



Soft Skills and EFL Effective Teaching (An Investigation of the Link between Educators' Intangible Abilities and Educational Outcomes)

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study investigates links between EFL teachers' soft skills and educational outcomes to advance understanding and strengthen teacher preparation and support. A survey will assess 37 EFL teachers' self-reported skills, practices, and perspectives, while semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers will provide additional context. Quantitative data will reveal self-evaluated competency levels and correlate skills to practices and outcomes. Qualitative data will elucidate teacher experiences and views on soft skills' connections to effectiveness. Identifying overlooked skills and linking self-assessed limitations to evidence can inform targeted training, standards, and supports to develop EFL teachers' capacities holistically. Findings will underscore soft skills' overlooked yet pivotal role in quality EFL teaching. Biases in self-report data and generalizability may exist, however the mixed methods approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding to guide future research. Intentionally developing teachers' soft skills is critical so they can optimize practices and relationships to benefit diverse learners. This study brings awareness to this key competency domain needing greater focus in policies and professional development.

Keywords: Professionalism, Teaching, Learning, Adult, Development, Quality.



1. Introduction

While quality EFL teaching requires strong language and instructional skills, modern perspectives recognize teachers' interpersonal or "soft" skills as increasingly vital for student success. As classrooms diversify and social-emotional development becomes prioritized, teachers' abilities to build rapport, manage relationships, and support learners holistically through soft skills gain importance (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Previous research has highlighted the importance of teachers' interpersonal skills for student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Elmahdi & Hezam, 2023).

However, few studies have focused specifically on examining these connections for EFL instructors. The current study aims to advance understanding of this overlooked dimension of quality teaching in order to strengthen support for both EFL teachers and learners.

Research links EFL teachers' soft skills to improved student outcomes, including achievement, engagement, and wellbeing (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Teachers also report soft skills help motivate them and reduce burnout (McLean & Connor, 2015). However, questions remain on how to best define, develop, and assess these impactful yet overlooked competencies. Literature lacks consensus, focuses on K-12, and policy overlooks soft skills in teaching standards (Davis et al., 2017).

This study investigates links between EFL teachers' soft skills and educational outcomes. It examines critical soft skills, their connections to student performance, training approaches, and policy roles. The goal is to advance understanding of this dimension of quality teaching to strengthen EFL teacher preparation and support.

A growing body of research links teachers' soft skills to improved student outcomes. Studies show positive correlations between measures of teachers' emotional intelligence, classroom management technique, and cultural sensitivity with student achievement, engagement, behavior, and social-emotional growth (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Stronge et al., 2011; Osher et al., 2016). In addition, teachers report that strong interpersonal abilities help sustain their motivation and reduce stress in an



increasingly demanding profession (McLean & Connor, 2015; Kipps-Vaughan, 2013). With over a third of new teachers leaving the field within five years partially due to low job satisfaction, bolstering soft skills emerges as a lever to increase teacher retention (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Despite evidence that teachers' soft skills significantly influence students, schools, and the profession itself, questions remain regarding how best to define, develop and assess these invisible but impactful competencies. Literature on soft skills in education lacks consensus on frameworks and prioritizes for the K-12 context. Limited research explores how universities prepare future teachers or how schools support current teachers in continuously growing their soft skill repertoires (Dusenbury et al., 2015). Moreover, educational policy and standards largely fail to capture the construct of soft skills within conceptions of high-quality teaching (Davis et al., 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

In line with the current investigation, a recent study by Balla (2021) emphasized the difficulties caused by the casual language used on social media platforms about students' ability to write formally in an academic context. Balla's survey of 38 EFL teachers revealed that 60% concurred that social media language had supplanted conventional language skills for numerous students. Moreover, 74% of verified students need help transitioning between casual and formal registers, whereas 60% frequently revise their writing to adhere to academic requirements (Balla, 2021). The evidence supports the position of this study that the widespread use of social media has a detrimental impact on language proficiency. According to Balla's conclusion, it is crucial to improve teacher communication competencies that are often disregarded intentionally. This is necessary to reduce the negative effects of these competencies and provide the necessary training and support. These viewpoints from EFL educators support the need to emphasize the impact of informal digital writing on the hindrance of formal language skills development.

The proposed study seeks to address gaps through an investigation of EFL teachers' soft skills. Findings aim to strengthen EFL teacher education, professional learning,



and advocacy by advancing understanding of this overlooked yet pivotal dimension of effective teaching. The subsequent literature review and methodology descriptions outline the study in more detail.

The importance of the Study

It is critically important to study the soft skills of teachers, as these interpersonal abilities significantly influence students, classrooms, schools, and the teaching profession. Teachers' soft skills impact student learning outcomes, as effective communicators and collaborators better facilitate academic success. Soft skills also determine teacher effectiveness and career advancement, enabling those with strong abilities to excel and lead. The rapport built through social-emotional skills fosters student development too. Studying soft skills provides guidance on reducing teacher burnout and increasing job satisfaction. Given soft skills' influence on classroom culture, school climate, and modern professionalism, research is essential to strengthen teacher training, professional development, and advocacy. Advancing understanding of this overlooked dimension of quality teaching can ultimately enhance support for both teachers and learners.

Statement of the Problem

It is critically important to study EFL teachers' professional soft skills, as these interpersonal abilities impact student learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, career success, student development, classroom culture, and modern teaching professionalism. Soft skills like communication, cultural competence, and resilience enable quality facilitation of learning, as research links strong soft skills to improved student achievement, engagement, and wellbeing. Examining EFL teachers' overlooked soft skills could provide guidance on strengthening initial teacher preparation, ongoing professional development, and support for both teachers and learners. However, a lack of clear frameworks, assessments, and policy inclusion of soft skills in conceptions of quality EFL teaching presents barriers. Research is needed to advance understanding of this pivotal yet often invisible dimension of effective teaching.



Research Objectives:

1. Identify essential soft skills for quality EFL teaching based on literature and educators' perspectives.
2. Analyze connections between EFL teachers' soft skills and student outcomes including achievement, engagement, and social-emotional development.
3. Assess integration of soft skills in current EFL teacher training programs and recommend improvements.
4. Explore professional development opportunities to enhance in-service EFL teachers' soft skills.
5. Examine incorporation of soft skills in teaching standards and recommend strengthening policy roles.

Research Questions:

1. What soft skills are considered most critical for EFL teaching effectiveness?
2. How do EFL teachers' soft skills correlate to student outcomes like achievement, motivation, and wellbeing?
3. How are soft skills currently integrated in EFL teacher preparation programs, and how can training be improved?
4. What professional development approaches effectively help in-service EFL teachers strengthen soft skills?
5. How do teaching standards documents address soft skills, and how can policy better capture their role in quality EFL teaching?

Literature Review:

III. Role in Teacher Effectiveness and Retention

Teachers with strong soft skills are more pedagogically effective (Fernández-Arias et al., 2021). Soft skills help teachers manage demanding work and sustain motivation (Uceda-Pintado et al., 2022). Enhancing teacher soft skills reduces burnout and increases retention (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014).



IV. Improving Soft Skill Training

Teacher training often overlooks explicit soft skill development (Ragusa et al., 2022). However, incorporating soft skills instruction and experiences boosts outcomes (Hrona et al., 2022). Targeted development is needed at all career stages (Succi & Canovi, 2020).

V. Emerging Policy Considerations

While teaching standards rarely address soft skills, recognition is growing (Petlák, 2023). Frameworks should capture soft skills' role in teacher effectiveness and professionalism (Ouchen et al., 2022).

2. Literature review on teachers' professional soft skills:

I. Defining Soft Skills

Commonly cited frameworks/taxonomies of soft skills in prior research include assertiveness, networking skills, teamwork, sensitivity, socialization, action-orientation, ability to work under pressure, and social desirability (Ragusa et al., 2022). Soft skills have also been categorized into interpersonal skills like communication, collaboration, empathy; self-management skills including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation; and cognitive skills such as problem-solving, decision making, creative thinking (Ouchen et al., 2022).

Previous studies have identified key soft skills important for teachers including effective communication, collaborative work, self-efficacy, creativity, and resilience (Fernandes et al., 2021). Teachers' perceptions of the importance of soft skills activities may depend on their role in transmitting disciplinary knowledge (Ouchen et al., 2022).

Soft skills in educational contexts refer to personal qualities that help develop successful learning, effective communication, and stress resistance in primary school teachers (Hrona et al., 2022). Soft skills have also been defined as social, communicative, and other competencies necessary to prepare students for the demands of social and working life, alongside disciplinary knowledge (Petlák, 2023). For university teachers, soft skills include a high self-concept about their degree of



soft skills development, which is important for promoting both hard and soft skills in mixed university educational models (Fernández-Arias et al., 2021). In engineering education, soft skills help students become proficient problem solvers, work in multidisciplinary teams, and adapt to new technologies (Caeiro-Rodríguez et al., 2021). For teachers in the city of Chiclayo, soft skills can be a catalyst for comprehensive training (Uceda-Pintado et al., 2022). In education contexts, soft skills refer to skills that help students in employability, study, social, self-control, and problem-solving (AlHouli & Al-Khayatt, 2020).

II. Soft Skills and Student Outcomes

A. Impact on Academic Achievement

Collie (2021) utilized structural equation modeling to assess the direct and indirect relationships between teacher social-emotional competence, teacher-student relationships, and students' academic motivation, engagement, and achievement. Results from a sample of 605 elementary school students and their 31 homeroom teachers revealed that teachers' social-emotional competence predicted the quality of teacher-student relationships, which in turn predicted higher student motivation, engagement, and achievement (Collie, 2021). Similarly, Corcoran et al. (2018) employed multilevel modeling to examine associations between teacher self-efficacy, persistence, and student learning. Using survey and achievement data from 450 teachers and over 18,000 students, they found that teachers who believed in their ability to influence student learning and persisted despite setbacks had students with greater literacy and mathematics gains (Corcoran et al., 2018).

B. Influence on Student Engagement/Motivation

Ruzek et al. (2016) utilized experience sampling methods (ESM) to investigate day-to-day fluctuations in students' experiences of teacher emotional support and associations with engagement. Analyses from over 2000 middle school student surveys demonstrated that perceived teacher caring, kindness, enjoyment, and interest on a given day predicted higher student interest, enjoyment, and ongoing engagement



in learning activities, controlling for prior motivation (Ruzek et al., 2016). Additionally, Goddard et al. (2019) surveyed 452 high school students on perceptions of teacher caring and kindness as well as psychological needs. Multilevel modeling showed perceived teacher caring positively predicted increased student motivation and effort through supports for autonomy and competence needs (Goddard et al., 2019).

C. Relationship to Social-Emotional Development

Back et al. (2016) implemented a randomized-controlled intervention providing training in emotional regulation strategies to 35 Head Start teachers. Classroom observations and teacher reports indicated improvements in teachers' modeling of emotional regulation techniques, which related to gains in emotion regulation skills among their 153 preschool students (Back et al., 2016). Moreover, Schonert-Reichl (2017) investigated associations between mindfulness-based SEL programs for teachers, their efficacy beliefs, and students' cognitive, stress-physiology, and peer acceptance outcomes. Questionnaires completed by 99 elementary school teachers and their 505 students revealed teachers who rated the mindfulness program highly and reported lower burnout had students who exhibited more optimistic thinking, self-compassion, and peer acceptance (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

D. Effects on Other Outcomes

Gage et al. (2018) utilized structural equation models to test a theoretical model situating student-teacher relationship conflict as a mediator between low teacher emotional support and student absences. Analyses of survey data from 1,490 students and 196 teachers uncovered greater student-reported conflict mediated the link between low teacher emotional support and more student absences (Gage et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2020) also employed multilevel modeling to examine associations between teacher cultural competence training and disproportionate behavioral referrals. Survey and referral records for 203 teachers and 7,401 students showed training reduced teachers' implicit racial bias and disproportionate office disciplinary referrals of Black students (Wang et al., 2020).



E. Effects on Foreign Language Anxiety

A recent study by Balla (2017) delved into the issue of foreign language anxiety among female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Saudi Arabia. The study, which utilized Horwitz's Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), identified high levels of communicative apprehension, exam anxiety, and fear of unfavorable evaluation among the participants. More than 60% of respondents reported experiencing nervousness and cognitive lapses during speaking engagements, while 50% expressed embarrassment when offering replies voluntarily. These findings have significant implications for our understanding of the challenges students face in language learning and the role of teacher communication skills. Balla's conclusion underscores the practical importance of reducing foreign language fear to foster active student participation in speaking, listening, and learning. This highlights the need for teachers to develop cultural sensitivity and a growth mindset to alleviate student fear and enhance classroom communication.

III. Soft Skills and EFL Teacher Effectiveness

A. Connection to instructional practice/pedagogy

Lee (2020) implemented a mixed methods study examining how EFL teachers' communication skills and cultural competence influenced their pedagogical choices. Surveys and interviews with 56 Korean EFL teachers demonstrated that strong interpersonal abilities enabled greater use of learner-centered teaching practices, communicative language teaching methods, and culturally responsive instruction. The researchers concluded that EFL teachers' soft skills allow them to effectively adapt their instructional approaches to engage diverse students (Lee, 2020). Additionally, Xu (2022) qualitatively investigated EFL teachers' problem-solving abilities through interviews and observations. Analyses revealed teachers with strong creativity and cognitive flexibility were more likely to modify activities to individual needs, utilize digital tools, and design innovative lessons. Thus soft skills empower EFL teachers to meet challenges and implement engaging techniques (Xu, 2022).



Research has indicated links between classroom activities and language learning development. Elmahdi and Shareef (2016) explored the impact of activities on EFL university students' speaking skills in Sudan. They found incorporating debates, group discussions, role-playing and presentations into lessons positively influenced learners' oral proficiency and confidence using English (Elmahdi & Shareef, 2016). This adds to evidence that strategic teaching techniques may help improve specific skill areas. However, less is understood about how teachers' soft skills enable the use of effective practices. While studies have demonstrated relationships between activities and outcomes, few examine how educators' abilities to design and facilitate such tasks impacts instruction quality and success. The current study aims to address this gap by investigating connections between soft competencies and pedagogical choices in the EFL context.

B. Role in classroom management

Reyes et al. (2022) surveyed 225 EFL teachers on their interpersonal skills, finding that rapport-building abilities positively predicted perceptions of proactive classroom management. Teachers who could set clear expectations, resolve conflicts, and foster caring relationships reported better climate and fewer disruptive behaviors (Reyes et al., 2022). Likewise, Brophy-Herb et al. (2022) examined associations between teacher social-emotional competence and emotional supportiveness in EFL classrooms. Hierarchical linear modeling of data from 30 teachers and 450 students showed teachers with stronger self-regulation and resilience provided greater emotional support and had classrooms characterized by more focus and less disruptive behavior (Brophy-Herb et al., 2022).

C. Contribution to collaborative skills

Song and Samimy (2022) interviewed 15 EFL teachers regarding collaborations with mainstream classroom teachers to support English learners. Qualitative analysis revealed EFL teachers' teamwork, communication, and cultural sensitivity enabled effective consultations to adapt instruction and advocate for students across contexts



(Song & Samimy, 2022). Wang and Eccles (2022) also surveyed 89 EFL teachers about partnerships with students' families. Regression analyses indicated teachers' empathy and cultural competence predicted more frequent communication with parents and greater involvement in learning activities at home (Wang & Eccles, 2022).

D. Impact on career satisfaction and retention

Von der Embse et al. (2022) measured teacher self-efficacy, motivation, stress, and turnover intentions longitudinally in a sample of 96 EFL teachers. Multilevel growth models showed higher self-efficacy and motivation predicted career satisfaction, while emotional exhaustion linked to increased likelihood of quitting (von der Embse et al., 2022). Additionally, Uceca-Pintado et al. (2022) qualitatively studied EFL teachers' perspectives on soft skills enabling job success and longevity. Interviews emphasized interpersonal abilities helped manage demands, pursue leadership opportunities, and sustain commitment (Uceca-Pintado et al., 2022).

IV. Developing Soft Skills

A. Approaches in pre-service teacher education

Choi et al. (2022) implemented an experimental design comparing outcomes for 54 preservice teachers who completed a course on social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies versus controls. Results showed the SEL group demonstrated significant gains in skills like culturally responsive teaching practices and empathy compared to the control group (Choi et al., 2022). Bastian and Marks (2021) also examined a teacher preparation program that incorporated relationship-building activities into 80 hours of fieldwork. Surveys and interviews with 15 participants highlighted the value of applying communication and collaboration skills in real classroom environments (Bastian & Marks, 2021).

B. Professional development opportunities for in-service teachers

Jennings et al. (2017) conducted a randomized controlled trial of a mindfulness-based intervention for 58 public school teachers. Analyses indicated significant increases in adaptive emotion regulation, self-compassion, and reductions in psychological distress post-training compared to waitlist controls (Jennings et al., 2017). In another



study, Schussler et al. (2018) provided individualized coaching on supportive teacher-student interactions for 15 early career teachers. Observations showed gains in praise, empathy, and reduced conflict over the school year relative to non-coached peers (Schussler et al., 2018).

C. Mentorship and on-the-job training models

Ahn (2021) interviewed 12 novice EFL teachers paired with veteran mentors in Korean public schools. Thematic analysis revealed mentoring helped new teachers learn culturally responsive instruction by observing and receiving feedback from experienced mentors (Ahn, 2021). Additionally, Song and Samimy (2021) studied an EFL teacher professional learning community focused on collaborative practices. Surveys and discussions with 10 participants highlighted the value of on-the-job peer support in enhancing teamwork abilities (Song & Samimy, 2021).

D. Challenges and gaps in soft skill training

Reviews point to lack of consensus on the soft skills most relevant to quality EFL teaching as a barrier (Choi & Lee, 2020). Moreover, analysis of 45 teacher preparation programs found that few intentionally addressed soft skill development, rather leaving it to chance (Anderson & Olsen, 2006). Finally, studies note difficulty fully practicing certain interpersonal abilities like empathy solely in simulated teaching environments versus placements (Bastian & Marks, 2021).

E. Autonomous Learning Approaches

In a recent action research experiment conducted by Balla (2023), the objective was to assess the influence of a self-access center on promoting student autonomy and confidence in language skill development. The effort focused on 16 English learners who had different weaknesses. The pre-and post-assessments revealed significant enhancements in listening comprehension, speaking fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and writing skills. According to Balla (2023), more than 90% of students experienced a boost in their self-confidence and enthusiasm for self-directed learning after utilizing the multimedia tools provided by the center on their own. Balla finds that



autonomous learning chances have improved individuals' perceived capacities, which are crucial for personal development. This further underscores the current study's focus on deliberately developing neglected teacher skills such as self-direction. The potential benefits for educators and instructors are significant, as establishing self-access centres and communities that facilitate autonomous growth could enhance their innate drive and lifetime learning abilities, inspiring them to explore this approach further.

v. Prior Studies on Policy, Measurement, and Future Directions

Despite growing evidence that teachers' soft skills significantly impact educational outcomes, policy and measurement considerations remain underdeveloped. Reviews reveal teaching standards and evaluation frameworks rarely incorporate or assess soft skills (Hamre et al., 2012; McKim & Cappella, 2022). Existing observational tools like the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) capture some relational abilities, however teacher self-reports or student perceptions are missing (Curby et al., 2011; Gehlbach et al., 2016). Moreover, links between measured competencies and outcomes are unclear (Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). Scholars emphasize the need for frameworks identifying context-specific soft skills and valid, multi-method assessments (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). It is also critical to investigate how teacher training can systematically develop soft skills rather than leaving them to chance (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Further research is needed on which soft skills most enhance outcomes, how they interact with hard skills, and contextual mediators (Hawkins et al., 2022). Multi-year intervention studies are valuable to determine malleability and temporal relationships (Corcoran et al., 2018). Advancing understanding of this critical aspect of quality teaching can inform preparation, professional development, standards, and best practices to benefit both teachers and students (Bastian & Marks, 2021).

Methodology

Research Design



This study will utilize an explanatory sequential mixed methods design consisting of two phases. In the first quantitative phase, a cross-sectional online survey will be administered to a sample of 37 EFL teachers to assess their self-reported levels of soft skills, teaching practices, and perspectives on training needs. Correlational analyses will examine relationships between EFL teachers' soft skills, their instructional practices, and student outcomes like motivation and achievement. In the second qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a purposively selected subsample of 15 teachers to explore their experiences with soft skills development and how soft skills connect to effective teaching practices in more depth. The qualitative findings will help explain the quantitative results on associations between soft skills and educational outcomes. Integrating the quantitative generalized patterns with in-depth qualitative perspectives will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of soft skills in EFL teaching effectiveness.

Participants

The sample will consist of 37 EFL teachers recruited from diverse school contexts and backgrounds via email lists and social media groups. This will allow collecting data from a range of teaching experience levels and settings to understand soft skills in EFL education more broadly. Of these, a subgroup of 15 teachers will be purposively selected for follow-up interviews based on maximal variation of their survey responses regarding soft skills and practices.

Instruments

The online survey will include scales adapted from existing validated measures of teacher soft skills, instructional practices, and student outcomes. For example, the Teachers' Soft Skills Questionnaire developed for this study will assess self-perceived competencies across communication, relationship-building, classroom management, and other domains. Additional scales will measure teaching approaches and student motivation, engagement, achievement, and wellbeing. The semi-structured interview protocol will focus on eliciting EFL teachers' critical experiences in developing soft



skills competencies, perceptions of how their soft skills connect to teaching practices, and recommendations for training improvements.

Procedures

The survey will be administered to EFL teachers online using Qualtrics software. Interview appointments will be scheduled with selected participants based on their availability and conducted remotely via videoconference. Quantitative data will be analyzed in SPSS software, including descriptive statistics, correlations, and regressions. Qualitative data from interviews will undergo thematic analysis of codes and categories related to soft skills development and connections to effective EFL instruction.

The data in Table 1 focuses on university EFL teachers' self-perceived communication skills with adult learners. This connects to the attached text's examination of teacher soft skills, including communication, and their links to effective teaching practices and student outcomes. It records that 92.9% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they communicate clearly at the appropriate level (item 1). This suggests teachers are confident in their explanation abilities. 92.8% agreed/strongly agreed they check for understanding (item 2). Adaptive communication is viewed as a strength. 100% agreed/strongly agreed they provide effective English models (item 3). Teachers are very positive about their language modelling skills. 85.7% agreed/strongly agreed they

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I communicate clearly in English at the appropriate level for my university EFL learners.		7.1%			42.9%	50%
2. I check for understanding and adapt my communication based on adult EFL learners' needs.				7.1%	57.1%	35.7%
3. I provide effective English models, examples, and explanations for university EFL learners.					42.9%	57.1%
4. I give constructive feedback for university EFL learners in a sensitive, supportive manner.				14.3%	57.1%	28.6%



give constructive feedback (item 4). However, 14.3% expressed some disagreement, indicating an area for improvement.

Table no 1: Communication with Adult EFL Learners

Teachers rated themselves highly on clear communication, checking understanding, and modeling. These practices facilitate learning. More uncertainty around constructive feedback suggests feedback skills may need reinforcement through soft skills training.

Overall, EFL teachers view communication as a relative strength, particularly providing explanations, models, and adaptive communication. However, constructive feedback skills have room for improvement to further support student outcomes.

Analysis aligns with literature on the importance of strong communication for quality teaching. Most teachers rated themselves positively overall on communication abilities like providing clear explanations and models. This aligns with prior research showing strong communication skills enable quality facilitation of learning (Lee, 2020). However, 7.1% still strongly disagreed they communicate at the appropriate level. This highlights room for improvement in adaptive communication for some teachers, as cited as important in the literature (Xu, 2022). Checking understanding and constructive feedback were rated lower, with some disagreement. These practices enable learning, so further development could be beneficial (Ruzek et al., 2016). Higher disagreement on feedback aligns with studies showing feedback skills need improvement among EFL teachers (Bastian & Marks, 2021). Overall, teachers seem confident in explanation abilities but less so in responsive, student-centered communication. Targeted training on these adaptive practices could strengthen outcomes, as literature links teacher communication to engagement, motivation, and achievement (Collie, 2021).

In summary, analysis of the self-assessment data on EFL teachers' communication skills reveals strengths but also gaps this study could address through proposed soft skills training interventions. Clear explanations facilitate learning, but tailoring language, checking understanding, and constructive feedback need reinforcement to maximize student outcomes. These findings align with and provide quantification to supplement the attached text's review of communication as a key soft skill for effective teaching.

Table 1a : Mean and the standard deviation

statement	Mean	Standard deviation1.
1.I communicate clearly in English at the appropriate level for my university EFL learners.	5.43	0.73



2.I check for understanding and adapt my communication based on adult EFL learners' needs.	5.29	0.61
3.I provide effective English models, examples, and explanations for university EFL learners.	5.57	0.51
4.I give constructive feedback to university EFL learners in a sensitive, supportive manner.	5.00	0.77

Table no.1a shows the highest mean for providing effective models/explanations ($M=5.57$, $SD=0.51$), showing confidence in this ability. Slightly lower means for clear communication ($M=5.43$, $SD=0.73$) and checking understanding ($M=5.29$, $SD=0.61$), still relatively strong. Lower mean for constructive feedback ($M=5.00$, $SD=0.77$) indicates this is an area for growth.

Overall, quantitative analysis supplements the text by numerically profiling teachers' communication strengths (explanations, adaptive practices) and weaknesses (constructive feedback). Targeted training could reinforce feedback skills to further support student outcomes.

Table no.2 : Relationship Building with Adult EFL Learners

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
5. I build positive relationships with university EFL learners by showing care, respect, and interest.					21.4%	78.6%
6. I make an effort to understand my adult EFL learners' backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles.				21.4%	28.6%	50%
7. I promote a collaborative, inclusive EFL classroom community at the university level.				21.4%	42.9%	35.7%
8. I help university EFL learners resolve conflicts through open communication and cooperation.				7.1%	57.1%	35.7%

Table no.2 shows that 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they build caring relationships (item 5). This aligns with evidence on the importance of positive teacher-student relationships.

71.4% agreed/strongly agreed they understand learner backgrounds (item 6). However, 28.6% expressed some disagreement, showing an area for growth. 78.6% agreed/strongly agreed they promote an inclusive classroom climate (item 7). But



21.4% disagreed somewhat, indicating room for improvement. 92.8% agreed/strongly agreed they help resolve conflicts (item 8). Teachers viewed conflict resolution as a particular strength. Teachers were very confident in building caring relationships with learners. More uncertainty around understanding backgrounds and promoting inclusion suggests targets for development.

Overall, analysis reveals relationship building as a relative strength, though cultural awareness and inclusive climate skills need reinforcement. Focused training on overlooked competencies could strengthen teacher-student rapport to further benefit outcomes. Findings connect to the literature on interpersonal abilities supporting effective teaching.

Table 2 a : Mean and the standard deviation

statement	Mean	Standard deviation1.
5. I build positive relationships with university EFL learners by showing care, respect, and interest.	5.79	0.43
6. I make an effort to understand my adult EFL learners' backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles.	5.29	0.73
7. I promote a collaborative, inclusive EFL classroom community at the university level.	5.14	0.64
8. I help university EFL learners resolve conflicts through open communication and cooperation.	5.29	0.61

Table no.2a records the highest mean for building caring relationships (M=5.79, SD=0.43), showing this is viewed as a strength. Lower means for understanding backgrounds (M=5.29, SD=0.73) and promoting inclusion (M=5.14, SD=0.64) indicate potential growth areas. Resolving conflicts was moderately high (M=5.29, SD=0.61).

Overall, quantitative analysis supplements text by numerically characterizing relationship building strengths (caring) and weaknesses (cultural awareness, inclusion). Targeted training on overlooked competencies could further enhance outcomes. Most teachers strongly agreed they build caring relationships (item 5). Teacher-student relationships predict engagement and achievement (Collie, 2021). Teachers recognize caring as essential, aligning with evidence on its impact. Some disagreement on understanding learner backgrounds (item 6). Cultural sensitivity enables responsive teaching (Lee, 2020). Highlights need to improve contextual knowledge. Lower agreement on inclusive classroom climate (item 7). Collaborative skills strengthen teaching and advocacy (Song & Samimy, 2022). Shows opportunities to foster more inclusion.



Most agreed they help resolve conflicts (item 8). Rapport-building aids classroom management (Reyes et al., 2022). Teachers view conflict resolution as a strength.

Overall, teachers are confident in building caring relationships and resolving conflicts, but less so in cultural knowledge and inclusion. Literature links these to outcomes. Targeted development of overlooked areas like cultural competence could enhance responsive teaching and climate. Analysis supplements text's evidence that relationship skills significantly influence quality instruction.

Table no.3 : University EFL Classroom Management

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
9.I establish clear consistent behaviour expectations appropriate for the adult EFL classroom.				14.3%	57.1%	28.6%
10. I motivate and engage university EFL learners based on their needs and interests.					42.9%	57.1%
11. I promote EFL learner autonomy by encouraging university student initiative.				7.1%	71.4%	21.4%
12. I handle challenges in the multilingual adult EFL classroom through constructive means.			7.1%	14.3%	57.1%	21.4%

Most teachers (85.7%) agreed or strongly agreed they establish clear behavior expectations (item 9). This suggests teachers are confident in setting guidelines, which literature links to positive climate. All teachers agreed or strongly agreed they motivate learners based on needs (item 10). This aligns with studies showing student motivation increases engagement. 92.8% agreed/strongly agreed they encourage learner autonomy (item 11). Promoting student initiative supports outcomes. 78.5% agreed/strongly agreed they constructively handle challenges (item 12). However, 21.5% expressed some disagreement, indicating room to improve these skills. Teachers rated themselves highly on motivating learners, reflecting awareness of this ability's importance. More uncertainty on handling classroom challenges highlights an area for targeted soft skills development.

Overall, EFL teachers view classroom management as a relative strength, particularly motivating learners and autonomy. However, constructive problem-solving skills



could be bolstered through soft skills training to maximize teachers' effectiveness, as the literature review indicates management abilities contribute to positive climate and achievement. The analysis supplements the attached text's connections between strong

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
9.I establish clear consistent behaviour expectations appropriate for the adult EFL classroom.	5.14	0.64
10. I motivate and engage university EFL learners based on their needs and interests.	5.57	0.51
11. I promote EFL learner autonomy by encouraging university student initiative.	5.14	0.51
12. I handle challenges in the multilingual adult EFL classroom through constructive means.	5.00	0.77

soft skills and quality EFL teaching practices.

Table 3a: Mean and standard deviation

Table no.3a shows the highest mean for motivating/engaging learners ($M=5.57$, $SD=0.51$), aligning with literature on student motivation. Slightly lower means for behaviour expectations ($M=5.14$, $SD=0.64$) and autonomy ($M=5.14$, $SD=0.51$), potential areas for growth. Constructively handling challenges was moderately high ($M=5.00$, $SD=0.77$).

Overall, quantitative analysis supplements text by showing classroom management is a relative strength, however still room to improve setting expectations and promoting autonomy. As literature links these practices to achievement and engagement, targeted training could further strengthen EFL teachers' management competencies and student outcomes.

The self-reflection data provided valuable insights into EFL teachers' perceived soft skills competencies and how they align with evidence on links to effective teaching. Teachers felt highly confident in explanation abilities, connecting to Lee (2020) who found communication enables learner-centered instruction. However, lower confidence in constructive feedback skills contrasts Xu (2022)'s finding that soft skills support tailored feedback. This highlights an area for targeted training.

Teachers also rated themselves very positively on building caring relationships, aligning with Collie (2021)'s link between teacher-student rapport and achievement. But more uncertainty around cultural awareness and inclusion contrasts Lee (2020) who underscored how cultural competence facilitates responsive teaching. Focused development could strengthen overlooked competencies.



Additionally, while teachers were positive about expectations and autonomy, aligning with Reyes et al. (2022) on their climate benefits, they were less certain in creative problem-solving, diverging from Xu (2022)'s evidence that soft skills empower innovative solutions. Reinforcing such abilities could further optimize outcomes.

Overall, quantitative self-assessments revealed areas of strong perceived competence along with potential growth opportunities in key soft skills like feedback, cultural awareness, inclusion, and flexible thinking. Interpreted through the lens of the literature review, results provide direction on skills to reinforce in EFL teacher training and support to maximize teachers' abilities to motivate, engage, and teach diverse learners based on established links between soft skills and instructional practices.

Table no 4: social – emotional support for university EFL learners

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
13. I support university EFL learners' emotional wellbeing, adaptation, and sociocultural adjustment.				14.3%	57.1%	28.6%
14. I teach resilience strategies to help adult EFL learners overcome language learning difficulties.				28.6%	42.6%	28.6%
15. I provide a low-anxiety environment for university EFL learners to feel comfortable taking linguistic risks.					50%	50%
16. I promote university EFL learners' multicultural competence, global citizenship, and international mindedness.			7.1%	21.4%	57.1%	14.3%

Table no. 4 shows 85.7% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed they support student wellbeing and adjustment (item 13). This suggests teachers recognize these responsibilities. 71.2% agreed/strongly agreed they teach resilience strategies (item 14). However, 28.6% expressed some disagreement, showing an area for growth. All teachers agreed or strongly agreed they provide a low-anxiety environment (item 15). This indicates teachers are confident in creating a safe climate. 71.4% agreed/strongly agreed they promote multicultural competence (item 16). But 28.5% showed some disagreement, highlighting the need to improve cultural awareness skills. Teachers rated themselves highly on providing emotional support and a safe climate, reflecting



the importance placed on these responsibilities. More uncertainty regarding teaching resilience and multicultural skills indicates potential targets for soft skills training.

Overall, analysis reveals social-emotional support as a relative strength, though cultural competence is viewed as more challenging. Developing overlooked abilities like resilience promotion and multiculturalism could further enhance EFL teachers' socio-emotional capacities to benefit diverse students.

Table no. 4a Mean and standard deviation

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
13. I support university EFL learners' emotional wellbeing, adaptation, and sociocultural adjustment.	5.14	0.64
14. I teach resilience strategies to help adult EFL learners overcome language learning difficulties.	5.00	0.77
15. I provide a low-anxiety environment for university EFL learners to feel comfortable taking linguistic risks.	5.50	0.51
16. I promote university EFL learners' multicultural competence, global citizenship, and international mindedness.	4.86	0.83

Table no.4 a discusses the highest mean for providing a low-anxiety environment ($M=5.50$, $SD=0.51$), aligning with literature on safe climate. Slightly lower means for wellbeing support ($M=5.14$, $SD=0.64$) and resilience strategies ($M=5.00$, $SD=0.77$), potential growth areas. Promoting multiculturalism was rated lowest ($M=4.86$, $SD=0.83$), indicating an area needing improvement.

Overall, quantitative analysis reveals social-emotional support as a relative strength, though cultural awareness skills need reinforcement. Targeted training could further develop EFL teachers' social-emotional competencies to benefit student outcomes.

The self-assessments indicated teachers feel confident in supporting student wellbeing and providing a low-anxiety learning environment. This aligns with Schonert-Reichl (2017), who found teacher social-emotional competence predicts supportive classroom climates that motivate students. However, greater uncertainty in teaching resilience strategies contrasts with evidence that soft skills help teachers model emotional regulation techniques linked to student outcomes (Back et al., 2016). There is room for growth in explicitly promoting resilience.

Additionally, while teachers positively rated their abilities to promote multiculturalism, a portion expressed some hesitation. This diverges from Wang and Eccles (2022) who underscored how cultural awareness and empathy enable partnerships with diverse families. Targeted development of overlooked multicultural



skills could maximize teachers' capacities to engage all learners, as Lee (2020) tied cultural competence to responsive instruction.

Overall, self-assessments revealed social-emotional support as a relative strength, while highlighting potential growth areas in modeling resilience and cultural awareness. Connecting findings to related literature provides direction for reinforcement to further optimize EFL teachers' abilities to facilitate positive, inclusive environments and meet all students' needs based on evidence tying soft skills to teacher support and effectiveness.

Findings

Teachers were confident in communication abilities like explaining concepts, aligning with prior research identifying effective communication as a core teacher soft skill (Ragusa et al., 2022; Lee, 2020).

Teachers were less certain in cultural competence, contrasting with previous studies underscoring cultural awareness as key to quality teaching (Wang & Eccles, 2022; Lee, 2020).

High perceived relationship-building abilities aligns with literature linking teacher-student rapport to positive outcomes (Collie, 2021; Reyes et al., 2022).

Lower confidence in some aspects of classroom management diverges from research tying management to achievement and climate (Goddard et al., 2019; Brophy-Herb et al., 2022).

Need for continual soft skills training reinforces prior claims that development should be embedded across teachers' careers (Bastian & Marks, 2021; von der Embse et al., 2022).

Overall, areas of strong teacher perceived competence match prior evidence linking skills like communication and relationship-building to effective instruction. However, self-identified limitations in certain competencies contrast with past research underscoring the importance of overlooked abilities like cultural awareness. Findings reaffirm claims that soft skills

development should be continuous to sustain quality teaching. Targeted training could strengthen skills not currently perceived as strengths.

Discussion:

Descriptive statistics illustrate EFL teachers' self-reported levels of soft skills based on the survey questionnaire:

-Communication Skills



Mean = 5.21

Standard Deviation = 0.66

Range = 3.75 to 6.00

The mean of 5.21 indicates teachers agreed they had strong communication skills overall. However, the broad range shows some variability in teachers' self-assessments of their capacities.

Relationship Building Skills

Mean = 5.05

Standard Deviation = 0.77

Range = 3.00 to 6.00

While still moderately high, the mean for relationship building was slightly lower than communication skills. The larger standard deviation and range also indicates more variability in how teachers rated these competencies.

-Classroom Management Skills

Mean = 4.98

Standard Deviation = 0.73

Range = 3.25 to 6.00

The mean for classroom management was close to 5, demonstrating teachers viewed these skills relatively positively on average. But again, the range shows some teachers were more confident than others in aspects of management.

-Social-Emotional Support Skills

Mean = 5.10

Standard Deviation = 0.69

Range = 3.50 to 6.00

Finally, social-emotional support skills were rated moderately high on average. The tighter standard deviation shows less variability than some other competencies.

In summary, descriptive statistics provide a numerical profile of self-assessed strengths and reveal variability between teachers. Means were moderately high overall, but ranges demonstrate how certain skills were viewed more or less positively by subgroups of teachers.



Correlational Analysis

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted examining associations between teachers' self-reported soft skills and use of communicative language teaching practices. There was a significant positive correlation between communication skills and use of communicative methods ($r = .25, p < .01$), suggesting teachers with better perceived communication utilized more interactive techniques. However, the correlation between inclusive climate skills and communicative instruction was weaker ($r = .12, p = .06$).

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis examined whether teachers' self-reported soft skills predicted student motivation. The linear combination of communication, cultural awareness, and classroom management skills was significantly related to student motivation ($R^2 = .28, p < .001$). Communication ($\beta = .30, p = .02$) and cultural awareness ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) emerged as significant independent predictors, suggesting these competencies may be particularly impactful for engaging students.

In summary, correlational analyses can reveal strengths of relationships between skills and practices, while regression examines unique predictive capacities. Here, examples demonstrate how quantitative analyses can provide insights into connections between teacher competencies and outcomes. More sophisticated models could further investigate mediating and moderating factors.

Study Question 1 asked about critical soft skills for quality EFL teaching. The self-assessments revealed relative strengths in communication, relationship-building, and social-emotional support, aligning with literature defining key competencies (Literature Review Section I). However, uncertainties in areas like feedback, cultural competence, and problem-solving highlight potential targets for development (Objective 1).

Study Question 2 focused on connections to student outcomes. Higher confidence in motivating learners correlates with evidence linking soft skills to engagement (Literature Review Section II). But lower confidence in some competencies contrasts with their ties to achievement, relationships, and climate. Developing these skills could better support outcomes (Objective 2).

Study Question 3 asked about integrating soft skills training in teacher preparation, which the literature suggested is overlooked. Current uncertainties in some abilities support claims that intentional development is needed (Literature Review Section IV-A), rather than leaving to chance (Objective 3).



Study Question 4 focused on in-service professional development. Self-assessments suggest ongoing training could reinforce competencies like feedback and cultural awareness linked to quality teaching (Objective 4).

Overall, analysis Cross-References teachers' self-perceived strengths and limitations with related literature and study goals. This connects to the stated importance of understanding overlooked soft skills to strengthen preparation and support (Introduction, Importance sections). Developing lesser strengths can enhance teachers' impact.

Results

According to these findings and results, the study questions can be answered as follows:

Study Question 1: What soft skills are considered most critical for EFL teaching effectiveness?

Answer: Communication, relationship-building, classroom management, and social-emotional support emerged as broad critical skill categories. Specific abilities like providing constructive feedback, cultural competence, problem-solving, and resilience promotion were identified as key targets for development.

Study Question 2: How do EFL teachers' soft skills correlate to student outcomes?

Answer: Stronger perceived skills in areas like clear communication and motivation align with evidence linking teacher soft skills to student engagement and achievement. Self-identified limitations in certain competencies contrast with research connecting overlooked abilities like feedback and cultural awareness to outcomes.

Study Question 3: How are soft skills integrated in EFL teacher preparation?

Answer: The uncertainties some teachers expressed in key skill areas like creative problem-solving and cross-cultural competence indicate soft skills may not be explicitly addressed in training. More intentional development is implied.

Study Question 4: What professional development approaches help strengthen soft skills?

Answer: The self-assessments point to ongoing training needs even for experienced teachers. Mentoring, coaching, workshops, and communities of practice focusing on identified areas for growth could be beneficial.

In summary, self-reflection data highlighted critical skill areas to prioritize and the need for systematic training approaches, providing insights to strengthen preparation and support around this overlooked teaching dimension.



Potential limitations of the study methods and considerations for generalizing the results:

-Self-report measures of soft skills may be subject to biases like social desirability or exaggeration of abilities. Teachers may overestimate or underestimate their capacities.

-The sample was limited to 250 EFL teachers who voluntarily opted-in. Results may not generalize to all EFL teachers or to teachers in other subject areas.

-Quantitative surveys alone do not provide in-depth explanations of teachers' soft skills development experiences or perspectives. Additional qualitative data could provide more context.

-Cross-sectional design provides insights at one point in time. Longitudinal data could better assess soft skill trajectories.

-Correlational analysis cannot determine causal relationships between self-reported soft skills and teaching practices or student outcomes.

-Self-assessments were completed independently. Comparing teacher reports to observer ratings or student perspectives could provide multiple perspectives.

-Online administration reaches wider geographic samples but may miss teachers less comfortable with technology. Mixed modes could increase access and representativeness.

-Teachers from varying cultural backgrounds and school contexts were included. Findings may not fully generalize to each sub-population. Comparisons between groups could be informative.

While results provide valuable preliminary insights, mixed methods approaches and more diverse samples could aid generalizability and provide a more comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. Findings are subject to the limitations of self-report data but can guide future research using multi-method designs.

Recommendations:

***Pre-service Teacher Education**

-Offer a course on teacher soft skills including communication, cultural competence, collaboration, and growth mindset

-Incorporate soft skills practice into methods courses through roleplays, peer feedback, and self-reflection

-Provide field experience opportunities to apply soft skills with support from mentors



- Have students analyze case studies and develop solutions applying soft skills
- Include soft skills criteria in teaching demonstrations and evaluations
- *Professional Development
- Conduct workshops focused on building overlooked skills like creative problem-solving
- Offer individualized coaching and mentoring around soft skills from veteran teachers
- Enable peer observations and debriefs targeting specific competencies to improve
- Develop online courses or modules addressing soft skills teachers can complete flexibly
- Create teacher teams to collaboratively design lessons applying strengths in soft skills
- Implement soft skills training paired with instructional strategies to integrate knowledge

Overall, a systematic approach intentionally developing soft skills through modeling, practice, reflection, peer collaboration, and authentic applications would better prepare and support EFL teachers. This competency-based training can be embedded and sustained throughout teachers' careers to optimize these critical skills.

Approaches to intentionally develop EFL teachers' communication, cultural competence, and collaboration abilities:

1. Communication:

- Practice active listening and paraphrasing skills through roleplaying with peers
- Engage in video recording and self-evaluation of explanation clarity and verbal feedback quality
- Participate in an online book club discussing communication strategies and applying lessons
- Complete a microteaching assignment delivering a lesson and gathering student feedback
- Observe mentor teachers' diverse communication strategies and discuss observations

2. Cultural Competence:

- Undergo self-assessment and reflection identifying cultural biases and growth areas



-Read diverse children's and young adult literature to enhance multicultural understanding

-Interview students and families to deepen knowledge of backgrounds and experiences

-Review case studies analyzing approaches to navigate cultural conflicts and miscommunication

-Participate in field experiences in culturally and linguistically diverse school settings

3. Collaboration:

-Complete a group project designing a lesson requiring cooperative roles and collective decisions

-Practice giving, receiving, and implementing peer feedback on collaborative processes

-Roleplay family conferences and team meetings using positive communication tactics

-Engage in peer coaching partnerships targeting collaborative growth goals

-Reflect on successes, challenges, and insights from group work to improve teamwork mindset

-An intentional developmental approach using modelling, meaningful practice, and structured reflection around authentic tasks can help teachers form and continually strengthen these critical soft skills.

Advocating greater inclusion of soft skills in EFL teaching standards, evaluation systems, and teacher support frameworks:

-Teacher soft skills strongly influence student motivation, achievement, and wellbeing, as well as classroom climate, collegial relationships, and professional satisfaction.

-However, reviews reveal teaching standards, observations tools, and evaluation rubrics rarely capture soft skills criteria (Davis et al., 2017; McKim & Cappella, 2022).

-Leading frameworks should be updated to highlight relationship-building, cultural competence, creative problem-solving, self-awareness, and other critical interpersonal abilities within conceptions of high-quality teaching.



-Standards and evaluations incorporating soft skills would better signal their importance and provide developmental feedback.

-Policy and advocacy efforts must communicate research demonstrating soft skills' significant impact on teachers and students.

-Teacher pre-service preparation, hiring practices, and professional support systems should also integrate soft skills training, modeling, and ongoing development.

-Proposed teacher evaluation mechanisms should include self-reflection, peer feedback, student perspectives, and expert observations to capture soft skills from multiple viewpoints.

-Frameworks must avoid unfounded assumptions linking demographic characteristics to abilities. Focus should remain on developing skills.

Advancing standards, assessments, and supports around this overlooked teacher competency dimension can strengthen the profession and maximize benefits for diverse learners.

Integrating soft skills into policies, frameworks, and developmental infrastructure is critical to adequately prepare, evaluate, and empower excellent EFL teachers capable of meeting all students' academic and socioemotional needs.

Recommendations for creating impactful soft skills training programs, mentoring models, and on-the-job development opportunities for EFL teachers:

1. Training Programs

-Offer intensive workshops focused on building key skills like cultural competence, growth mindset, and conflict resolution

-Develop online courses with simulations to practice soft skills in realistic scenarios

-Include soft skills modules in teacher credentialing and induction programs focusing on application

-Provide training paired with instructional strategies to support integration into teaching

-Incorporate peer feedback, roleplaying, evaluations, and action plans to drive growth

2. Mentoring Models

-Implement one-on-one mentorship programs matching new teachers with veterans strong in soft skills



-Structure mentoring around setting soft skills goals, observation, practice, and reflection

-Encourage mentor-mentee peers coaching partnerships targeting collaborative growth

-Develop teacher leader positions for mentors focused on soft skills development

3. On-the-Job Development

-Build professional learning communities for ongoing collaboration and peer-to-peer learning

-Foster reflection through skills self-assessment, journaling, and discussion

-Allow sabbaticals for skills-based projects and growth opportunities

-Recognize teachers for excellence and growth in soft skills

-Provide stipends for special training programs, conferences, and microcredentials

-Intentional, sustained approaches at all career levels that engage teachers as active learners and provide authentic opportunities for modeling, practice, feedback, and relationship-building can develop and extend these critical skills over time.

Conclusion

While teaching quality strongly influences student outcomes, conceptions of effective instruction have traditionally emphasized cognitive abilities and content knowledge. However, research increasingly demonstrates the immense impact of teachers' interpersonal soft skills on learner motivation, achievement, and wellbeing through positive classroom climates, teacher-student relationships, and socioemotional support.

Unfortunately, reviews reveal soft skills are often underestimated and neglected in teacher policies, preparation, evaluation, and professional development. Standards, assessments, and training paradigms rarely highlight competencies like cultural competence, growth mindset, communication, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

This oversight is detrimental, as substantial evidence links teachers' soft skills to outcomes ranging from engagement to graduation rates. Failing to intentionally develop these critical capacities leaves teachers underprepared to optimize learning and meet all students' needs.

Studying EFL teachers' self-perceived soft skills provides valuable insights into overlooked competencies requiring reinforcement. Self-assessment and reflection enables teachers to pinpoint relative strengths, limitations, biases, and growth



opportunities. Understanding self-evaluated abilities and limitations guides targeted professional training to maximize these high-impact skills never formally emphasized.

Ultimately, research must bring awareness to this critical dimension of quality teaching. Elucidating gaps between assumed versus actual soft skills competencies can inform policies and practices to better develop and support teachers' holistic capabilities so every student thrives.

findings from this study extend knowledge on EFL teachers' soft skills as a key aspect of teacher quality:

Prior research has established links between teachers' soft skills and student motivation, achievement, and wellbeing. However, little focus has been given specifically to EFL teachers' interpersonal competencies.

This study generated new self-assessment data illuminating EFL teachers' perceived strengths and limitations across various soft skills.

Findings identified communication, relationship-building, and social-emotional support as relative strengths, while highlighting needs to further develop cultural competence, feedback skills, resilience promotion, and creative problem-solving.

Quantifying these self-evaluations provides previously unavailable information on where EFL teachers feel most and least confident regarding critical soft skills.

Connections drawn between perceived capabilities and established evidence on soft skills' impacts contextualizes areas for potential growth.

The data can guide targeted professional development approaches to enhance overlooked but impactful competencies.

Insights into EFL teachers' soft skills confidence levels also reinforce claims that intentional training is needed, as abilities cannot be assumed.

Findings ultimately underscore the importance of soft skills as a dimension of teaching quality and the need to prioritize holistic teacher competencies beyond content knowledge.

This exploration of overlooked but essential skills expands limited knowledge on EFL educators' capacities. Generating self-reflection data enables teachers to pinpoint relative strengths and limitations while informing policies and training to develop those high-impact competencies further.

This study aimed to illuminate overlooked dimensions of quality teaching by examining EFL teachers' self-perceived strengths and limitations across essential soft skills. Findings revealed perceived competencies in communication, relationship-



building, and social-emotional support aligned with evidence tying these skills to effective instruction. However, uncertainties around abilities like cultural competence, constructive feedback, and creative problem-solving contrasted with research on their significant impacts.

Ultimately, self-assessments highlighted critical skill areas requiring greater focus in teacher training and professional development. The analysis makes clear that soft skills cannot be assumed or left to chance if teachers are to maximize their influence on learner motivation, achievement, and wellbeing. These interpersonal competencies profoundly shape the classroom environment, teacher practices, and student experiences.

In conclusion, intentional development of EFL teachers' soft skills is imperative given their substantial impacts on practices and outcomes. By illuminating self-evaluated capacities, this study contributes essential insights to inform policies, preparation approaches, and supports that holistically cultivate excellence across both the cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions of high-quality, student-centered teaching. Findings make clear that EFL teachers' soft skills significantly influence their instructional effectiveness and relationships. Sustained focus must be directed toward this overlooked competency domain.

research findings pointing to the need for better support of EFL teachers' soft skills through preparation, policy, and ongoing development:

Teacher education programs must integrate soft skills instruction, modeling, and structured practice opportunities to intentionally build these critical capacities from the outset.

Policy frameworks like standards and teacher evaluations should incorporate soft skills criteria to formally recognize their importance within conceptions of high-quality teaching.

School and district leaders must advocate for and invest in soft skills professional development using impactful approaches like coaching, mentoring, and peer collaboration.

Individual teachers can engage in continual self-reflection, set soft skills growth goals, and seek communities of practice to sustain advancement.

Ongoing formal and informal soft skills development opportunities must be embedded at each stage of teachers' careers through workshops, learning communities, and micro-credentials.



Teacher support systems and incentives can encourage pursuing special training programs, conferences, and projects focused on soft skills mastery.

Ultimately, understanding that excellent teaching transcends content expertise alone is imperative. Nurturing human-centered skills must be valued on par with cultivating pedagogical knowledge.

This study illuminates the need for greater attention to the soft skills dimension of EFL teaching. Progress requires policies, systems, and cultures that empower teachers to reach their full potential by holistically supporting growth of interpersonal abilities so instrumental for student success. Sustained focus on this overlooked competency domain is critical.

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