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## Beyond Fears and Hopes for Teaching English: An Investigation of Iranian Pre-service and In-service EFL Teachers' Possible Selves

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### Abstract

Possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. This paper, using a mixed method design, probes the possible teaching selves of 108 pre-service and 41 in-service Iranian EFL teachers to explore their professional fears and hopes. Data were collected via Possible Language Teacher Self Questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the qualitative data using MAXQDA demonstrated the fears and hopes of the teachers in terms of professionalism, instructional strategies, classroom management and professional interpersonal relationship. Moreover, both fears and hopes were found to be rooted in personal (cognitive and affective) and social (mostly organizational) sources. Further, analysis of quantitative data via ANOVA, independent-samples T-test also revealed that the pre-service teachers and their in-service counterparts are similar in terms of their feared and ideal to selves whereas their ought self has a determining role in justifying the observable variations in their possible self. In addition, pre-service teachers' year of education was also found to be a significant factor affecting their possible selves; that is, it was shown that first-year, second-year and third-year pre-service teachers' ought self is significantly different from that of in-service teachers. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between fourth-year-pre-service teachers and in-service teachers in terms of their ought self.

**Keywords:** In-service teachers, Possible Selves, Pre-service Teachers, Self-discrepancy theory

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## 1. Introduction

There has been a growing trend which has considered the personality of teachers as weightier than content or pedagogical knowledge. As Solhi et al. (2023) believes, good classroom interaction increases the learning potential and capacity of students. Accordingly, many teacher education programs are investing on identity development and improving their professional attitude (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005). There is a growing expectation, as stated by Zhao (2011), that the current or prospective teachers need to both master content knowledge and become reflective practitioners. In simpler terms, enjoyment in second language learning refers to experiencing pleasure and satisfaction from engaging in language activities and achieving progress in learning the language. It involves enjoying the process of learning, as well as the outcomes of that learning. Enjoyment also includes experiencing positive emotions from pushing oneself beyond comfort zones and achieving new and unexpected accomplishments in language learning, even when facing challenges (Solhi et al., 2023).

Ironically, however, it is believed that the “best solution” of this “worst problem” of teacher education and training simultaneously exists within the very teacher education (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 2007, p. 278). A large body of research supports the fact that improving teachers' theoretical knowledge in terms of identity development (Grossman & Ronfeldt, 2008), and conducting empirical studies on teacher education (TE) pedagogy (Hoban, 2007) can turn the threat into an opportunity. From this perspective, it is undeniably worthy to invest on research on effective EFL teachers from personal growth (Wurf & Markus, 1991) perspective and possible selves (PS) theory to make TE pedagogy reform possible (Korthagen et al., 2006).

Despite its significance, as mentioned by Dyer (2012), identity development seems to be disregarded in pre-service teacher (PT) training. The purpose of this study is to broaden the current view on developing Iranian pre-service EFL teachers and in-service teachers' (ITs) professional identity defined as “individually constructed, through negotiations with self and others, and is never stable or fixed” (Berci, 2007, p. 65). This research is theoretically based on Markus and Nurius' (1986) theory of personal growth and possible selves. To broaden the scope of the current body of research on effective teachers, such as Grossman and Ronfeldt (2008), which were mostly concentrated on PTs only, and to provide a more vivid picture of the PS of both PTs and ITs, the following research questions were

considered:

1. How do Iranian in-service and pre-service teachers describe their hopes and fears in response to their professional lives?
2. Is there any significant difference between the pre-service and in-service EFL teachers in terms of their possible selves?
3. Are there any significant differences in terms of pre-service and in-service teachers' education and gender regarding their possible selves?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. *The Theory of Possible Selves***

This theory, as described by Markus and Nurius (1986), and Markus and Ruvolo (1989), accounts for teachers' fears and hopes with regard to what is perceived to be gained or lost in future. It is believed that teachers may have a range of PSs at any given time which are built on their past images of their selves and their prospect images of their selves, (Carroll, 2014; Oyserman et al., 2004). The incentive for moving toward PS is fed by social comparisons made against the images teachers perceive they could become. PS, therefore, is influenced by situations which constantly provide new or unpredictable evidence about self and make teachers repeatedly reframe their images of who they tend to become. Accordingly, it was witnessed that pre-service teachers' identities are more likely to be influenced by their contexts as discussed by van Veen et al. (2005). As stated by Pillen et al. (2013), shaping teachers' identity or possible selves initially depends on the experiences and beliefs brought to a context even those from outside of their TE programs such as their memories of their school life, past teachers, parents and even people in their previous work places together with their personal traits and values.

Markus and Nurius (1986) also stated that PS, as the collection of teachers' conceptions and self-images, may be multi-faceted and may be realized as bad selves (BS), feared selves (FS), good selves (GS), hoped-for selves (HS), ideal selves (IS), and ought selves (OS). Accordingly, PS defined as teachers' would-be self-representations may emerge in different forms that link cognition and motivation. Teachers' PS are considered to be accountable for their incentives for their future behavior, and their evaluation or interpretation of their actual selves (AS) (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006), either of which is backed by mental imagery as the

dynamo for regulation and performance (Markus, 2006; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). It is noteworthy to note that PSs not only involve long-term goals as lighthouses but also encompass the defining images (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Miller & Brickman, 2004). Therefore, PS unlike personal goals is concrete mental images associated with several emotional and experiential dimensions (Hiver, 2013) which led teachers to their HS while saving them against their FS.

## 2.2. *The Self-discrepancy Theory*

A different perspective to illuminate teachers' self-knowledge, according to Higgins et al. (1985), is self-discrepancy theory. Higgins (1987) defined a systematic basis to theorize the interaction among several self-states. He further classified the self into (1) the actual self-referring to the self-representation of a teacher's current attributes or traits, (2) the ideal self-referring to self-representation of the traits a teacher ideally tends to have, and (3) the ought self-referring to teachers' self-representation of the traits they believe they ought to have. Accordingly, the ideal self is a state which is rooted in the teacher's own desires and ambitions, whereas the ought self refers to attributes a teacher is expected to have (Dörnyei, 2009). However, this distinction is criticized in that, these two classes of self are relatively overlapping or even conflicting in that a teacher simultaneously belongs to different social groups so it seems inevitable that a teacher personify a few social expectations into the goals and desires representing the ideal self (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Dörnyei, 2009).

## 2.3. *Possible Selves: Intersecting Teachers' Cognition, Development, and Motivation*

Based on PS theory and SD theory, Kubanyiova (2007, 2009) added teachers' motivation as component of their self-system and explored the relationships among teacher cognition, development, and motivation. She introduced the teachers' PS as a canonical element of teacher cognition. With this regard, teacher cognition, considered as an abstract cognitive module (Kubanyiova, 2012), includes teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and thoughts (Borg, 2006). According to Hamman, Gosselin, Romano, and Bunuan (2010), a teacher's PS includes a future-orientated dimension of teacher identity and self-concept. That is, the construct of teacher PS is distinguished from other self-constructs thanks to its future orientations (Dörnyei

& Ushioda, 2011).

Kubanyiova's (2007, 2009) model emphasizes the FS due to its motivational capacity to balance the desired selves bolded in PS theory and SD theory (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Kubanyiova, 2007; Oyserman & Markus, 1990). However, the definition and contribution of the OS (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; Dörnyei, 2009), is transformed into a more internalized future self-image of a teacher's IS (Kubanyiova, 2007, 2009). According to this tripartite model, in which PS are central to teacher cognition, the motivational potential and self-regulatory consequences of PS are considered to be conditional to the availability, specificity, plausibility, understandability, and context of self (Kubanyiova, 2007).

It seems that the research into EFL teachers' selves is indebted to Kubanyiova (2007, 2009). In a pioneering study, Kubanyiova (2007) explored the professional and conceptual development of teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of a teacher development course on eight Slovakian in-service teachers. She found that the course relatively reflected the participants' teaching practices but was incapable of making a conceptual change. Accordingly, she developed a model of Language Teacher Conceptual Change (LTCC), involving IS, OS and FS, to explain how they approached the course. Later, Kubanyiova (2009) reported that the incongruity between teachers' DS and AS is responsible for their learning and professional development.

In a more recent study, Smid (2018) explored the relationships among various factors of learning and teaching English, teachers' PS among other factors. It was found that intrinsic motivation as well as IS was the direct predictors of motivated behaviors, whereas FS and language learning experience as well as macro-contextual extrinsic motivation were the indirect ones. Kalaja and Mäntylä (2018) reported some opposing features of the imagined future classes of PTs in terms of their environment, activities, and the roles and focus of teachers and students. The results showed that the participating teachers' IS and OS were prominent in the classes. Similarly, Sahakyan et al. (2018), in their qualitative research, showed that although the teachers had ostentatious IS, OS and FS at the early years, with their IS being deep-seated in their learning experiences and their images of their past teachers, these selves were transformed later thanks to teachers' lack of internalization and achievement. Experienced teachers were found to gain a sort of feasible self-including a holistic combination of ideal, ought-to and fear selves.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Participants

In total, 149 Iranian pre-service teachers, majoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) at two branches of Teacher Education University and in-service teachers, practicing in different high schools in Markazi province, were randomly selected and invited to this study (41 ITs and 108 PTs) (Table 1). Ninety-nine female participants and 50 male ones took part in this study after being told about the aims of the study.

**Table 1**

*Cross Tabulation of the Participants According to Their Gender and Academic Degrees*

Count		Degree			Total
		BA	MA	PhD	
Gender	Male	34	11	5	50
	Female	69	22	8	99
	Total	103	33	13	149

It is also worth mentioning that, the participants attending the interview were selected from the respondents of the survey. Those who indicated that they were willing to take part in an interview were contacted. A total of 42 participants participated in this phase of the study.

#### 3.2. Instruments

Considering the mixed-method approach adopted in this study, two instruments were needed to answer the posed research questions; the Possible Language Teacher Self-Questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

##### 3.2.1. Possible Language Teacher Self Questionnaire

The Possible Language Teacher Self Questionnaire (PLTSQ), developed and validated by Karimi and Norouzi (2019), included two main sections. The first section elicited the participants' demographic information in terms of age, education, gender, length of service/year of study. The second section aimed at measuring the possible L2 teacher selves of the PTs and ITs participants based on

three components; (1) feared L2 teacher self (13 items), (2) ideal L2 teacher self (15 items) and (3) ought to L2 teacher self (6 items). Each component included a 6-point response scale ranging from Very true of me (1) Very untrue of me (6). To remove any possible confusion or misapprehension, the researchers pilot-tested the PLTSQ on twenty students who had similar characteristics to the participants. Then, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by Cronbach's alpha formula (.84). Further analysis of the reliability of the components using the same procedure demonstrated that all three components, L2 teacher FS (.84), L2 teacher IS (.87) and L2 teacher OS (.82), were highly reliable. The face and content validity of the instrument was also approved by three experts in foreign language research.

### *3.2.2. Semi- Structured Interview*

To identify how language teacher self-archetypes manifest themselves in the PTs and ITs' behavior or how they categorize themselves in their professional lives, this phase of the study was conducted on 42 participants (15 ITs and 27 PTs). The interviews, in a semi-structured manner, were held individually and conducted in L1 so that participants could express themselves comfortably, and were recorded, transcribed verbatim and used for data analysis. It is necessary to mention that, the participants' answers made the interviewer ask some probing questions (Hatch, 2002) that "prompted the respondents to elaborate on certain points and give concrete examples" (Low et al., 2017, p. 35).

### *3.3. Procedures*

The quantitative data were collected through the Possible Language Teacher Self Questionnaire (PLTSQ), developed by Karimi and Norouzi (2019). In total, 149 Iranian EFL pre-service and in-service teachers received the PLTSQ administered both online (prepared on Google Docs) and through personal contact with some participants. The data were collected in about 1 month. Out of 129 filled-in questionnaires, 11 were incomplete and were excluded in the final analysis of the data. The questionnaires ( $n = 118$ ) were further processed for inserting the data into the statistical application, SPSS 22.0.

For the qualitative part of the study, an interview protocol was designed. The researchers conducted all the interviews either at the university where they teach

and offer some courses to the participants of this study or on a smart phone. The interviews were conducted in L1 (Persian), though oftentimes the majority of the participants chose to use English sentences or phrases throughout the interview. Each interview lasted between 15 to 20 minutes. Before each interview, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees. The interview proceeded in a way to lead the participants to reflect upon and talk about the posed questions as follows.

Scenario Description: As a teacher you are/will be a member of a community. You will/ have interactions and build relationships with other teachers, parents and community members. Tell me about an experience you have had dealing with interpersonal relationships within the school community. How did you react? Why did you react that way? How do you hope to react in the future?

Data collection was stopped when the data reached saturation level. The sign of this saturation was that further data collection merely added to the bulk of the data rather than contributing to the informative content. Moreover, the participants' rights to voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidential treatment of their data were clearly explained both at the invitation to the study stage and at the actual interview session. The interviews were all voice-recorded and then processed to be exported to MAXQDA 2020 for further analysis.

The researchers adopted a quantitative-qualitative design. The analyses of the quantitative data using SPSS 18.0 and qualitative data using MAXQDA 2020 were done sequentially to give the researchers a chance to interpret the qualitative data while being informed by the other. In addition, the analyses were done according to each research question separately and attempts were made to rely on both sets of data, wherever possible, to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the results which are discussed in the succeeding section.

#### **4. Results**

In order to have an organized presentation of the results, they are presented according to each research question. The first research question was "how do Iranian in-service teachers and pre-service teachers describe their hopes and fears in response to their professional lives?"

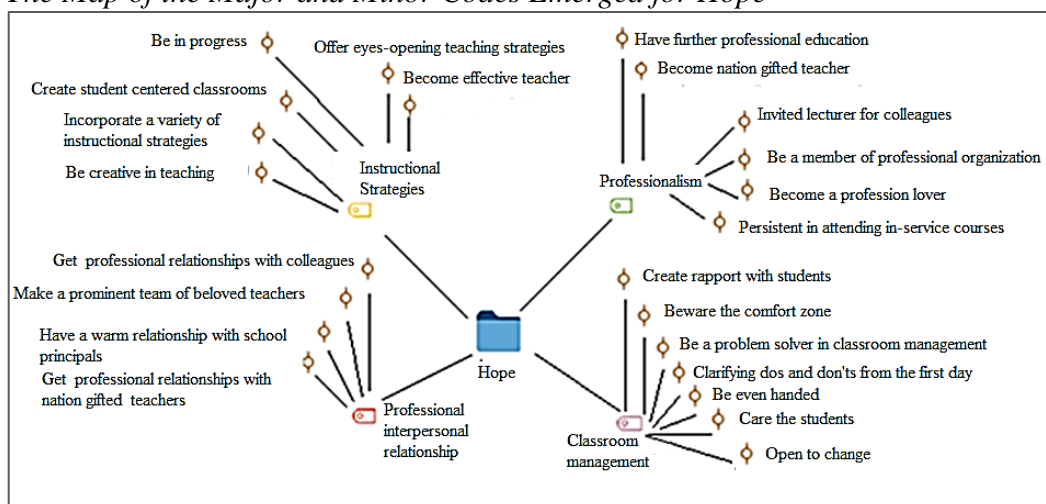
Figure 1 illustrated the emerged codes for hope of the participants. Similar to the



mapped codes for hope in Figure 1, the emerged codes for fear were illustrated in Figure 3. Both fear and hope codes were classified under the same headings as: professionalism, instructional strategies, classroom management and professional interpersonal relationship. Interestingly, the number of minor codes emerged for professionalism ( $n = 10$ ), instructional strategies ( $n = 10$ ), classroom management ( $n = 9$ ) are very close, the one for professional interpersonal relationship ( $n = 6$ ) is fewer. Accordingly, it can be argued that in comparison with other major mapped codes, professional interpersonal relationship of both, hope and fear, have less sophisticated impact on the distance between teachers' actual professional selves and their ideal and ought professional selves.

**Figure 1**

*The Map of the Major and Minor Codes Emerged for Hope*

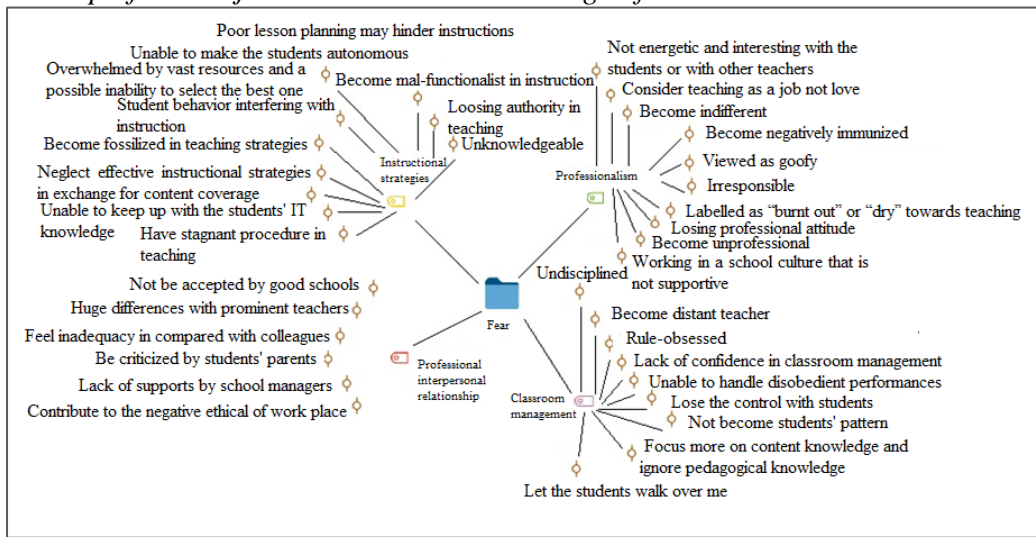


Figures 2 and 3 demonstrated the main categories emerged from the parallel analysis of the fears and hopes of the participants and the nature and number of minor codes grouped under each of these categories. However, a further analysis of the qualitative data was needed to illustrate the relative significance of these classes in terms of hopes and fears. The results, shown in Figure 4, indicated that the ranking of the significance of each of the emerged categories to hopes and fears of the participants was different.

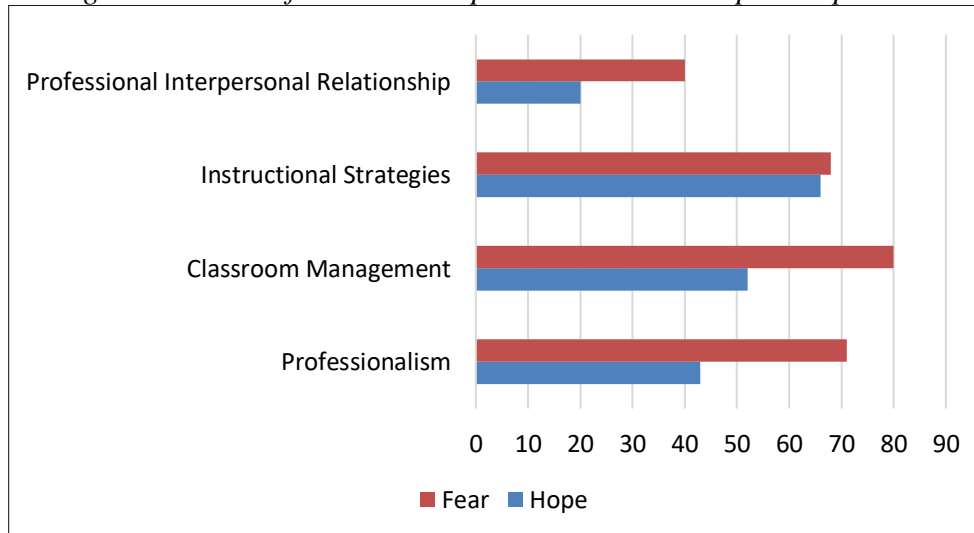
Classroom management, instructional strategies, professionalism, and professional interpersonal relationship respectively were significant in developing hope among the participants, whereas, instructional strategies, professionalism,

classroom management and professional interpersonal relationship respectively were found to be relatively significant in inducing fear of future profession among the participants. Accordingly, it can be argued that the participants' instructional strategies can be the main resource of forming their actual professional self.

**Figure 2**  
*The Map of the Major and Minor Codes Emerged for Fear*



**Figure 3**  
*The Relative Significance of Professionalism, Instructional Strategies, Classroom Management and Professional Interpersonal Relationship to Hope and Fear*



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To carry on a more detailed analysis of the qualitative data, the ranking of each of the minor codes emerged in Figures 2 and 3 were taken into account and compared with regard to each of the four main categories. The purpose was to illuminate the parallel contributions of hopes and fears. The results are shown in the following tables.

**Table 2**  
*The Fears and Hopes Emerged for Professionalism*

Ranking	Fears	Hopes
1	Become indifferent	Have further professional education
2	Become unprofessional, Consider teaching as a job not love, Viewed as goofy	Become a profession lover
3	Losing professional attitude, Not energetic and interested with the students or with other teachers	Invited lecturer for colleagues
4	Become negatively immunized, Irresponsible	Persistent in attending in-service courses
5	Working in a school culture that is not supportive Labelled as “burnt out” or “dry” towards teaching	Be a member of professional organization
6		Become nation gifted teacher

As shown in Table 2, there are six professional derives which ignite the participants to improve their professional selves. Above all is the willingness to have further education. This is in line with the results reported in Figure 4, where instructional strategies were found to be the most important hope resource for the teachers. It seems that teachers are considering further education in language teaching an opportunity to arm themselves larger body of instructional strategies and skills. Table 3 indicates, the participants would like to go up the ladder of teaching profession to teach classes effectively and also to teach in higher ranked education centers after some time that may be achieved by pursuing their education, taking part in-service classes, joining professional organization and winning a professional award. A closer look at Table 3 shows that the participants' future goals or self-images (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Miller & Brickman, 2004) are mainly based on personal rather than contextual expectations.

According to Table 2, the most significant professional fear among the participants was becoming indifferent, an emotional breakdown which was also echoed in other aspects of future fears such as becoming unprofessional, losing interest in teaching as a profession, and losing professional attitude and sticking

to the job for the sake of earning a living. Unlike the motives for future achievements, the future fears seem to have social aspects; for example, being considered as a goofy teacher, or labeled as burned out are inherently rooted in social expectations posed on teachers. Although these expectations are not encompassing a wide range of social expectations and are mainly limited to organizational ones, they can add to the complexity of teacher's fears and making fear avoidance more difficult.

**Table 3**

*The Comparative Rankings of the Fears and Hopes Emerged for Professionalism Instructional Strategies*

Ranking	Fears	Hopes
1	Unknowledgeable	Offer eyes-opening teaching strategies
2	Become fossilized in teaching strategies	Become effective teacher
3	Lack of understanding, Have stagnant procedure in teaching, Noisy students make the class water muddy	Be in progress
4	Become mal-functionalist in instruction	Create student centered classrooms
5	All teaching years NOT survival, Poor lesson planning may hinder instructions	Be creative in teaching
6	Unable to make the students autonomous, Loosing authority in teaching, Unable to keep up with the students' IT knowledge	Incorporate a variety of instructional strategies

Table 3 demonstrates the rankings of hopes and fears the participants had in terms of their instructional strategies. Similar to what was reported for professionalism, the hopes they enumerated, to a great extent, reflected personal values and goals, such as looking for more effective instructional strategies, being reflective which helps developing a stronger professional self and in turn achieving the other hope, being effective. In addition, other participants' hopes desired to be achieved, namely, improving in terms of teaching and strategies, being a creative and risk-taking teacher, are also personal future images.

**Table 4**

*The Comparative Rankings of the Fears and Hopes Emerged for Professionalism Classroom Management*

Ranking	Fears	Hopes
1	Undisciplined	Create rapport with students
2	Not become students' role model	Be even handed
3	Lack of confidence in classroom management	Care the students
4	Unable to handle disobedient performances, Focus more on content knowledge and ignore pedagogical knowledge	Open to change
5	Rule-obsessed	Clarifying dos and don'ts from the first day
6	Become distant teacher, Lose the control with students Let the students walk over me	Be a problem solver in classroom management Beware the comfort zone

With regard to the results reported in Table 4, the hopes for classroom management, unlike the dominant patterns seen in Tables 2 and 3, were mostly social, e.g. creating rapport with students, caring them and solving their problem. However, similar to what was argued regarding instructional strategies, the hopes for classroom management were to great extent unrelated to organizational aspects while touching socio-affective aspects of instruction.

However, in terms of fears, as listed in Table 4, the participants were mainly obsessed with the under- or over-estimation of rules, as reflected in the primary fear, being undisciplined, and other ones, such as losing control with students and inability to handle learners' rebelliousness. Although the primary fears of the participants were personal, not being disciplined, not acting as their role models, and lacking professional self-confidence, to name a few, there were rays of social fears which were mainly connected with students' affairs as the most immediate human context of the teachers.

**Table 5**

*The Comparative Rankings of the Fears and Hopes Emerged for Professionalism Interpersonal Relationship*

Ranking	Fears	Hopes
1	Feel inadequacy in compared with colleagues	Have a warm relationship with school principals
2	Contribute to the negative ethical of work place	Get professional relationships with colleagues
3	Not be accepted by good schools	Get professional relationships with nation gifted teachers
4	Lack of supports by principals	Make a prominent team of beloved teachers
5	Huge differences with prominent teachers	
6	Be criticized by students' parents	

As listed in Table 5, the future hopes of the participants were mainly socially-oriented and were mainly organizationally bound. In addition, a closer look at the table shows that organizational rankings also played a role in their significance so that warm constructive relationship with the principal was the priority while the relationship with the teachers in the immediate organizational context, i.e. school, and associating with the teachers in the distant contexts was at the lowest rank.

Considering the fears of the participants listed in Table 5, it was discovered that although the fears, similar to what was seen for the hopes, were mainly potential organizational obstacles such as being less effective than the colleagues, which may in turn lead to not being accepted by top schools, and not being supported by the principals, there is a broader social aspect which was related to a broader social scope, i.e. students' parents. However, it has to be noted that, similar to the teachers' hopes, fears were dominantly rooted in organizational expectations, too.

The second research question of the study was "Is there any significant difference between the in-service and pre-service EFL teachers in terms of their possible selves?" To answer this research questions, the collected data via the questionnaire were analyzed using one-way ANOVA after the assumptions were confirmed. The results of which are shown below.

**Table 6***Independent Samples T-test for FS, IS and OS of the Participants*

	Type of Service	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	d
Fear	Pre-service	4.17	1.24	.701	147	
	In-service	4.02	1.15			
Ideal	Pre-service	5.04	.65	1.38	147	
	In-service	4.84	.86			
Ought	Pre-service	4.95	.830	3.65**	147	.59
	In-service	4.28	1.36			

\*\* Significant at  $P < .01$

As shown in Table 6, the measured FS ( $t = .70 > .05$ ) for pre-service teachers, ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) and in-service teachers ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) and the measured IS ( $t = 1.38 > .05$ ) for pre-service teachers ( $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = .65$ ), and in-service teachers ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = .86$ ) were not significantly different. However, the measured OS ( $t = 3.65 < .01$ ,  $d = .59$ ) for pre-service teachers, ( $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = .83$ )

and in-service teachers ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) was significantly different. In addition, with reference to the observed effect size ( $d = .59 < .60$ ), it was argued that the difference between the two groups in terms of their OS was medium (Dornyei, 2007). Accordingly, it was argued that although pre-service and in-service teachers were similar in terms of their IS and FS, pre-service teachers were stronger in OS. A further comparison of the participants' selves was taking account of their demographic features. The results of which are reported below.

**Table 7**

*One-way ANOVA for Comparing the FS, IS and OS of the PTs and ITs (based on their years of training)*

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Fear	12.47	3	3.11	2.17	.07
Ideal	7.06	3	1.76	3.63	.06
Ought	25.98	3	6.49	6.90	.00

As shown in Table 7, the differences among the measured FS ( $F = 2.17$ ,  $p = .07 > .05$ ) and IS ( $F = 3.63$ ,  $p = .00 < .01$ ) of the four groups of pre-service and the in-service teachers were insignificant. However, the difference among the measured OS ( $F = 6.90$ ,  $p = .00 < .01$ ) of the four groups of pre-service and the in-service teachers was significant. To further compare the groups pairwise in terms of their OS, Scheffe test was run as the post hoc test. The results of which are tabulated below.

**Table 8**

*Multiple Comparisons of the Four Groups of PTs and ITs in Terms of Their Measured OS*

Groups	Descriptives						
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	In-service
1 <sup>st</sup> year	5.03	.56		-.12	.30	.86	.81*
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	5.15	.56			.42	.98	.93*
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4.72	.99				.56	.50
4 <sup>th</sup> year	4.16	1.48					-.05
In-service	4.21	1.40					

\*Significant at  $p < .05$

As reported in Table 8, post hoc analyses using the Scheffé test indicated that the OS of the in-service teachers was significantly weaker ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) than that of the 1<sup>st</sup> year ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .56$ ),  $F = .81$ ,  $p < .05$  and second year ( $M = 5.15$ ,  $SD = .56$ ),  $F = .93$ ,  $p < .05$  pre-service teachers. However, the observed differences between other pairs were not significant. Accordingly, it was argued that the OS of the pre-service teachers was dominant and underwent a significant change from the third year on whereas the pre-service teachers and in-service teachers were similar in terms of their FS and IS.

The third research question of the study was, "Are there any significant differences in terms of in-service teachers' education and gender regarding their possible selves?"

To provide the answer to the third question, first, descriptive statistics were computed. The results of which are given in Table 9.

**Table 9**

*Descriptive Statistics of Measured FS, IS and OS According to Participants' Education and Gender*

	Education			Gender	
	BA	MA	PhD	Female	Male
Fear	4.28 (1.20)	3.86 (1.16)	3.54 (1.33)	4.27 (1.15)	3.85 (1.30)
Ideal	5.01 (.73)	4.48 (.60)	5.30 (.79)	5.03 (.74)	4.90 (.67)
Ought	4.92 (.85)	4.14 (1.37)	5.19 (.90)	4.82 (1.06)	4.66 (.99)



According to the results reported in Table 9, the BA teachers had the strongest FS ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) whereas, the Ph.D. teachers had strongest IS ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = .79$ ) and OS ( $M = 5.19$ ,  $SD = .90$ ). In addition, IS was the strongest aspect of teachers' selves among all the three groups, BA teachers ( $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = .73$ ), MA teachers ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) and Ph.D. teachers ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). With regard to their genders, female teachers' FS ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), IS ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) and OS ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) were stronger than FS ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ), IS ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) and OS ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) of male ones. Furthermore, IS was the dominant aspect of selves among both female ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .74$ ) and male ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = .67$ ) participants. In addition, to trace the mixed effects of education and gender on each aspect of the teacher selves, a two-way ANOVA was run, the results of which are shown below.

**Table 10**

*Two-way ANOVA for the Measured FS, IS and OS of the Participants Across Their Gender and Education Levels*

	Source	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>
Fear self	Gender	.228	1	.633
	Degree	2.116	2	.124
	Gender * Degree	1.943	2	.147
Ideal self	Gender	.70	1	.40
	Degree	1.69	2	.18
	Gender * Degree	.46	2	.62
Ought self	Gender	.21	1	.64
	Degree	8.78	2	.00
	Gender * Degree	.47	2	.62

According to the results reported in Table 10, it was argued that neither gender ( $F = .22$ ,  $p = .63 > .05$ ) nor education ( $F = 2.11$ ,  $p = .12 > .05$ ) of the participants influences their FS. In addition, in accordance with the results the mixed effect of gender and education ( $F = 1.94$ ,  $p = .63 > .05$ ) was also insignificant. Moreover, it was argued that neither gender ( $F = .70$ ,  $p = .40 > .05$ ) nor education ( $F = 1.69$ ,  $p = .18 > .05$ ) of the participants influences their IS. In addition, with regard to the results, the mixed effect of gender and education ( $F = .46$ ,  $p = .62 > .05$ ) was insignificant, too. The following table shows the results of two-way ANOVA for the participants' OS. In addition, it was concluded that gender ( $F = .21$ ,  $p = .64 >$

.05) had no significant effect on the participants' OS. By contrast, their education level ( $F = 8.78, p = .00 < .01$ ) was found to be significantly influential on their OS. With regard to the results, the mixed effect of gender and education ( $F = .47, p = .62 > .05$ ) on their OS was also insignificant. Considering the reported means in Table 8, it was concluded that the both Ph.D. and BA teachers enjoyed stronger OS than MA teachers. Based on the analyses of the measured teacher self, it was argued that, except for the effect of education on OS of the participants, neither gender nor education level can affect the FS, IS and OS of the participants.

The results of this study imply that features of the imagined future classes, either fears or hopes of teachers in terms of their environment, activities, and the roles and focus of principals, colleagues, students and their parents are forming their possible selves. It can be argued that teachers' IS at the early years of their education changes, due to their learning and (micro-) teaching experiences and sometimes their images of their own teachers, and is transformed later thanks to their internalization and achievement so that, someday, similar to experienced teachers, they gain a sort of feasible self which features a balance of IS, OS and FS.

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed at investigating pre-service and in-service teachers' professional selves according to the theory of PS and SD theory. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses done on the collected data revealed that pre-service and in-service teachers participated in this study had generally similar fear and ideal selves; however, the in-service teachers' ideal selves were different with novice (1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year) pre-service teachers. Interestingly, the junior and senior pre-service teachers were not different from in-service teachers regarding their ought-to selves. Based on the SD theory (Higgins, 1987), it can be argued that the teachers were well-aware of the traits they would ideally tend to have (their IS) right from the first year of training. In line with Dörnyei (2009), it can be argued that L2 teachers have relatively clear ideas of their desires and ambitions right from the first year of training and carry them to later years of practicing teachers at schools; however, PTs do not have a vivid self-representation of the traits they believe they ought to have. According to the results obtained from quantitative analyses, it seems that after two years of education, the PTs come to know the attributes they are expected to have so that they develop a body of OS similar to that of the ITs.

The results of this study can also be discussed with reference to those of Kubanyiova's (2007) in terms of the effectiveness of the four-year pre-service the participants pass. Unlike her observations regarding the inadequacy of the teacher training courses in terms of her participants' incapability of making a conceptual change, the participants of this study showed a significant pattern according to which they underwent a conceptual image change concerning the expectations they have to meet so that they develop a rather different self after four years which is partially affected by their years of education. It seems that OS, as seen in this study, is responsible for the dynamicity of pre-service teachers' development so that it pushes 1<sup>st</sup>-year and 2<sup>nd</sup>-year pre-service teachers' OS to get evolved into a different one from what had in the first year.

However, with reference to the results of the qualitative analysis, unlike White and Ding's (2009) who see this dynamicity socially evoked, it has to be argued that dynamicity of possible self, in general, and OS in particular, is both personally (either cognitively or affectively) and socially evoked. Based on the findings, while in some aspects, such as instructional strategies and professionalism, personal aspect is stronger, in other aspects such as classroom management, social aspects and expectations play a more significant role. As seen in the results of the qualitative analyses, it can be argued that the intensity of the dynamicity of participants' possible selves in general, and OS in particular, is indebted to the fluctuations of the balance between hopes and fears a teacher possess.

The results may be interpreted within Kubanyiova's Language Teacher Conceptual Change (LTCC) model (2009), involving IS, OS and FS, too. It can be argued that the participants' selves mainly change mainly within their OS domain while their FS and IS undergo minor insignificant fluctuations. In addition, based on the qualitative data analyses, it seems that the evolution of OS among pre-service teachers is mainly driven by a balance between their hopes and fears which are rooted in personal (either cognitive or affective) and social, especially, organizational sources. Based on the findings of this study, it may be argued that essentially personal hopes and fears are driving pre-service teachers forward. Above all, their tendency to learn more and achieve higher degrees, seemingly feeding other hopes, justifies why four years of attending teacher training courses can be constructive or destructive in terms of OS. On the other hand, fears, mostly socially-evoked, lying in the immediate organizational context within human resource such as principal, colleagues and professionals seem to be hindering the

dynamicality of in-service teachers' OS evolution. However, weighing social fears should not be at the cost of underestimating personal fears which may be either affective such as losing self-confidence and losing control with students, or cognitive, being unknowledgeable or fossilized for example.

Moreover, based on the enlightenments discussed in previous studies, (Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Hiver, 2013; Jalali et al., 2020; Miller & Brickman, 2004; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992), it is arguable that the pre-service teachers' well-structured selves when entering the teacher training course backs their motivation for professional development, fixing their incompetency, and meeting the expectations. However, the findings of the current study contradict those of Kumazawa's (2013), in that the divergence between the teachers' initial FS, IS and OS did not seem to have negative impact on the formation of their ultimate professional self-concept. It seems that it was a trigger for pre-service teachers' self-reflection, especially if it was socially and more specifically organizationally supported which would lead to the transformation of their self-concepts and more constructive possible self, and as reported by Kubanyiova (2015), it is materialized in their interview discourse. Speaking of specific role of organizational support, as highlighted by the participants' commenting on their hopes and fears concerning classroom management and professional interpersonal relationship, the findings are in agreement with those of Smid (2018) in that teacher constructive or destructive interactions with their supervisors and mentors, or as mentioned in this study, colleagues and principals, can penetrate their possible selves.

## 6. Conclusion

This study probed in-service teachers and pre-service teachers' FS, IS and OS in addition to various aspects of their fears and hopes within the realm of their PS which included the four dimensions of professionalism, instructional strategies, classroom management, and professional interpersonal relations. It was also found that OS of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers was a significant determinant of their PS.

From a practical perspective, PS standpoint adopted in this study proved to be potentially insightful for making constructive modifications in teacher education programs. Attempts should be made to conserve the initial states of IS while

investing on the pre-service teachers' FS and OS. In addition, curricular policies are needed to handle the personal ideals the teachers carry with regard to professionalism, instructional strategies, classroom management, and professional relationship. Furthermore, organizational human resources have to be enlightened regarding the dynamics of the L2 teachers FS, IS and OS to pave the organizational and social ground for booming L2 teacher effectiveness.

Teacher training courses and practicum also have to be informed by the fact that the years spent in teacher training programs can have determining role in pre-service-teacher formation. This would of great significance when the expectations and course objectives are set for the student teachers in each year. Also, the explored fears and hopes explored in this study needs to be reconsidered when the trainers are developing course content, performance observation criteria and assessment of students' teachers so that they can formatively contribute to self-growth among the would-be EFL teachers.

L2 teachers' PS seems to be a promising construct to be further researched, especially along with other teacher variables to help us gain an insight into the professional self-concepts of both pre-service and in-service education and training. It seems that more qualitative research, including but not limited to case studies, longitudinal studies, phenomenological and lived experience research, is needed to probe the dynamics of self-development and formation among Iranian pre-service and in-service EFL teachers.

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