Research Paper

Psychometric Properties of the Already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL Teachers

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the psychometric features of the already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers. A correlational survey design was used benefiting from Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study participants consisted of 300 (126 males and 174 females) Iranian EFL teachers who were conveniently selected from different Azad and State universities and various institutes and high schools of Iran. The instrument used for data collection was the already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers. This scale consisted of 90 Likert-type items that measured ten subscales (i.e., Good inter-personal behavior, Making students motivated, Time management ability, Recognition of students' needs, Positive thinking skills, Critical thinking ability, Verbal intelligence, Mastery over different teaching methods, Evaluation skills, and English language proficiency). SPSS and AMOS 26 were employed to analyze the data, using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha test. The results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, along with alpha coefficients, provided evidence in support of the validity and reliability of the developed scale. Therefore, it can be concluded that the already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers can be used in recruiting individuals for the teaching profession so that teachers' professional development and students' English achievement are guaranteed.

Keywords: *Aptitude; Language Teaching; Teaching Success; Teaching Effectiveness*

خصوصیات روانسنجی مقیاس از پیش ساخته شده استعداد آموزش زبان برای معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی

هدف از این مطالعه بررسی خصوصیات روان سنجی مقیاسی از پیش ساخته شده در ارتباط با استعداد آموزش زبان برای معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی می باشد. بدین منظور از روش پیمایش همبستگی با استفاده از مدل معادله ساختاری استفاده گردید. شرکت کنندگان در این مطالعه شامل 300 (126 مرد و 174 زن) مدرس ایرانی زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی بوده که بشیوه در دسترس بودن از دانشگاه های مختلف دولتی و آزاد انتخاب گردیدند. ابزار مورد استفاده جهت جمع آوری داده ها مقیاسی از پیش ساخته شده در ارتباط با استعداد آموزش زبان برای معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی بود. این مقیاس دربرگیرنده 90 گویه به شکل لیکرت بود که 10 زیر مجموعه را می سنجید (رفتار میان فردی مناسب، ایجاد انگیزه در دانش آموزان، توانایی مدیریت زمان، شناخت نیازهای دانش آموزان، مهارت های تفکر مثبت، توانایی تفکر انتقادی، هوش کلامی، تسلط بر روش های مختلف آموزش، مهارت های ارزیابی و بسندگی زبان انگلیسی). تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها با استفاده از نرم افزار "SPSS" و"AMOS 26" و بکارگیری تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و تاییدی و همچنین آزمون آلفای کرونباخ صورت پذیرفت. نتایج تحلیل عاملی اکتشافی و تاییدی و همچنین ضریب آلفای کرونباخ مبین روایی و پایایی مقیاس ساخته شده بودند. بنابراین می توان نتیجه گرفت که مقیاس از پیش ساخته شده استعداد آموزش زبان برای معلمان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی بعنوان زبان خارجی می تواند جهت استخدام افراد در حرفه آموزش مورد استفاده قرار گیرد تا رشد حرفه ای مدرسان و دستاورد زبانی زبان آموزان تضمین گردد.

کلمات کلیدی: استعداد، آموزش زبان، موفقیت آموزش، اثربخشی آموزش.

Introduction

Education quality is intermingled with a set of factors among which the role of teachers is well accepted. Teacher effectiveness cannot be imagined as separate from teachers' characteristics. Among diverse teacher characteristics, teaching aptitude is of significance in teacher effectiveness. Interestingly, teaching aptitude has been enumerated as one of the main predictors of teacher effectiveness (Kumari & Naik, 2016). Kukruti (1990), a pioneer of the studies on psychological correlates of effective teachers, for the first time, reported a significant relationship between teaching aptitude and teaching success. Therefore, teaching aptitude is worth investigating with a view to the vital role of teaching success in students' learning success and achievement (Kant, 2011).

By teaching aptitude, teaching aptness, inclination, and tendency are meant. It refers to cognitive capability, attitude and affection towards students, adaptability, and willingness to teach. It is a particular capability, ability, tendency, enjoyment, and fitness in the teaching profession. Teachers achieve the required proficiency or achievement level in the teaching job through teaching aptitude (Kumari & Naik, 2016). A view that teaching aptitude can serve as a predictor of teachers' success or failure in future teaching, plays a vital role in teachers' fulfilling the assigned responsibilities. As stated by Tasleem and Hamid (2012), teaching aptitude, as a specific capacity or ability, is distinguished from the general intellectual ability, and attaining proficiency or achievement in teaching passes through the teaching aptitude channel.

As evidenced by the previous literature (Kaur, 2007; Saurabh, 2013; Ushakumari, 2008), besides teaching success and effectiveness, teaching aptitude is positively and significantly associated with students' academic achievement. Interestingly, the mentioned association between teaching attitude and academic achievement of students has proved to be true for students belonging to diverse gender groups (Ganoje, 2011; Mangal, 2009), intelligence levels (Devi, 2013), contextual conditions (Saurabh, 2013), and language proficiency levels (Mishra, 2007; Sindhu, 2013; Tasleema & Hamid, 2012).

Given that any educational system with any theoretical underpinning seeks the academic achievement of its learners, the critical role of teaching aptitude cannot be underestimated. Like a crystal-clear issue, teaching aptitude is a measurable characteristic. This is the main reason behind different efforts made to develop a teaching aptitude scale that works in different contexts.

However, through reviewing the related studies, the researchers found that in general, the volume of research devoted to language teaching aptitude is scarce in both domestic and foreign contexts. In particular, as perceived by the researchers, missing in the literature, in the context of Iran, is research on developing a language teaching aptitude scale for Iranian EFL teachers. Having been motivated by this, the researchers set out to develop and validate a language teaching aptitude scale for Iranian EFL teachers in a previous study. However, considering practicality issues and time constraints, validation of the proposed scale could not be conducted in the mentioned study. Therefore, inevitably, it was delayed to the present study. To this end, the following research question was formulated:

Does the Already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude scale for EFL teachers have acceptable validity and reliability?

Literature Review

Although scarce in quantity, some studies have addressed teaching aptitude, which has revealed interesting results. The majority of studies focused on the role of aptitude in the process of language learning, but few of them explored the role of teachers' aptitude in teaching. So, because of the importance of teachers' aptitude in Iran's education system and the lack of study on the role of aptitude and talented teachers in the country, the researcher in the following study focused on this significant matter.

Here, some parts of the scarce literature on teaching aptitude are reviewed. Sharma (1984), in a study on teaching aptitude, sought to see whether teaching aptitude significantly correlates with prospective teachers' intellectual level and morality. According to the results, it was shown that teaching aptitude significantly correlated with intellectual level. Moreover, a significant interplay was found between teaching aptitude and morality. Shah (1991) explored the predictive power of teaching aptitude in predicting teachers' teaching effectiveness and quality. It was shown that teaching effectiveness and quality were strongly predicted by teaching aptitude. Vasanthi and Anandhi (1997) sought to identify the factors influencing teacher effectiveness and found teaching aptitude and achievement motivation among the most significant factors. Social motivation is also among the factors whose relationship with teaching aptitude has been proved. Teachers seek social changes and transformations at different levels from student-level to society-level (Kant & Shukla, 2021). Dubey (2012) discussed the need to take advantage of reflective inquiry in classrooms as a signal for teachers' teaching aptitude. The other recommendation put forth by the researcher was that to enhance teachers' teaching aptitude, their reflection should be improved. Menka (2016) tried to examine the teaching aptitude of pre-service teachers, taking the role of gender into account. To do so, Teaching Aptitude Test Battery (TATB) was utilized. He found that the teaching aptitude of most of the teachers was at a high level. Moreover, male and female teachers proved to be at approximately the same level of teaching aptitude. The researcher concluded that teaching aptitude is a variable that is not under the effect of gender. Thangarajan (2018) sought the goal of investigating the correlation between teaching attitude and the teaching quality of high school teachers. According to the findings, the teachers who had a higher teaching aptitude showed a higher quality teaching. This was attributed to different factors including job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and emotions. Qureshi (2021) explored the teaching aptitude of pre-service teachers in educational institutions in Kashmir, taking the role of their field of study into account. The sample of the study contained 600 pre-service teachers who were classified based on their majors. Data collection was done using the teaching aptitude test (TAT) developed by Gakhar and Rajnish (1990) in 75 items in six sub-scales. Descriptive statistics and t-test were the statistical tests used to analyze the collected data. In fact, these tests were used to compare art and science teachers' teaching aptitude. The findings of the study indicated that teachers of these two majors were significantly different in terms of their overall teaching aptitude. Moreover, they were different on three six sub-scales of teaching aptitude including teaching profession, attitude towards students, social contacts, innovative skills, professional morality, teaching ability and existing knowledge. As such, major of teaching had a significant effect on teachers' teaching aptitude. Qingsong et al. (2020) analyzed the professional features of teacher aptitude as represented in Chinese teacher training programs. The researchers classified teacher aptitude into four dimensions: possessing professional teaching morale, teaching interest, teaching ability, and type of personality. Furthermore, it was found that both assessment and development of teacher aptitude should be taken into account. Therefore, teacher education programs take aptitude as an individual tendency plus educational practice knowledge. Sonawane (2020) investigated the teaching aptitude in high school teachers. The goal of this research was to explore the characteristics of teacher aptitude and see whether teacher aptitude is correlated with teaching stress. According to the results, teaching aptitude and stress were correlated in a significant way. Moreover, professional development, teaching quality and success were identified as the characteristics of teacher aptitude. In a study, Yeung (2000) explored factors contributing to teachers' teaching efficacy and found that, among other factors, the communication ability of teachers and their teaching aptitude were effective on their teaching self-efficacy. The studies by Kohlan (1989), Malik (1999), Meenakshi (1988), Saron (1975), and Vyas (1982) also confirmed these findings. On the

contrary, the findings reported by Al-Zubeiry (2020), Gupta (1977), and Tapodhan (1991) did not show any relationship between teaching aptitude and academic performance.

Method

Design of The Study
In line with the objectives of the present study, a correlational survey analysis method was used, benefiting from Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Participants
The participants of this study consisted of 300 (126 males and 174 females) Iranian EFL teachers who were conveniently selected from different Azad and State universities of Iran. They were Ph.D. holders in TEFL with more than 20 years of teaching EFL at different universities in Iran.

Instruments
The already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers was used to gather the required data. This scale consisted of 90 Likert-type items in which the strongly disagree answer received a score of one, and the strongly agreed answer received a score of five. These 90 items are used to measure ten subscales (16 items for Good inter-personal behavior, 4 items for Making students motivated, 4 items for Time management ability, 4 items for Recognition of students' needs, 15 items for Positive thinking skills, 8 items for Critical thinking ability, 5 items for Verbal intelligence, 13 items for Mastery over different teaching methods, 13 items for Evaluation skills, and 8 items for English language proficiency). Together, these 10 subscales make up the overall score of the Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers.

Procedure
The process of data collection started with sampling the participants and taking ethical issues into account. Then, the researchers sent the Google Form link of the already-developed scale via social networks, including WhatsApp and Telegram, to the participants to be completed. Next, the collected data were analyzed through SPSS and AMOS 26. More particularly, to assess the construct validity of the scale, SEM was run through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Moreover, to measure the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha test was run.

Results

To evaluate the construct validity of the scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run using SPSS 26. First, Bartlett Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests were run to check the Sphericity assumption and Adequacy of content sampling. The results of the Bartlett and KMO test are indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Table 1
The Results of Bartlett and KMO

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.71
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	639.257
	df	1738
	Sig.	0.0001

As observed in Table 1, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at the 0.0001 level. The value of KMO is 0.71 which means the data is suitable for applying exploratory factor analysis (KMO is greater than 0.60 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant).

Then, the optimal number of factors was determined using parallel analysis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
The Results of Parallel Analysis

Component number	E. O	M.E. R	Decision
1	13.18	11.27	Accept
2	11.46	10.50	Accept
3	10.67	9.13	Accept
4	8.26	8.09	Accept
5	5.12	4.71	Accept
6	4.23	3.66	Accept
7	3.10	2.28	Accept
8	2.56	2.12	Accept
9	2.50	2.13	Accept
10	1.67	1.45	Accept
11	1.32	1.42	Reject
12	1.11	1.37	Reject

E.O = the eigenvalues of original data. M.E.R = the mean eigenvalues of random data

As seen in Table 2, 10 factors have eigenvalues greater than the mean eigenvalues derived from the random data. Therefore, it is concluded that the optimal number of factors is 10. Then, a 10-factor solution using Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation was applied. In sum, 17 items were excluded from the analysis, because of inadequate factor loading (factor loading lower than 0.3 or loading over unwanted factors).

The results of the exploratory factor analysis are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**

Table 3
The Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

Components, and Eigenvalues of related items

1			2		3		4		5			
q1	0.54	q9	0.49	q17	0.46	q21	0.52	q25	0.39	q29	0.25	q37	0.11
q2	0.51	q10	0.35	q18	0.39	q22	0.49	q26	0.47	q30	0.44	q38	0.24
q3	0.43	q11	0.38	q19	0.51	q23	0.50	q27	0.56	q31	0.47	q39	0.49
q4	0.15	q12	0.50	q20	0.64	q24	0.58	q28	0.62	q32	0.17	q40	0.52
q5	0.21	q13	0.55							q33	0.52	q41	0.48
q6	0.45	q14	0.52							q34	0.51	q42	0.62
q7	0.66	q15	0.36							q35	0.34	q43	0.57
q8	0.52	q16	0.18							q36	0.60		

Components, and Eigenvalues of related items

6		7		8				9				10	
q44	0.61	q52	0.49	q57	0.61	q65	0.13	q70	0.39	q78	0.48	q83	0.52
q45	0.50	q53	0.62	q58	0.47	q66	0.40	q71	0.42	q79	0.41	q84	0.49
q46	0.28	q54	0.50	q59	0.26	q67	0.18	q72	0.46	q80	0.13	q85	0.53

q47	0.49	q55	0.49	q60	0.44	q68	0.50	q73	0.51	q81	0.16	q86	0.36
q48	0.32	q56	0.46	q61	0.53	q69	0.47	q74	0.34	q82	0.43	q87	0.38
q49	0.40			q62	0.50			q75	0.11			q88	0.17
q50	0.63			q63	0.46			q76	0.28			q89	0.48
q51	0.57			q64	0.55			q77	0.56			q90	0.23

1: Good inter-personal behavior, 2: Making students motivated, 3: Time management ability, 4: Recognition of students' needs, 5: Positive thinking skills, 6: Critical thinking ability, 7: Verbal intelligence, 8: Mastery over different teaching methods, 9: Evaluation skills, & 10: English language proficiency.

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

As it can be seen in the Table, 3 items from first factor (4, 5, & 16), 4 items from fifth factor (29, 32, 37, & 38), one item from sixth factor (46), 3 items from eighth factor (59, 65, & 67), 2 items from ninth factor (75 & 76), and 2 items from tenth factor (88, & 90) have been set aside. Other items have suitable factor loading on their corresponding factor. These ten factors explained 51 % of the total variance.

Finally, the obtained 10-factor model was examined by higher-order confirmatory factor analysis available in the AMOS24 package. The results of confirmatory factor analysis using the Maximum likelihood estimation method are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
The Results of CFA
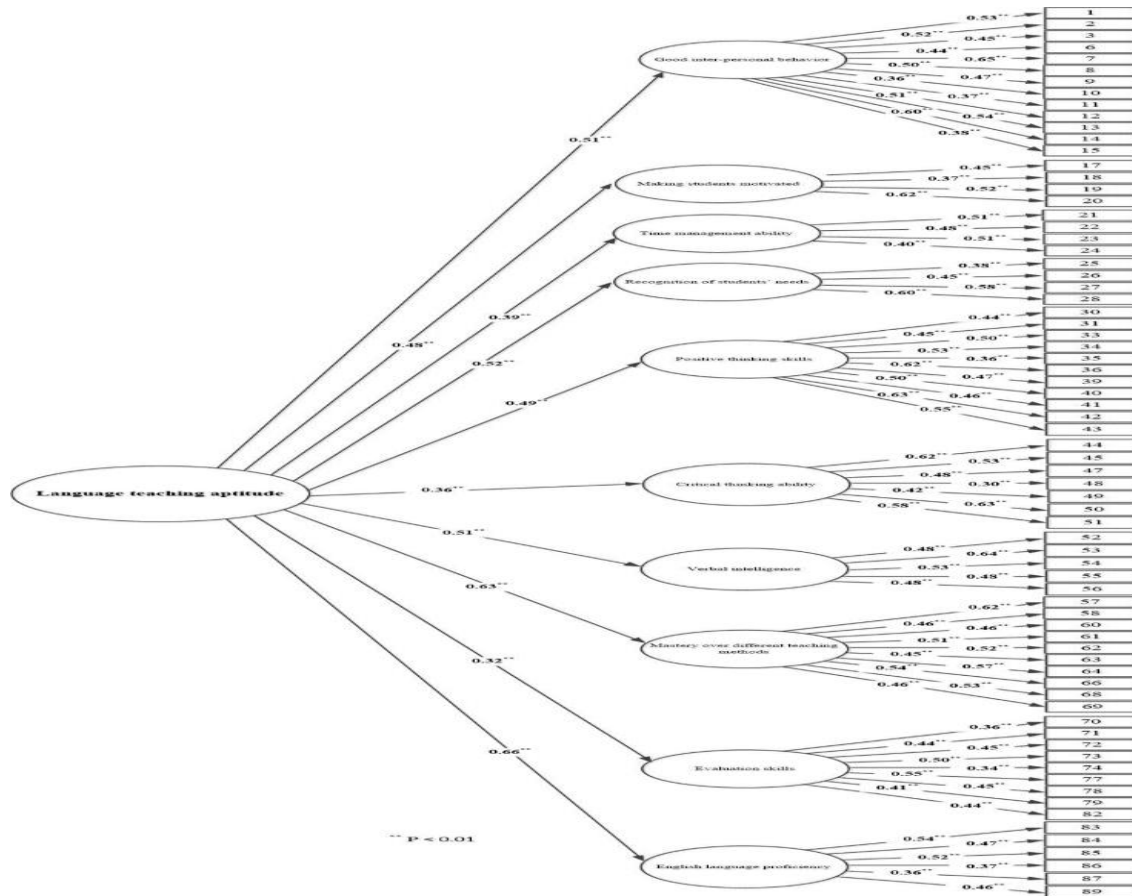
As seen in Figure 1, all items have an acceptable factor loading that is significant at the 0.01 level. The goodness of fit of the model was examined, and the most common fit indices are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Fit Indices of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Developed Scale

	X^2/df	TLI	CFI	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	PCLOSE
Fit indices	1.75	0.92	0.92	0.93	0.91	0.01	0.27
Acceptable Fit indices	< 3	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.08	> 0.05

As shown in Table 4, the Language Teaching Aptitude scale has an acceptable fit index.

After examining the validity of the Language Teaching Aptitude scale, its reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Language Teaching Aptitude Scale

Language Teaching Aptitude scale	Number of items	Alpha coefficients'
Good inter-personal behavior	13	0.88
Making students motivated	4	0.71
Time management ability	4	0.73
Recognition of students' needs	4	0.70
Positive thinking skills	11	0.83
Critical thinking ability	7	0.76

Verbal intelligence	5	0.72
Mastery over different teaching methods	10	0.80
Evaluation skills	9	0.84
English language proficiency	6	0.71
Total scale	73	0.92

As shown in Table 5, the Language Teaching Aptitude scale enjoys acceptable reliability.

Discussion

The present study aimed to evaluate the psychometric properties of the already-developed Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers. As confirmed by the results of EFA and CFA, the Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers has an acceptable validity, as supported by the obtained fit index. Moreover, it was proved that the Language Teaching Aptitude Scale for Iranian EFL teachers enjoys acceptable reliability.

Consistent with the present study, in the studies by Kaboodvand (2013) and Wichadee (2010), interactional skills were enumerated as a significant factor for teachers, as revealed by the perceptions of Iranian teachers. In the same vein, in the investigation by Ramos-Rodríguez, Fernández-Ahumada, and Morales-Soto (2022), communicative skills were found to serve a vital role in a teaching job. Similarly, as reported by Khojastehmehr and Takrimi (2008) and Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), teachers' communication skills are significantly associated with their teaching success and development. Furthermore, in Zein's (2017) research, communicative skills, language knowledge, and needs analysis were recognized as crucial components of teachers' teaching effectiveness.

In addition, the finding that motivational skills constitute the central component of language teaching aptitude was supported in previous studies (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Rubio, 2009; Smet, 2022). Besides, similar to the present study, Zein (2017) identified interpersonal skills, language proficiency, and management skills as the main components of teachers' teaching success. Other studies whose results supported those of the present study are Kabilan and Veratharaju (2013), and Le and Do (2012) wherein language proficiency and critical thinking were perceived as contributing to teachers' teaching professionalism. In this line of discussion, we cannot ignore the studies by Choy and Oo (2012), Kaneko-Marques (2015), and Silver (2015), in which teachers' criticality and verbal skills proved to be among the main features of English teachers. Last but not least, similar to the current study, Dibapile (2012), Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013), and Rahimi and Asadollahi (2012) considered knowledge of teaching and assessment ability as significant predictors of the language teaching profession.It can be argued that

EFL teaching is a multi-faceted notion that requires a variety of dimensions of knowledge and skills. The role of such knowledge and skill dimensions cannot be underestimated in EFL teaching and learning. The teaching profession is directly or indirectly heavily affected by various teacher features. This is not in line with the lay view, which takes teaching as a simple linear, and easy task that is just influenced by the language proficiency of teachers. Nevertheless, the fact is that the teaching profession transcends the border of language proficiency and is affected by a set of personal, social, and emotional factors.

Conclusion

With a view of the results of the present study, it is worth noting that without the presence of the components recognized for English language teaching aptitude, it is difficult for teachers to act professionally, successfully, efficiently, and effectively in English classes. What makes the affairs more complex is that as is the case in any qualitative study, there are some additional

unrevealed components in the current study. All of these convince us to accept that a set of components are there to make teaching professional in various ways.

Since the English teaching profession is the best opportunity for presenting useful and meaningful EFL materials to students (Rokhyati, 2015), it can be concluded that English teachers should attempt to increase their knowledge of teaching methods, interpersonal skills, knowledge of evaluation and teaching methods, and language proficiency as central components of language teaching aptitude. Moreover, they should try to take advantage of different motivational techniques to make students motivated and willing to learn. Furthermore, they should take the needs of students into account, practice critical thinking, learn to manage time effectively, and try to be optimistic and think positively.

Finally, since the reliability and validity of the developed English Language Teaching Aptitude scale were proved in the present study, teacher educators and other authorities in the realm of English teacher recruitment are recommended to use the developed scale to employ those individuals who are qualified for the English teaching profession. In this way, it can be expected that the recruited filtered individuals reach professional development. This contributes to the higher probability of students' reaching English achievement in EFL settings.

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