# The Relationship Between EFL Teachers' Professional Identity and Professional Autonomy

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## Abstract

This study aims to identify 250 Turkish EFL teachers' level of professional identity and professional autonomy. This study also aims to investigate whether the results differ by gender, the school in which they work, education level and work experience. Furthermore, the study aims to identify whether there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and their professional autonomy. In this survey-based research, the results demonstrate that EFL teachers have a very high level of professional identity and a high level of professional autonomy, and the results differ by EFL teachers' gender, school type and work experience. Results also reveal that there was a significant, positive and moderate relationship between professional identity and professional autonomy of EFL teachers. This study suggests that the freer EFL teachers feel to make decisions in their teaching and profession, the more they can define their identity in the teaching profession.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers' professional identity, EFL teachers' professional autonomy, Professional development, Teacher education.

## Contents

**Contribution of this paper to the literature**
This study responds to needs of the field of teachers' professional development and teacher education as EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy empower the continuity of teacher professional development and teacher engagement with EFL learner identity and autonomy in this globalized world.

## 1. Introduction

In the recent research, scholars have tried to define the teacher professional identity but there is not a standard description of it (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Not only does the teacher identity influence how teachers exist in the classroom, but it also shapes their practices and educational approaches (Cross, 2006). Teacher identity is characterized as multiple, potent, individual and social (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). In this sense, teachers' cultural, individual and professional selves should be investigated to shed light on language teaching and learning (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). According to Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) the mixture of personal self and professional being which generates professional identity is also related to individual decisions, roles, values and morals.

Current research studies have addressed the interrelation between teacher identity and teacher autonomy (Huang & Benson, 2013; Teng, 2017; Teng, 2019). Teacher autonomy means taking decisions about what to teach, and how to develop teaching practices and teacher professional development (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). McGrath (2000) sees teacher autonomy as an autonomous practice and being free from the control that is taken by others. Therefore, teachers' professional autonomy is promoted by some strategies which also contribute to sustainability, peer collaboration, development of teaching skills, and professional reflection on teaching (Pineda & Frodden, 2008). Teacher autonomy enables teachers to take the responsibility of what to provide as a teaching practice and how to be in charge of the process in the field. Indeed, the level of teachers' autonomy identifies the level of teachers' efforts they put into facilitating learners' autonomy (Smith, 2001). Thus, enhancing learner autonomy can be achieved by promoting autonomy of teachers (Aoki, 2002; Benson, 2011; Little, 1995; Sezen-Balcikanli, 2009; Smith, 2001; Vieira, 1999).

In foreign language education field, EFL teachers construct a different identity and autonomy in the foreign language (Benson & Huang, 2008; Ortaçtepe, 2015). Herein, the significance of this study is about investigating the relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and teachers' professional autonomy because foreign language constitutes a particular domain to question who the person is as an English language teacher and to what extent h/she can make choices for his/her teaching. Non-native English-speaking teachers have the status of L2 learners, L2 speakers and L2 teachers (Armour, 2004). In addition, teachers have an attitude towards making decisions about what/how to teach. EFL teachers also have a responsibility to teach the target language critically and reflectively with their free-will (Han, 2017). Thus, English language has the mediating role to form and define EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy in the field. Teacher autonomy and teacher identity are explained as mutually interrelated and reinforced notions (Chik, 2007; Korhonen, 2014; Reinders & Lazaro, 2011; Teng, 2019).

Considering the interconnection between identity and autonomy, the construction of identity brings about development of autonomy while autonomous actions enrich the reformation of identity (Teng, 2019). Thus, teachers gain an autonomous perspective in the profession as long as they rebuild their identity (Huang, 2009). The concepts of identity and autonomy have been studied in the field of psychology, politics and sociology (Grimshaw, 1988; Robertson, 2003). And, the interrelation between identity and autonomy has been investigated in the field of education through qualitative and narrative studies (Chik, 2007; Derakhshan, Coombe, Arabmofrad, & Taghizadeh, 2020; Huang, 2011; Lier, 2007; Smith & Erdoğan, 2008). However, the relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy has not been examined through a quantitative study. Therefore, this study aims to find out EFL teachers' level of professional identity and professional autonomy in Turkish education context, and it also aims to investigate whether the results differ by gender, the school in which EFL teachers work, the education level and their work experience. Lastly, this study investigates whether there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and their professional autonomy.

## 2. Literature Review

Professional identity means monitoring and socialization in the occupational context (Ibarra, 1999). Similarly, (Neary, 2014) says that professional identity is related to individuals' own perception on their profession and the way of communication with colleagues. Pedagogical approaches which teachers use encourage them to question their own position and reveal teachers' beliefs and values (Damon & Hart, 1992). Teachers' knowledge and decisions/actions they take form their professional identity (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). Furthermore, teachers' didactic principles are empirical models to ensure optimal teaching and learning (Thela, 1997).

Teachers' identity construction is characterized by the social context that has an impact on the description of the self and the teacher self (Lasky, 2005). In this social context, the teachers have their teacher education (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Teaching context incorporates school culture and interaction with others at work and this school culture involves the norms and the soul of education (Doyle, 1990). Moreover, the formation of teachers' professional identity is reinforced through professional development (Mora, Trejo, & Roux, 2014).

Learner autonomy in language learning is actualized by teachers' guidance that helps students take responsibility in their educational life. Furthermore, internal and external drives, capability, managing time effectively and collaboration with colleagues form the teacher autonomy (Okay, 2018). Herein, teacher education programs involve curriculums to train professionally autonomous teachers, which are required to foster pre-service teachers' professional autonomy and give them a chance to experience how to foster their own students' autonomies (Little, 1995). In this regard, autonomy is accepted as the capacity for self-oriented actions in professional decisions and development (McGrath, 2000; Smith, 2003). Ability is defined as developing skills, knowledge and attitudes for autonomy by engaging with colleagues and learners (Smith, 2003). The combination of capacity and ability constitutes the concept of the capability to address teachers' professional autonomy (Okay,

2018). External conditions, such as changes in teaching, power relations in the classroom, and regulations by government and institutions, may limit teachers' decision making in teaching (Ramos, 2006).

A study conducted by Huang (2011) demonstrates that the growth of future-teacher identity and autonomy are in relation to the agency. In their study, Smith and Erdoğan (2008) state that the participants formed a future-teacher identity during the educational period which is a driving force for teacher agency and subsequently promotes autonomy. Teachers' professional identity and teacher professional autonomy have an impact on teachers' success in the field. Investigating the relationship between teachers' professional identity, teacher autonomy, and teacher success through structural Equation Modeling, the study conducted with Iranian EFL teachers shows that there is a significant and positive relationship among all three factors (Derakhshan et al., 2020). In an authoritative study, Teng (2019) addresses the relationship between teacher identity, autonomy, and agency, all of which are interconnected and influenced by the constraints of the teacher's personal and professional life. As mentioned in the literature review, there aren't any research studies that have investigated the relationship between Turkish EFL teachers' professional identity and their professional autonomy. In this regard, the research questions are:

RQ1. What is the level of EFL Teachers':
a. Professional identity?
b. Professional autonomy?
RQ2. Do the results differ by:
a. Gender?
b. The school in which EFL teachers work?
c. Education level?
d. Work experience?
RQ3. Is there a meaningful relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy?

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Participants

The participants comprised 250 English as foreign language teachers (EFL). All were Turkish. There were 170 female and 77 male participants working in private (N=128) and state (N=117) schools in Antalya, Turkey. A convenience sampling was used to select participants and the participation was entirely voluntary based on their consent. They were working at the secondary and high schools. These participants had bachelor's (N=184) and postgraduate (N=69) degrees. Their work experience varied from less than seven years (N=87), between seven and 15 years (N=57), and more than 15 years (N=64).

## 3.2. Instruments

In the study, two questionnaires were used: Teachers' Professional Autonomy Questionnaire (TEPAQ) by Okay (2018) and Professional Identity Questionnaire by Beijaard et al. (2000). Additionally, one Demographic Information Form prepared by the researcher was used.

### 3.2.1. Demographic Information Form

The form was used to investigate if the results of teachers' professional identity (TPI) and teachers' professional autonomy differ by gender, the school in which EFL teachers work as state and private, education level such as Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate as well as work experience of EFL teachers.

### 3.2.2. Professional Identity Questionnaire

Professional Identity Questionnaire by Beijaard et al. (2000) is composed of 18 items with 4-point Likert scale. The questionnaire comprises three sub-scales: Subject-Matter Expert, Pedagogical Expert and Didactical Expert. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) by AMOS was employed to ensure the construct validity of the questionnaire. As a consequence of the CFA, a goodness-of-fit index was found as compatible ($0 < RMSEA < CFI < GFI < 0.90$). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated as 0.817 for Subject-Matter factor, 0.776 for Pedagogical Expert factor, and 0.655 for Didactical Expert factor. Overall Cronbach's Alpha value for Professional Identity Questionnaire was found as 0.881.

### 3.2.3. Teachers' Professional Autonomy Questionnaire (TEPAQ)

Teachers' Professional Autonomy Questionnaire (TEPAQ) developed by Okay (2018) consists of 23 items with 5-point Likert scale. Choices range from "strongly disagree to strongly agree". The questionnaire is composed of five sub-scales: Internal Drives & Motives, Capability, Time Management, and External Drives & Motives. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated as 0.822 for Internal Drives & Motives, 0.875 for Capability, 0.889 for Collaboration with Colleagues, 0.777 for Time Management, and 0.792 for External Drives & Motives. Overall Cronbach's Alpha value for Teachers' Professional Autonomy Questionnaire was calculated as 0.896.

## 3.3. Data Collection and Procedure

Before the implementation of the study, the required approval from the developers of the two questionnaires was obtained. [1]This study is from the Master's thesis which was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University. The ethics approval was received from Research Ethics Committee of the University and the Directorate of National Education to conduct the study. The data were collected from February to May in 2021. Quantitative survey-based research was employed through one demographic form and two questionnaires. The demographic form and two questionnaires were distributed online through Google Forms.

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[1] This study is from the Master's thesis entitled: "The Relationship Between EFL Teachers' Professional Identity and Professional Autonomy".

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was employed to identify the level of the EFL teachers' professional identity and autonomy. As the instrument of professional identity is a four-point Likert scale, mean scores were calculated to find the level of teachers' professional identity with: "1-1.75=first level, 1.75-2.50=second level, 2.50-3.25=third level, 3.25-4.0=fourth level". The instrument of professional autonomy is a five-point Likert scale and the following is used to determine the professional autonomy level with: "1.0-1.8=first level, 1.8-2.6=second level, 2.6-3.4=third level, 3.4-4.2=fourth level, 4.2-5.0=fifth level". As a consequence of testing normality by Skewness and Kurtosis values, it was determined to use Independent Sample T-Test, One Way ANOVA and Spearman Correlation Test by SPSS.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Analysis of the First Research Question

To find out the participants' levels of professional identity and professional autonomy, descriptive statistics was employed to analyse the data.

### 4.1.1. The Level of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity

As Table 1 shows, participants have a very high level of teachers' professional identity based on the total mean score of the whole questionnaire (M=3.27, SD= 0.4).

The total mean score of Subject-Matter Expert was found as very high. The results demonstrate that EFL teachers view themselves as good examples for their profession and as having good knowledge for their field and about methods (M$^{\text{Subject-Matter Expert}}$=3.29, SD$^{\text{Subject-Matter Expert}}$= 0.5).

Furthermore, EFL teachers have a very high level of pedagogical expertise with good communication-prompting and problem-solving skills as well as creating a safe setting of teaching based on the total score of the Pedagogical Expert (M$^{\text{Pedagogical Expert}}$=3.36, SD$^{\text{Pedagogical Expert}}$=0.4).

As a consequence, EFL teachers also perform a high level of didactical expertise with the consideration of personal, professional and academic developments for both teachers and students with respect to the total score of the Didactical Expert (M$^{\text{Didactical Expert}}$=3.17, SD$^{\text{Didactical Expert}}$=0.4).

### 4.1.2. The Level of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy

Data results in Table 2 show that EFL teachers possess a very high level of professional autonomy based on the total mean score of the whole questionnaire (M=3.7, SD=0.5).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the Level of EFL teachers' professional identity.

| | Items | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Subject-Matter Expert** | 1. As a teacher, I serve as an example for the way in which students interact with each other and with other people. | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| | 2. In my lessons, I pay a lot of attention to alternating my teaching methods. | 3.3 | 0.7 |
| | 3. The discipline I have studied has been decisive in my choice for the teaching profession. | 3.0 | 0.8 |
| | 4. I consciously encourage a good interaction among students. | 3.6 | 0.6 |
| | 5. I possess good subject matter knowledge for my work as a teacher. | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| | 6. I make sure that students use their learning or working time effectively. | 3.1 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 3.29 | 0.5 |
| **Pedagogical Expert** | 7. When I notice student problem behaviour, I try to do something about it. | 3.4 | 0.6 |
| | 8. I support my lessons with resources as much as possible. | 3.5 | 0.7 |
| | 9. I attach much value to conversations with my school colleagues about subject matter issues. | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| | 10. The most important thing for me is creating a class climate in which students feel safe and respected. | 3.6 | 0.6 |
| | 11. I regularly keep up with developments in my discipline through self-study and/or schooling. | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| | 12. I regularly evaluate my teaching. | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| | Total | 3.36 | 0.4 |
| **Didactical Expert** | 13. In my lessons, I strive to emphasize students' personality development. | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| | 14. I pay a lot of attention to diagnosing and solving problems students have with their learning. | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| | 15. I am very interested in developments in my discipline. | 3.4 | 0.7 |
| | 16. The image students have of themselves, is an important point of departure for the way in which I approach them. | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| | 17. Choosing relevant learning material for students takes a lot of my time. | 2.5 | 0.9 |
| | 18. Everything I cover in my subject teaching is really important for the students. | 3.3 | 0.7 |
| | Total | 3.17 | 0.4 |
| | Total Score | 3.27 | 0.24 |

**Note:** N=229.

EFL teachers are also internally driven to behave professionally autonomous and continue their professional development (M$^{\text{Internal Drives \& Motives}}$=4.2, SD$^{\text{Internal Drives \& Motives}}$=0.5).

In addition, EFL teachers have the capability to become autonomous in their profession (M$^{\text{Capability}}$=4.4, SD$^{\text{Capability}}$=0.5). The total mean score of Capability is also very high; that is, the teachers are highly able to adapt and develop themselves and their teaching techniques. It can also be said that they are very good at employing technology to alternate their teaching efficiently.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the level of EFL teachers' professional autonomy.

| Teachers' Professional autonomy questionnaire. Items | | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Internal Drives & Motives | 1. I want to develop myself professionally because I feel I have to. | 4.2 | 0.9 |
| | 2. It is my own wish to continue my professional development. | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| | 3. I am curious about new ways to develop my teaching. | 4.4 | 0.8 |
| | 4. I want to develop professionally because it is a necessity to meet the needs of students. | 4.4 | 0.7 |
| | 5. I enjoy developing myself professionally. | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| | 6. I feel obliged to continue my development as a teacher. | 3.9 | 1.0 |
| | 7. I constantly look for ways to develop my teaching. | 4.2 | 0.7 |
| | 8. I want to develop professionally to meet the needs of my students. | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| | 9. I want to develop myself professionally in order to push the limits of my abilities as a teacher. | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 4.2 | 0.5 |
| Capability | 10. I am able to search out information about teaching. | 4.4 | 0.7 |
| | 11. I can find profession-related materials (i.e. books, journals, etc.) about teaching. | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| | 12. I have the ability to develop my teaching. | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| | 13. I am able to identify my weaknesses/strengths as a teacher. | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| | 14. I am able to use technology to develop my teaching. | 4.6 | 0.6 |
| | 15. I can adapt to recent developments in teaching. | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| | 16. I have access to technology to continue my development as a teacher. | 4.6 | 0.6 |
| | Total | 4.4 | 0.5 |
| Collaboration with Colleagues | 17. I can work with my colleagues to develop my teaching | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| | 18. I like to learn from my colleagues to develop my teaching. | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| | 19. I have colleagues whom I can consult when I need help about my professional development. | 4.2 | 0.8 |
| | Total | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| Time Management | 20. My workload is too heavy to engage in activities to develop myself as a teacher. | 3.3 | 1.0 |
| | 21. I find very little time outside the school for professional development activities. | 3.3 | 1.1 |
| | Total | 3.3 | 0.9 |
| External Drives & Motives | 22. I want to develop myself professionally to better my financial condition. | 3.2 | 1.2 |
| | 23. I want to develop myself professionally for a chance of getting promoted to a better position. | 3.1 | 1.1 |
| | Total | 3.1 | 1.0 |
| Total Score | | 3.7 | 0.5 |

**Note:** N=229.

Regarding the data results of Collaboration with Colleagues, EFL teachers are very good at collaborating with people at work ($M^{Collaboration\ with\ Colleagues}=4.3$, $SD^{Collaboration\ with\ Colleagues}=0.7$). Based on the total mean score of this sub-scale, EFL teachers' collaboration with colleagues at work is at very high level.

Regarding the time management of EFL teachers, their autonomous actions in their profession are also influenced by managing their time at a moderate level based on the total mean score of the Time Management ($M^{Time\ Management}=3.3$, $SD^{Time\ Management}=0.9$). These EFL teachers are further driven by external factors in their professionally autonomous attitudes and behaviours ($M^{External\ Drives\ \&\ Motives}=3.1$, $SD^{External\ Drives\ \&\ Motives}=1.0$). Based on the total mean score of the External Drives & Motives, it can be said that EFL teachers' autonomous perceptions and actions are driven by better positions and promotions in their profession at a moderate level.

### *4.2. Analysis of the Second Research Question*

In this analysis, Independent Sample T-Test and One-Way ANOVA were used to identify whether the results of EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy differ by gender, school type the EFL teachers work, their education level and work experience.

### *4.2.1. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity According to Gender*

To determine whether EFL teachers' professional identity differs by gender, Independent Sample T-Test was utilized to analyses data.

**Table 3.** Analysis of TPI in terms of gender.

| Scale | Gender | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional Identity | Female | 158 | 59.7 | 6.7 | 2.268 | 0.024 |
| | Male | 71 | 57.4 | 8.7 | | |
| Subject-Matter Expert | Female | 158 | 19.7 | 3.0 | -0.403 | 0.687 |
| | Male | 71 | 19.9 | 3.7 | | |
| Pedagogical Expert | Female | 158 | 20.6 | 2.5 | 3.800 | 0.000 |
| | Male | 71 | 19.2 | 3.1 | | |
| Didactical Expert | Female | 158 | 19.4 | 2.4 | 2.911 | 0.004 |
| | Male | 71 | 18.3 | 3.0 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

Table 3 shows that the scores of EFL teachers' Professional Identity ($M^{female}$= 59.7, $M^{male}$=57.4, t=2.268, p<.05), Pedagogical Expert ($M^{female}$= 20.6, $M^{male}$=19.2, t=3.800, p<0.05) and Didactical Expert ($M^{female}$= 19.4, $M^{male}$=18.3, t=2.911, p<0.05) are significantly different in terms of gender. However, no significant difference exists between the scores of Subject-Matter Expert in terms of gender ($M^{female}$= 19.7, $M^{male}$=19.9, t=-0.403, p=0.687).

### 4.2.2. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity according to the School Type EFL Teachers Work

Independent Sample T-Test was used in this analysis to determine whether ELF teachers' professional identity differs by the school in which ELF teachers work.

**Table 4.** Analysis of TPI in terms of the school in which EFL teachers work.

| Scale | The school in which EFL teachers work | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional Identity | Private | 118 | 60.9 | 6.6 | 4.173 | 0.000 |
| | State | 111 | 57.0 | 7.7 | | |
| Subject-Matter Expert | Private | 118 | 20.4 | 2.8 | 3.216 | 0.001 |
| | State | 111 | 19.1 | 3.5 | | |
| Pedagogical Expert | Private | 118 | 20.8 | 2.5 | 3.449 | 0.001 |
| | State | 111 | 19.5 | 2.9 | | |
| Didactical Expert | Private | 118 | 19.7 | 2.4 | 4.021 | 0.000 |
| | State | 111 | 18.4 | 2.7 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

As shown in Table 4 EFL teachers' total scores of Professional Identity ($M^{private}$=60.9, $M^{state}$=57.0, t=4.173, p<0.05), subject-matter knowledge ($M^{private}$=20.4, $M^{state}$=19.1, t= 3.216, p<0.05), pedagogical expertise ($M^{private}$=20.8, $M^{state}$=19.5, t=3.449, p<0.05), and didactical expertise ($M^{private}$=19.7, $M^{state}$=18.4, t=4.021, p<0.05) significantly differ by the school type.

### 4.2.3. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity according to Education Level

To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between ELF teachers' professional identity according to educational level, Independent Sample T-Test was computed to analyse the data.

As presented in Table 5 no significant difference exists between EFL teachers' total scores of Professional Identity ($M^{bachelor's}$=59.1, $M^{postgraduate}$=58.3, t=0.674, p=0.501), according to their education level.

### 4.2.4. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity According to Work Experience

To identify whether there is a statistically significant difference between ELF teachers' professional identity according to work experience, One-Way ANOVA was computed. As seen in Table 6 EFL teachers' work experiences were grouped as less than seven years (LT7Y), 7-15 years (7-15Y) and more than 15 years (MT15Y).

**Table 5.** Analysis of TPI in terms of education level.

| Scale | Education Level | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional Identity | Bachelor's | 170 | 59.1 | 7.5 | 0.674 | 0.501 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 58.3 | 7.0 | | |
| Subject-Matter Expert | Bachelor's | 170 | 19.8 | 3.2 | 0.702 | 0.483 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 19.5 | 3.2 | | |
| Pedagogical Expert | Bachelor's | 170 | 20.2 | 2.9 | 0.328 | 0.743 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 20.0 | 2.6 | | |
| Didactical Expert | Bachelor's | 170 | 19.1 | 2.7 | 0.683 | 0.496 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 18.8 | 2.5 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

**Table 6.** Analysis of TPI in terms of work experience.

| Scale | Work Experience | N | M | SD | F | p | Between Group Difference | η² |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional Identity | LT7Y | 81 | 59.8 | 7.3 | 4.107 | 0.018 | LT7Y>MT15Y | 0.041 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 60.9 | 5.7 | | | 7-15Y>MT15Y | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 57.4 | 7.0 | | | | |
| Subject-Matter Expert | LT7Y | 81 | 20.0 | 3.3 | 4.719 | 0.010 | 7-15Y>MT15Y | 0.046 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 20.8 | 3.2 | | | | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 19.0 | 2.7 | | | | |
| Pedagogical Expert | LT7Y | 81 | 20.3 | 2.7 | 1.593 | 0.206 | - | |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 20.7 | 2.1 | | | | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 19.9 | 2.8 | | | | |
| Didactical Expert | LT7Y | 81 | 19.5 | 2.6 | 3.450 | 0.034 | LT7Y>MT15Y | 0.034 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 19.3 | 2.1 | | | | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 18.4 | 2.8 | | | | |

**Note:** N=229.

Results in Table 6 indicate that the difference between the scores of EFL Teachers' Professional Identity is significant in terms of their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=59.8, $M^{7-15Y}$=60.9, $M^{MT15Y}$=57.4, F=4.107, p<0.05). To determine between which groups there is a difference, the Post Hoc LSD test was carried out. Regarding the data analysis of Professional Identity, the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15Y of work experience. Additionally, the scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15Y of work experience. There is a moderate effect of work experience on TPI determined by the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.041).

Regarding the data results of the Subject-Matter Expert, there is a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' Subject-Matter Expert in terms of their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=20.0, $M^{7-15Y}$= 20.8, $M^{MT15Y}$=19.0, F=4.719, p<0.05). As a consequence of the Post Hoc LSD test, data results of Subject-Matter Expert demonstrate that the scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15Y of work experience. It was found that year of work experience has a small effect on the Subject-Matter based on the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.046).

In this study, no significant difference was detected between EFL teachers' Pedagogical Expert in terms of their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=20.3, $M^{7-15Y}$=20.7, $M^{MT15Y}$=19.9, F=1.593, p=0.206). A significant difference was found between EFL teachers' Didactical Expert in terms of their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=19.5, $M^{7-15Y}$= 19.3, $M^{MT15Y}$=19.4, F=3.450, p<0.05). As a result of the Post Hoc LSD test, data results of Didactical Expert show that the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15Y of work experience. It was determined that there is a small effect of work experience on the didactical domain of TPI based on the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.034).

### 4.2.5. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy according to Gender

To find out whether EFL teachers' professional autonomy differs by gender, Independent Sample T-Test was used in this analysis.

As shown in Table 7, a significant difference exists between the total scores of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy in terms of gender ($M^{female}$=96.3, $M^{male}$=93.2, t=2.149, p<0.05). Table 7 presents the role of gender on participants' internal drives, capability, collaborative attitudes with colleagues and time management as well as external motives.

**Table 7.** Analysis of TPA in terms of gender.

| Scale | Gender | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers' Professional autonomy | Female | 158 | 96.3 | 10.0 | 2.149 | 0.033 |
| | Male | 71 | 93.2 | 10.7 | | |
| Internal Drives & motives | Female | 158 | 39.1 | 4.9 | 2.540 | 0.012 |
| | Male | 71 | 37.3 | 5.2 | | |
| Capability | Female | 158 | 31.5 | 3.4 | 2.169 | 0.031 |
| | Male | 71 | 30.4 | 3.9 | | |
| Collaboration with colleagues | Female | 158 | 12.9 | 2.1 | 1.591 | 0.113 |
| | Male | 71 | 12.5 | 2.3 | | |
| Time management | Female | 158 | 6.6 | 1.8 | -0.080 | 0.936 |
| | Male | 71 | 6.6 | 2.1 | | |
| External Drives & motives | Female | 158 | 6.2 | 2.0 | -0.742 | 0.459 |
| | Male | 71 | 6.4 | 2.3 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

Female EFL teachers' scores of Internal Drives and Motives ($M^{female}$=39.1, $M^{male}$=37.3, t=2.540, p<0.05) and Capability ($M^{female}$=31.5, $M^{male}$=30.4, t=2.169, p<0.05) are significantly higher than male EFL teachers. However, no significant difference was found between collaboration with colleagues ($M^{female}$=12.9, $M^{male}$=12.5, t=1.591, p=0.113), time management skills ($M^{female}$=6.6, $M^{male}$=6.6, t=-0.080, p=0.936), and External Drives and Motives according to gender ($M^{female}$=6.2, $M^{male}$=6.4, t=-0.072, p=0.459).

### 4.2.6. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy according to School Type EFL Teachers Work

In order to determine whether EFL teachers' professional autonomy differs by the school type in which they work, Independent Sample T-Test was employed in the analysis.

Table 8 shows that a significant difference exists between the total scores of EFL teachers' TPA according to the school in which they work ($M^{private}$=97.6, $M^{state}$=93.0, t=3.458, p<0.05).

**Table 8.** Analysis of TPA in terms of the school in which EFL teachers work.

| Scale | The school in which EFL teachers work | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers' professional autonomy | Private | 118 | 97.6 | 10.5 | 3.458 | 0.001 |
| | State | 111 | 93.0 | 9.6 | | |
| Internal Drives & Motives | Private | 118 | 39.2 | 5.0 | 1.905 | 0.058 |
| | State | 111 | 37.9 | 5.0 | | |
| Capability | Private | 118 | 31.7 | 3.6 | 2.498 | 0.013 |
| | State | 111 | 30.5 | 3.5 | | |
| Collaboration with Colleagues | Private | 118 | 13.1 | 2.3 | 2.547 | 0.012 |
| | State | 111 | 12.4 | 2.0 | | |
| Time Management | Private | 118 | 6.9 | 2.1 | 2.164 | 0.031 |
| | State | 111 | 6.4 | 1.5 | | |
| External Drives & Motives | Private | 118 | 6.7 | 1.9 | 3.531 | 0.001 |
| | State | 111 | 5.8 | 2.1 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

However, the internal drives and motives of EFL teachers are not influenced by working in private or state schools ($M^{private}$=39.2, $M^{state}$=37.9, t=1.905, p=0.058). In this analysis, there is a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' Capability ($M^{private}$=31.7, $M^{state}$=30.5, t=2.498, p<0.05), Collaboration with Colleagues ($M^{private}$=13.1, $M^{state}$=12.4, t=2.547, p<.05), Time Management ($M^{private}$=6.9, $M^{state}$=6.4, t=2.164, p<0.05), and External Drives and Motives ($M^{private}$=6.7, $M^{state}$=5.8, t=3.531, p<0.05) in terms of the school type.

### 4.2.7. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy according to Education Level

To find out whether EFL teachers' professional autonomy varies according to education level, Independent Sample T-Test was performed.

As seen in Table 9 total scores of EFL teachers' professional autonomy do not differ by having B.A. degree or postgraduate degree ($M^{bachelor's}$=95.7, $M^{postgraduate}$=94.3, t=0.916, p=0.361).

**Table 9.** Analysis of TPA in terms of education level.

| Scale | Education Level | N | M | SD | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers' Professional Autonomy | Bachelor's | 170 | 95.7 | 9.6 | 0.916 | 0.361 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 94.3 | 12.4 | | |
| Internal Drives & Motives | Bachelor's | 170 | 38.7 | 4.9 | 1.036 | 0.301 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 37.9 | 5.6 | | |
| Capability | Bachelor's | 170 | 31.2 | 3.2 | 1.064 | 0.288 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 30.7 | 4.4 | | |
| Collaboration with Colleagues | Bachelor's | 170 | 12.9 | 2.1 | 1.486 | 0.139 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 12.4 | 2.3 | | |
| Time Management | Bachelor's | 170 | 6.6 | 1.8 | 1.037 | 0.301 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 6.9 | 2.1 | | |
| External Drives & Motives | Bachelor's | 170 | 6.3 | 2.1 | 0.380 | 0.705 |
| | Postgraduate | 56 | 6.4 | 2.1 | | |

**Note:** N=229.

### 4.2.8. Analysis of EFL Teachers' Professional Autonomy according to Work Experience

To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between ELF teachers' professional autonomy according to work experience, One-Way ANOVA was performed in this analysis. EFL teachers' work experiences were grouped as less than seven years (LT7Y), 7-15 years (7-15Y) and more than 15 years (MT15Y).

Based on the results in Table 10, the scores of EFL teachers' Professional Autonomy significantly differ by their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=97.6, $M^{7-15Y}$=96.4, $M^{MT15Y}$=92.1, F=7.870, p<0.05). Post Hoc LSD test indicates that the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15Y of work experience. The scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y of work experience are also significantly higher than the ones with MT15Y of work experience. The eta squared score was calculated as $\eta^2$=0.075; therefore, the work experience variable has a moderate effect on TPA.

No significant difference was found between EFL teachers' Internal Drives and Motives in terms of work experience (F=2.012, p>0.05). However, a significant difference exists between EFL teachers' Capability in terms of their work experience ($M^{TH7Y}$=31.5, $M^{7-15Y}$=31.9, $M^{MT15Y}$=30.3, F=4.905, p<0.05). As a consequence of the Post Hoc LSD test, data results of Capability reveal that the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are higher than the scores of EFL teachers with MT15 years of work experience. Furthermore, the scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y of work experience are significantly higher than the EFL teachers in work for MT15 years. The role of work experience in capability was calculated as small based on the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.048).

**Table 10.** Analysis of TPA in terms of work experience.

| Scale | Work Experience | N | M | SD | F | p | Between Group Difference | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers' Professional Autonomy | LT7Y | 81 | 97.6 | 9.2 | 7.870 | 0.001 | LT7Y>MT15Y | 0.075 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 96.4 | 7.2 | | | 7-15Y>MT15Y | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 92.1 | 8.4 | | | | |
| Internal Drives & Motives | LT7Y | 81 | 39.2 | 4.6 | 2.012 | 0.136 | – | 0.020 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 38.9 | 4.3 | | | | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 37.7 | 4.6 | | | | |
| Capability | LT7Y | 81 | 31.5 | 3.1 | 4.905 | 0.008 | LT7Y>MT15Y | 0.048 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 31.9 | 2.2 | | | 7-15Y>MT15Y | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 30.3 | 3.4 | | | | |
| Collaboration with Colleagues | LT7Y | 81 | 12.9 | 2.4 | 2.811 | 0.063 | – | 0.028 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 13.3 | 1.5 | | | | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 12.4 | 1.8 | | | | |
| Time Management | LT7Y | 81 | 7.1 | 2.0 | 5.386 | 0.005 | LT7Y>7-15Y | 0.053 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 6.5 | 1.7 | | | LT7Y>MT15Y | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 6.2 | 1.6 | | | | |
| External Drives & Motives | LT7Y | 81 | 6.9 | 2.0 | 9.277 | 0.000 | LT7Y>7-15Y | 0.087 |
| | 7-15Y | 54 | 5.9 | 1.7 | | | LTY7>MT15Y | |
| | MT15Y | 62 | 5.6 | 2.2 | | | | |

**Note:** N=229.

Data results also demonstrate that no significant difference was found between EFL teachers' Collaboration with Colleagues according to their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=12.9, $M^{7-15Y}$=13.3, $M^{MT15Y}$=12.4, F=2.811, p>0.05). However, there is a statistically significant difference between EFL teachers' Time Management in terms of their work experiences ($M^{LT7Y}$=7.1, $M^{7-15Y}$=6.5, $M^{MT15Y}$=6.2, F=5.386, p<0.05). As a result of the Post Hoc LSD test, data results of Time Management show that the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y and MT15Y of work experience. It was determined that work experience has a small effect on time management based on the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.053).

In addition, EFL teachers have a significant difference in their External Drives and Motives in terms of their work experience ($M^{LT7Y}$=6.9, $M^{7-15Y}$=5.9, $M^{MT15Y}$=5.6, F=9.277, p<0.05). Based on the Post Hoc LSD test, data results of External Drives and Motives demonstrate that the scores of EFL teachers with LT7Y of work experience are significantly higher than the scores of EFL teachers with 7-15Y of work experience and EFL

teachers with MT15Y of work experience. In this analysis, the role of work experience in External Drives and Motives was calculated as moderate based on the eta squared score ($\eta^2$=0.087).

### 4.3. Analysis of the Third Research Question

In order to identify whether there is a meaningful relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy, a correlational analysis was used and thereby Spearman Correlation Test coefficients were computed in this analysis.

Results in Table 11. indicate that there is a statistically significant, positive and moderate relationship between TPI and TPA (r=0.568, p<0.01). And, a significant, positive and moderate relationship exists between EFL teachers' professional identity and Internal Drives & Motives (r=0.559, p<0.01), professional identity and Capability (r=0.623, p<0.01), and their professional identity and Collaboration with Colleagues (r=0.471, p<0.01).

**Table 11.** Spearman correlation test of TPI and TPA.

| Scale | Teachers' Professional Autonomy | Internal Drives & Motives | Capability | Collaboration with Colleagues | Time Management | External Drives & Motives |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Professional Identity | 0.568** | 0.559** | 0.623** | 0.471** | -0.046 | -0.057 |
| Subject-Matter Expert | 0.377** | 0.371** | 0.447** | 0.351** | -0.026 | -0.113 |
| Pedagogical Expert | 0.526** | 0.531** | 0.579** | 0.460** | -0.126 | -0.044 |
| Didactical Expert | 0.570** | 0.533** | 0.581** | 0.416** | 0.052 | 0.051 |

**Note:** **p<0.01; N=229.

Additionally, there is a significant, positive and moderate relationship between Subject-Matter Expert and professional autonomy (r=0.377, p<0.01), Subject-Matter Expert and Internal Drives & Motives (r=0.371, p<0.01), Subject-Matter Expert and Capability (r=0.447, p<0.01). A significant, moderate and positive relationship also exists between Subject-Matter Expert and Collaboration with Colleagues (r=0.351, p<0.01).

In addition, a significant, moderate and positive relationship was found between Pedagogical Expert and EFL teachers' professional autonomy (r=0.526, p<0.01), between Pedagogical Expert and Internal Drives & Motives (r=0.531, p<0.01), Pedagogical Expert and Capability (r=0.579, p<0.01). There is also a significant, moderate and positive relationship between Pedagogical Expert and Collaboration with Colleagues (r=0.460, p<0.01).

Moreover, a significant, moderate and positive relationship was found between Didactical Expert and professional autonomy (r=0.570, p<0.01), between Didactical Expert and Internal Drives & Motives (r=0.533, p<0.01), Didactical Expert and Capability (r=0.581, p<0.01), and Didactical Expert and Collaboration with Colleagues (r=0.416, p<0.01).

As a consequence of the analysis, it can be concluded that there is not a significant relationship between the subscales of Professional Identity and Time Management, and between the subscales of Professional Identity and External Drives & Motives.

## 5. Results and Discussion

This study was set out to find out the professional identity and autonomy levels of EFL teachers. Based on the results, EFL teachers perform a very high level of professional identity and particularly they have a very high level of subject-matter expertise based on their educational background. The reason is that the teacher's professional identity formation is promoted by the pre-service education and experiences (Beijaard et al., 2004). Thus, the knowledge of subject-matter obtained through the previous education period encourages EFL teachers to continue their profession. Furthermore, EFL teachers with a very high level of subject-matter expertise view themselves as a good interaction model for the interaction between students and for the interaction students have in their social context. Results also reveal that EFL teachers are pedagogical experts in their profession at a very high level. And, they consider the climate of the classroom as a safe and respectful environment. According to Kansanen (2003) creating a peaceful classroom atmosphere encourages students to establish close relationships with their teachers. In light of findings, EFL teachers with a very high level of pedagogical expertise can also manifest their professional identity by creating a classroom environment with the sense of respect, safety and consideration. As a consequence of the high level of didactical expertise, these teachers can also diagnose and solve the problems in the learning process. Similarly, Klimstra (2013) says that identity formation is ensured by personal development. Therefore, personal development and identity formation of learners are provided by the teachers who have a high level of didactical expertise.

Regarding the level of EFL teachers' professional autonomy, the results show that they possess a high level of professional autonomy. As stated by Dam (1995) teachers' autonomy is affected by their willingness and pleasure in the profession. In light of findings, EFL teachers are also internally motivated at a very high level as they enjoy developing themselves. Smith (2003) regards teachers as learners of their profession; thus, autonomous EFL teachers keep developing themselves in the teaching profession. Based on the results, EFL teachers also have a very high level of capability which addresses their abilities to benefit from profession-related materials, technological tools and which means expressing weaknesses and strengths as teachers. Teachers' capability is a combination of ability and capacity which enable teachers to become autonomous in the professional context (Okay, 2018). Furthermore, collaboration in the professional context enables people to share work and experiences to make the work better (Campbell, Freedman, Boulter, & Kirkwood, 2003; Haapaniemi, Venalainen, Malin, & Palojoki, 2020). In this regard, EFL teachers have a very high level of collaborating skills. And, time management is another aspect of professional autonomy which EFL teachers perform at a moderate level. From Pacaol (2021) perspective, teachers may also be busy with assessment, talking to parents and preparing materials. Results reveal that EFL teachers find their workload heavy to have time for professional development. Lastly, external drives

such as better financial conditions and promotion have a moderate impact on EFL teachers' professionally autonomous actions. The reason is that a higher pay and promotion affect teachers' job satisfaction (Khaliq, 2018). Therefore, EFL teachers may continue their professional development activities to be paid more or get promoted.

In this study, we also investigated whether the results of EFL teachers' professional identity and autonomy differ by gender, education level, work experience, and the school type. Based on the findings, female EFL teachers have a higher level of professional identity and a higher sense of pedagogical and didactical expertise than male teachers. And, they perform a higher level of professional autonomy than male teachers in this study. Although EFL teachers' collaborating with colleagues, time management and external drives do not differ by gender, results demonstrate that female EFL teachers are more internally driven than male EFL teachers, and view themselves as more capable than male teachers. In comparison to male teachers, female teachers seriously take into account the significance of higher inspiration, attraction and clear instruction that are also considered by their students (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2007; Escardíbul & Mora, 2013; Krupnick, 1985). Considering the gender stereotypes in Turkish culture and the sociological context, Turkish people describe men as powerful whereas women's stereotypes are structured under the personality traits such compassionate in the society and the media (Ayan, 2014; Berk, 2005). On the choice of a profession, the female might be perceived as an agent in the comfort of the house more than in a challenging work environment (Zencirkıran, 2016). However, female teachers have a higher academic achievement, higher intrinsic motivation and less burn-out in the field (Erten, 2010; Sak, 2018). In this study, both professional identity and professional autonomy levels of female teachers are higher; therefore, the explanation of these findings might be related to the females' effort to change the social stereotypes through higher pedagogical and didactical expertise as well as higher internal drives and capability in their teaching profession where they try to manifest their potential and actualize their ideals.

In addition, EFL teachers who work at private schools have a higher level of professional identity in the subject-matter, pedagogical and didactical expertise than the ones working in state schools. Results reveal that private school EFL teachers display a higher level of professional autonomy than the ones in state schools. Regarding EFL teachers' professional autonomy, their capability, collaboration with colleagues, time management and external drives differ by the school type they work in. This might result from the extended hours of language lessons in private schools (Garipağaoğlu, 2015; Gürler, 2020). Thus, EFL teachers in private schools might have more time to be subjected to a variable teaching environment. Moreover, private schools are allowed to modify the curricula and materials by the Ministry of Education in Turkey while pre-determined materials must be used in state schools (Ministry of National Education (MoE), 2012, 2016). Therefore, private school EFL teachers can feel freer to take actions autonomously in their field.

In light of findings, EFL teachers who have less than seven years of work experience and the ones with 7-15 years of experience possess a higher level of TPI than the ones with more than 15 years of work experience. At the same time, EFL teachers who are in their first seven years in profession view themselves as more expertized in subject-matter and didactical approaches. The results reveal that EFL teachers with less work experience might feel more competent with their fresh theoretical knowledge and enthusiasm. However, more experienced EFL teachers might lose their interest in describing their teacher being in years. Furthermore, EFL teachers with less than seven years of work experience perform a higher level of TPA than the ones who have been working for more than 15 years. And, EFL teachers with less work experience perform a higher level of capability in terms of professional autonomy than the ones in profession for more than 15 years. Herein, it can be said that more experienced teachers might falter in capability whereas EFL teachers with less than seven years of work experience are better at managing their time and are more externally motivated. Thus, EFL teachers with less work experience in the field tend to define their professional self autonomously.

As a consequence of this study, we found that a significant, positive and moderate relationship exists between EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy. There are some studies that refer to the interrelation between identity and autonomy concepts (Benson, 2010; Huang., 2009; Teng, 2019) however, the relationship between professional identity and professional autonomy of teachers in this study was investigated in the EFL context. As EFL teachers possess professional identity, they can display autonomous actions in their profession. Accordingly, the freer EFL teachers feel to make decisions in their teaching and profession, the more they can define their identity in the profession.

## 6. Recommendations

EFL teachers, the pre-service trainers, mentors and school managements as well as curriculum developers should consider the relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy so that the efficiency of teacher education in the pre-service and in-service periods can be enriched. For this reason, professional development activities in these periods should be encouraged to render teaching and learning more effective. To enhance EFL teachers' professional identity and professional autonomy awareness, curriculum specialists can also collaborate with the teachers in further studies. In addition, the significant difference between EFL teachers' professional identity and autonomy in terms of gender should also be investigated to highlight the sociological and cultural backgrounds in the Turkish context and different EFL contexts. In the implication of this study, perceptions of teacher trainers or school management should also be explored.

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