apply some strategies to improve students' self-confidence. To achieve this purpose, I usually ignore students' mistakes when they are speaking. Then, I ask them or their classmates to correct the mistakes after their presentation**."**

Focus group interview: Teacher 5 discussed, "Most students in EFL classes are afraid of speaking. So, it is necessary for us to boost their confidence by giving them responsibility, asking them to have presentation in front of their classmates and, playing role or singing."

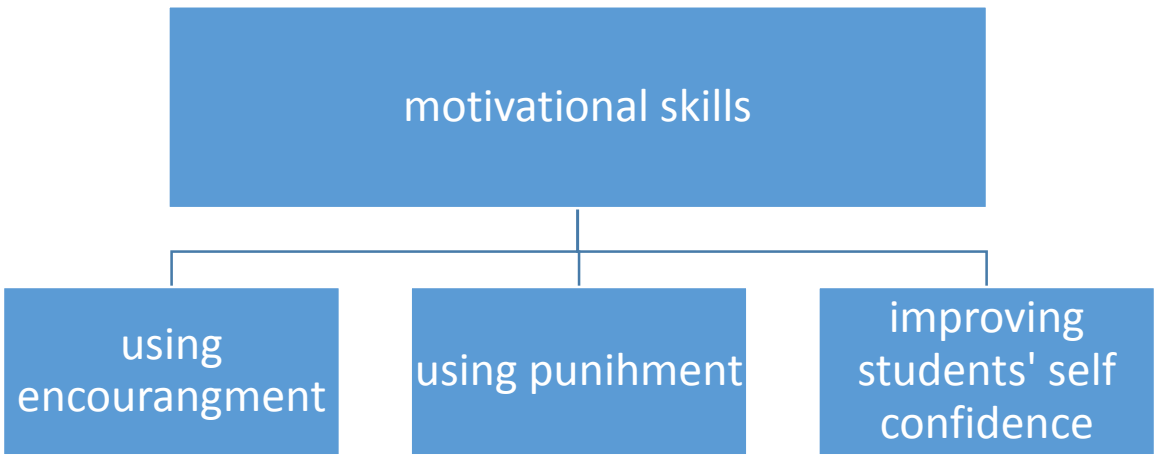


Figure 1.2. motivational skills and its subcategories

2. Principle skills

It is the second theme that elicited from the data, and it has four main categories (Figure 2), organizational skills, thinking skills, personal and establishing set skills.

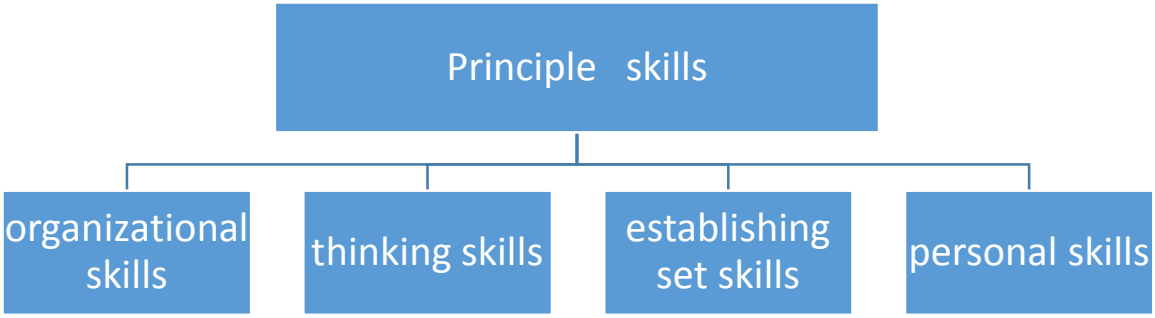


Figure 2. principle skills and its categories

2.1 Organizational skills

Classroom management

Individual Interview: Teacher 12 said, "I usually assign tasks and activities for students to do in class and most of the time, they do their activities and tasks in their groups or by pair work. This strategy helps students develop language skills. Additionally, group work helps them to increase their confidence, and become responsible for their own learning."

Focus group interview: Teacher 8 stated, "In my classes, students sit in their groups. Groups give students the opportunity to learn better, to have better communication and do their tasks and activities effectively."

Designing tasks and activities

Individual Interview: Teacher 19 said**,** "I can't rely only on students' book and workbook practices to develop students' language, so, I try to provide students with extra tasks and activities such as role playing and simulating in order to practice learned contents and also use language skills."

Focus group interview: Teacher 3, "Most of the time, I design tasks and activities that help students to use language skills and taught contents."

Preparing lesson plan

Individual Interview: Teacher 1 said**, "**I prepare my lesson plan every session. I manage the objectives, time and what I want to do in the class such as tasks and activities and evaluation of students."

Focus group interview: Teacher 7 discussed, "Every teacher is a manager of her or his classes. Because, there are many different things that we must do every session to have effective teaching. For example, we must manage students' tasks and activities, students' engagement, our instruction and teaching material and many other things."

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Disciplinary skills

Individual Interview, Teacher 18 said, "I always try my students be relaxed but this doesn't mean they can do what they want. There are some rules to avoid misbehaviors in my classes."

Focus group interview: Teacher 18 commented, "There are some rules and regulations which must be considered by my students. My students know they must be polite and respect to each other and me".

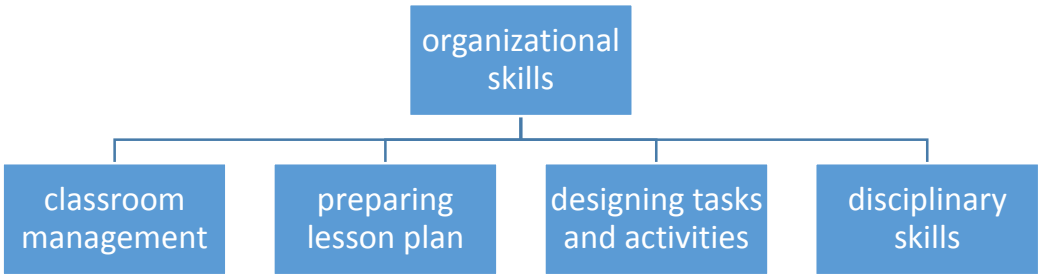


Figure 2.1. organizational skills and its subcategories

2.2 Establishing set skills

Students' needs analysis

Individual Interview: Teacher 21 said," As an experienced teacher, I'm sure my students have different background knowledge. Some of them are strong and some are weak. So, before starting my teaching I always try to know their needs."

Focus group interview: Teacher 5 said, "If we want to be effective teachers, we should consider students' background knowledge, their levels and their needs before instruction. Because we have different students with different needs."

Providing climate for teaching

Individual Interview: Teacher 23 said**, "**I consider the aim of lesson, levels and needs of students for teaching. Then, I set my daily plan, tasks and activities."

Focus group interview: teacher1 commented, "I consider needs, levels and prior knowledge of students then prepare the situation for effective teaching."

Using variety

Individual Interview: Teacher 20 said**, "**I don't teach in a same way. I use novel activities and different games to prevent students from being bored. Additionally, I innovate new opportunities for my students to interact with each other and me. "

Focus group interview: Teacher 2 discussed" We shouldn't let students to be tired in our classes. To do this, we must be creative and use different games, different types of questionings, assessments, gestures and different teaching methods."

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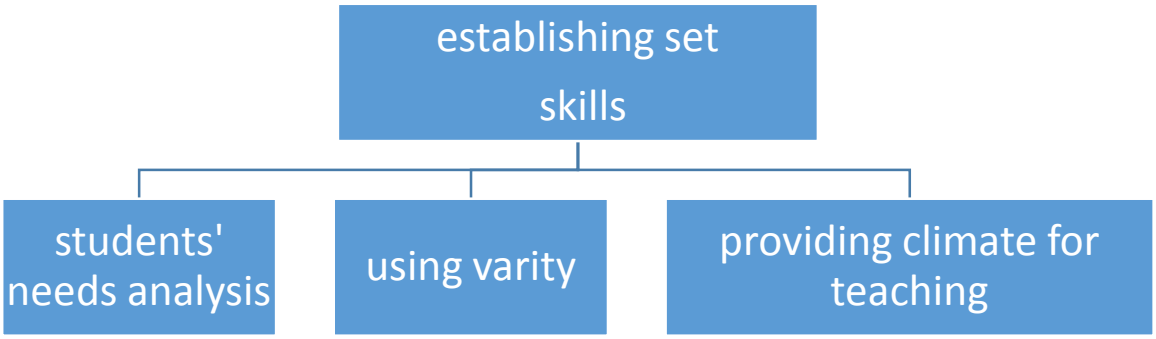


Figure 2.2 Establishing set skills and its subcategories

2.3 Thinking skills

Decision-making skills

Individual Interview: Teacher 19 stated, "Skillful teachers must decide about many aspects of their teaching such as the materials which are used, students' needs, headmaster, parents and ministry expectations and so more. So, it is very important for us to make the best decision for each particular situation that shows our authority in our classes."

Focus group interview: Teacher 7 said "There are many unforeseen situations during our teaching which we must decide about them. For example, we cannot sometimes run our lesson plan because of school's program, or one students may ask a question that would change our plan."

Problem-solving skills

Individual Interview: Teacher 8 said**,** "There are many problems before, during and after our teaching which must be solved by ourselves. For example, students' argumentation in group works."

Focus group interview: Teacher 6 discussed, "We should find the best solution to immediate and short problems which occur in our classrooms some of these problems are related to our teaching or maybe to our learners."

Critical thinking skills

Individual Interview: Teacher 15 said**, "**I usually analyze and evaluate the teaching situation and then prepare my lesson plan."

Focus group interview: Teacher 5 stated**,** "I have an analytical mind and always analyze students' performance on assessments, their activities, evaluate text books and materials to run my classes effectively."

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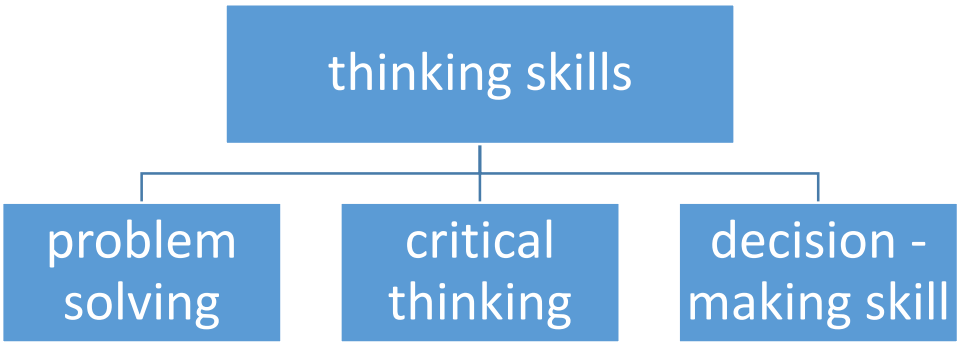


Figure 2.3 thinking skills and its subcategories

2.4 Personal skills

Flexibility

Individual Interview: Teacher 24 said, "As a professional teacher, I always consider that everything doesn't go on based on my plans and what I have in my mind. So, I must prepare to change my plans every minutes."

Focus group interview: Teacher 4 commented" Every skillful teachers has more than one plan for his or her classes because we cannot sometimes handle our classes based on the prepared plan."

Leadership

Individual Interview: Teacher 14 said," I think that effective teachers should be the leader of their classes to have positive influence on their students."

Focus group interview: Teacher 3 commented, "Teachers in general and EFL teachers in particular are the core of their classes and they play an essential role in students' success and achievement not only in class but beyond the class. "

Mentoring

Individual Interview: Teacher 9 said," I always consider students have their challenges and problems. So, I try help and guide them carefully. "

Focus group interview: Teacher 8 commented, "I always try to guide and help students and be a good counselor for them."

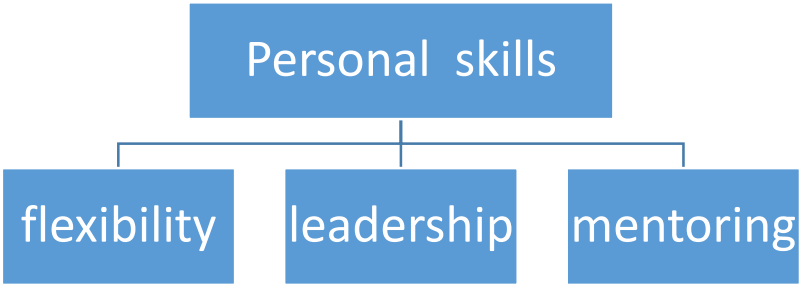


Figure 2.4. personal skills and its subcategories

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3. Pedagogical skills

Pedagogical skills (Figure 3) are the third theme of the study which includes presentation skills, evaluation skills, technical and technological skills.

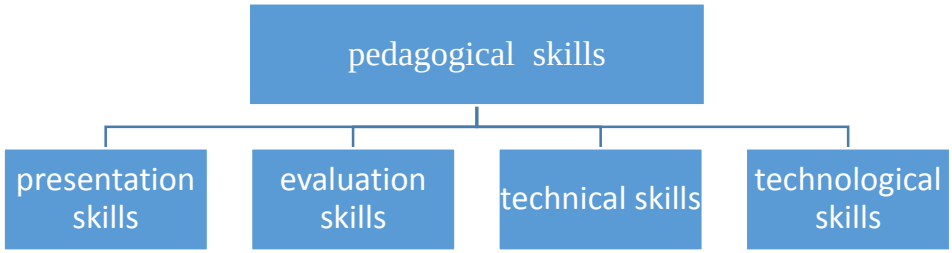


Figure 3. Instructional skills and its subcategories

3.1 Presentation skills

Using materials

Individual Interview: Teacher 10 said," Every successful EFL teacher needs to use text books, supplementary and authentic materials in line with each other to help learners develop their language skills."

Focus group interview: Teacher 5 stated," Students must be informed that they learn English in order to communicate in real world. To achieve this aim, we must use authentic and supplementary materials beside textbooks to motivate students and boost their interest in using language."

Give clear instruction

Individual Interview: teacher 12 said, "We must consider that our students are in different levels, with different background knowledge. So, we should speak with appropriate tone and use clear and precise language."

Focus group interview: Teacher 2 commented," As an experienced teacher, I always try to use simple words during my teaching, speak calmly, provide examples and explain about the purpose what I am going to teach."

Flipped teaching

Individual Interview: Teacher 11 said," I usually ask students to watch movies or listen to files before my teaching and then I ask them questions or ask them to do their assignments. This strategy helps me to have an active class**."**

Focus group interview: Teacher 4 commented, "Nowadays, teacher centered and traditional method of teaching are not workable and our classes must be interactive. To do this, I ask my students to read related references, listen to audios and watch related movies before presenting new lesson."

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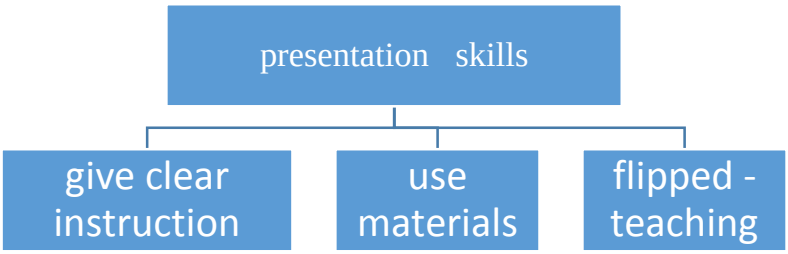


Figure 3.1. presentation skills and its subcategories

3.2 Evaluation skills

Assessment

Individual Interview: Teacher 23 said, "I assess my students formatively at the end of every session to know that whether they have learnt the contents which have been taught or there are any gaps or misunderstandings. To do this, I ask learners oral questions or sometimes ask them to summarize what I have taught. Moreover, my students take written exam at the end of each month and at the end of each term which is summative assessment."

Focus group interview: Teacher 1 commented," Assessing students' needs special skill. we have different types of assessments that meet educational needs. I check students' understanding step by step and regularly without making them nervous and stressful. Both formative and summative assessment are used to know students' development or their problems."

Self-monitoring

Individual Interview: Teacher 13 stated, "I occasionally evaluate my teaching to identify my problems in teaching and try to remove them to be an effective teacher. "

Focus- group interview: Teacher 3 said, "I sometimes receive some comments about my teaching such as too much using of English words in my classes or high speed of my teaching. So, I try to check my teaching to solve the problems."

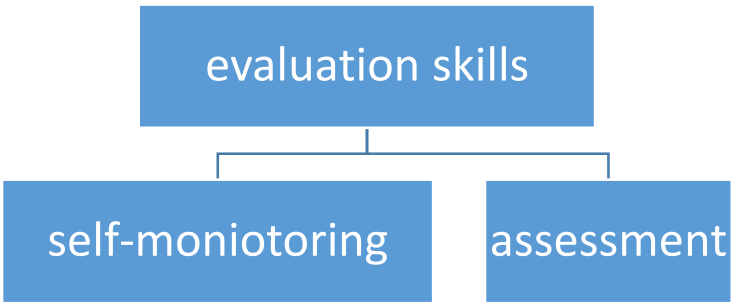


Figure 3.2. Evaluation skill and its subcategories

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3.3 Technical skills

Observation

Individual Interview: Teacher 13 said**, "**I always try to be a good observer to check my students' activities and progress. Because many students don't like to talk about their problems and difficulties in learning."

Focus group interview: Teacher 3 commented, "I try to be a skillful observer. Good observation helps me to provide direct feedback. Additionally, it helps me to notice students' improvements and challenges of my teaching."

Integration four language skills

Interview: Teacher 10 stated, "Students learn English in order to communicate. So, they need situations to use four languages skills. As an EFL teacher, it is my duty to provide situations and tasks that let students use four language skills. "

Focus group interview: Teacher 2 said," Skillful teachers always have in their mind that language skills are integral part of language teaching and they are not separated from each other. So, they should provide activities and tasks that students are forced to use language skills to have better interaction with each other."

Reviewing

Individual Interview: Teacher 10 stated, "English language is forgettable. To avoid this, I use games, questions and other things to review what I have thought."

Focus group interview: Teacher 6 said, "I review vocabularies and grammar constantly because I know if I don't do this, my students forget them easily."

Questioning

Focus group interview: Teacher 7 commented, "knowin**g** how to ask questions to contribute students in teaching process is very important. I sometimes ask same question from all students but most of the time, I ask different questions from different students.

Co-teaching

Individual Interview: Teacher 16 said, "I ask my students to assist me in teaching and play my role for their classmates. I have noticed that weak students are more active and ask their problems when their friends are their teacher."

Focus group interview: Teacher 8 commented," one of the useful ways to encourage students to use language is asking them to play the role of the teacher. It is a collaborative practice that boost motivation and enthusiasm in learning English. "

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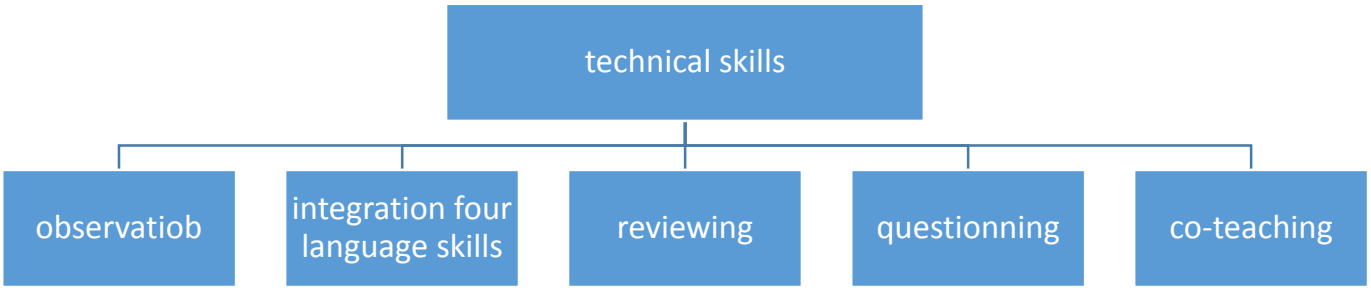


Figure 3.3. technical skills and its subcategories

3.4 Technological skills

Using computers

Individual Interview: Teacher 7 said, "Nowadays, computers has helped us to enhance the quality of our teaching. For example, I use computers to type exam questions or make power points slides to teach grammar or vocab. Moreover, I surf the net to find interesting contents related to presented content of textbooks."

Focus group interview: Teacher 4 said, "Every skillful teacher needs to have the basic knowledge about using computers. During last years, use of computers has grown in our field. I myself use computers to make the content of textbooks more interesting for my students, to make power point slides and content creation besides searching in internet. So, computer has helped me in different aspect of my career."

Using social networks

Individual Interview: Teacher 20 said, "I create groups in Telegram and WhatsApp with my students to send them clips, listening files and sample of exam questions."

Focus group interview: Teacher 1 commented, "Social networks such as WhatsApp and Telegram has helped me to save my teaching time. One of my problem was that I didn't have enough time to check assignments and homework in class. By creating groups in WhatsApp, I can check students' homework and they also ask their problems before their exams easily. I ask them to read conversation and reading parts to check their pronunciations and many other things such as sending clips, short stories and movie."

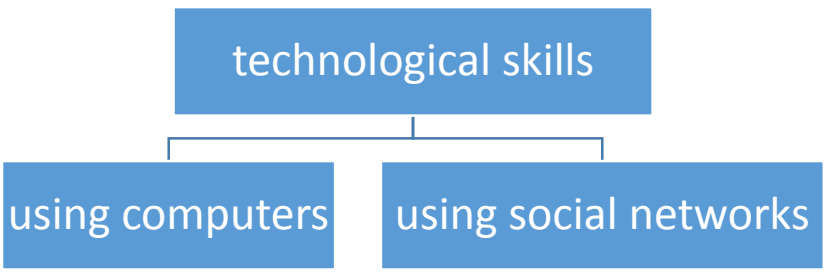


Figure 3.4. technological skills and its subcategories

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Concerning the second research question 'What model of Iranian EFL teachers' professional skills can develop following the results of the emerged skills?', the following model was designed.

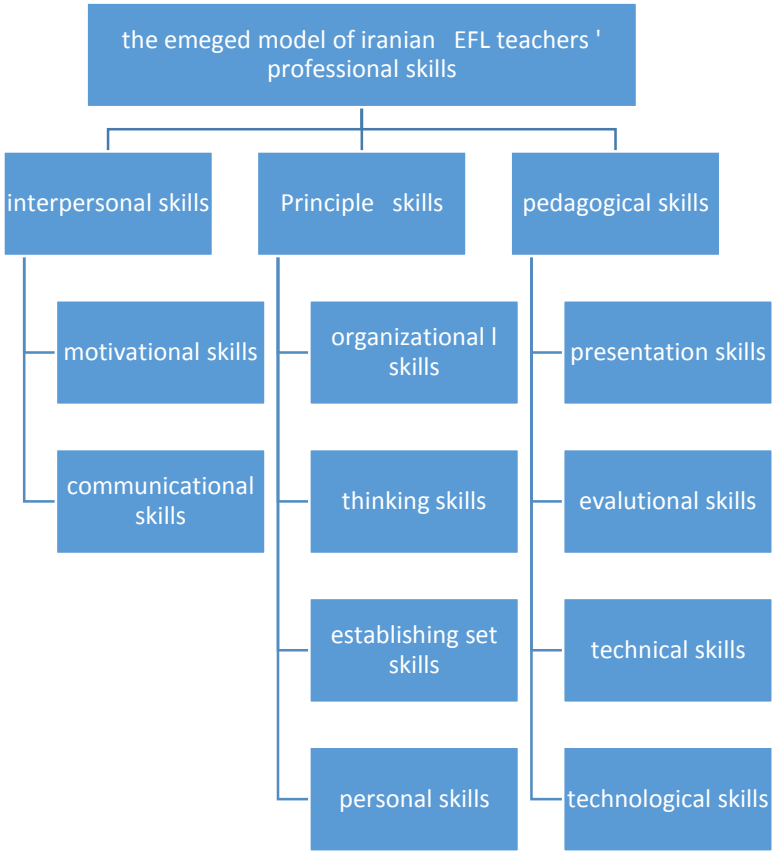


Figure 4. The emerged model of Iranian EFL teachers' professional skills

As Figure 4 depicts, the model consists of three major themes and eight categories.

Discussion

The results of the present study revealed that Iranian EFL teachers' professional skills consisted of three main themes including interpersonal skills, principle skills and pedagogical skills. Each of these themes included some categories and subcategories representing the skills employed by effective English teachers to enhance the quality of their own teaching and their students' learning.

In line with the present study, Kaboodvand (2013) explored perceptions of a group of Iranian learners and language teachers about characteristics of effective language teachers and reported that participants regarded teachers' pedagogical knowledge as a determinant of teacher effectiveness. Similarly, in the study conducted by Wichadee (2010), respondents perceived communicative skills of English teachers as important factors in teacher effectiveness. In the same vein, in the study conducted by Khojastehmehr and Takrimi (2009), communication (social) skills and knowledge were perceived as important factors in teacher effectiveness. The findings of this study are also consistent with the results of some previous related studies (e.g., Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2011; Erden, 2005; Sezer, 2019; and Wragg,

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1998) though this study adds some new categories to the existing literature. Motivational, communicational, managerial and evaluation skills were also reported in the studies by Emmer and Gerwels (2005), Hashemi and Ghasemi (2011), and Rubio (2009) as important factors in teacher effectiveness. Moreover, regarding thinking skills, the findings of this study are in line with Green and Jax (2011). Presentation, organizational, personal, evaluation, establishing set and disciplinary skills were also supported in the study by Kalebic (2005). Last but not least, consistent with this study, Shishavan and sadeghi (2009) found that preparing the lesson well, using lesson plans, unbiased assessment of what students have learned, integrating group activities to class and assigning homework, flexibility, considering students' needs and being smart affect the efficacy of teachers. Additionally, the findings are consistent with Zein's (2016) study wherein communicative skills, content knowledge, language knowledge and psychological knowledge were found as the professional development needs of EFL teachers. Furthermore, Hamid (2010), Kabilan and Veratharaju (2013), and Le and Do (2012) have enumerated language knowledge as a basic need of EFL teachers.

This model is in line with the mottoes of post-method pedagogy that support a data-driven model. As reflected in this model, effective EFL teachers, besides knowledge about subject matter needs to develop a set of skills in form of professional skills to enhance their teaching and their students' learning. These skills include a wide range of strategies and activities which EFL teachers employ in their classrooms to communicate and motivate their students. On the other hand, what teachers do to have a well-organized classroom, to provide a good atmosphere for their teaching and students' learning besides decision making, problem solving and critical thinking activities can be components of professional skills. Additionally, what teachers do to save their authority in their classrooms, to adapt himself or herself with students' needs(flexibility) and to guide their learners are other components of professional skills. Moreover, this model indicates using social networks and computers, what teachers do to evaluate their students' learning, what they do to instruct and present the teaching content in long with strategies that effective EFL teachers run in their classrooms to ask questions, to monitor their learning, to improve students' language skills and their learning are other characteristics of professional skills

Conclusion: In conclusion, this study uncovered Iranian EFL teachers' perceptions of professional skills in the form of a model consisting of three major themes (i.e., interpersonal skills, principle skills and pedagogical skills) and some interwoven categories and subcategories. According to the results, it is concluded Iranian EFL teachers perceive interpersonal skills, principle skills and pedagogical skills as significant players in the realm of effectiveness of English teachers. Also, the obtained results lead to the conclusion that Iranian EFL teachers perceive effectiveness of English teachers as dependent on such skills as motivational skills, communicational skills, organizational skills, thinking skills, establishing set skills, personal skills, presentation skills, evaluation skills, technical skills and technological skills. Finally, the results contribute to the conclusion that teacher effectiveness is a multidimensional notion wherein different factors have a hand. It is contrary to the public opinion that it is language proficiency which contributes to EFL teacher effectiveness.

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This study has some pedagogical implications for different groups of stakeholders including Iranian EFL teachers, teacher education curriculum planners, researchers, etc. Iranian EFL teachers become more informed of the role of effective factors on their own professional development. In other words, Iranian EFL teachers' attention is absorbed to the fact that teaching English is characterized by some professional skills without which no teaching success and effectiveness occurs. Teacher education curriculum planners become more aware of the necessary professional skills in English teaching and the (potential) need to take appropriate measures in planning future curricula so that the professional skills needs of Iranian EFL teachers are incorporated in teacher education curricula. Future researchers can validate the proposed model among a larger population.

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