

Exploring Standards and Developing a Measure for Evaluating Iranian EFL Teachers' Professional Competence in the Private Sector

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Abstract

The primary foundation of teacher evaluation is establishing standards for assessing the optimal characteristics of qualified teachers. The present study aimed at exploring standards of professional competence of adult-level Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector and developing a questionnaire to assess their professional competence. To this end, initially, the members of the professional community including teacher trainers, supervisors, teacher educators, and teachers themselves were selected and interviewed to set standards through adapting TESOL (2003) standards of professional EFL teachers. Content analysis of the interviews showed that the members of the professional community recognized 38 performance indicators out of 65 performance indicators suggested by TESOL (2003) as appropriate, inclusive, and necessary to evaluate Iranian in-service EFL teachers' professional competences in the private sector. Then, a self-assessment questionnaire was designed to evaluate the professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector. The questionnaire was administered to 344 EFL teachers in order to examine its reliability and construct validity. The results indicated that the aforementioned questionnaire is a valid and reliable measure of the professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector. Researchers hope the emerged standards and the newly-developed instrument would be eventually implemented at national level to secure consistency in EFL teachers' quality assurance in the private sector.

Keywords: TESOL standards, EFL teacher evaluation, professional competence, private sector, Iran

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1. Introduction

Evaluation has always been of great significance in policy and practice of English language teaching (ELT) and has been linked with various aspects of TESOL including teacher development, teaching methodology, and curriculum design (Davison & Cummins, 2007). Luo and Dappen (2004) highlight the value of evaluation and state that evaluation aims at judging worth, merits, and shortcomings of educational programs. They hold that evaluation serves as an important instrument towards improving educational quality of a program.

A review of the related literature on teacher evaluation in ESL contexts reveals that evaluation studies have basically concentrated on evaluating teachers' English language competence (e.g., Kiely & Rea-Dickens, 2005), evaluating teachers' level of teaching competence (e.g., Hamdan, Ghafar, & Li, 2010), designing teacher evaluation and appraisal systems (e.g., Kaufman, 2007), and describing performance appraisal of ESL teachers (e.g., Stoyhoff, 2007). Furthermore, the studies of teacher evaluation in EFL contexts have mainly focused on evaluating the contribution of native speaker teachers in EFL contexts (e.g., Kiely & Rea-Dickens, 2005), evaluating English language competencies of EFL teachers (e.g., Coniam & Falvey, 2005), evaluating the accountability of English teachers after training (e.g., Weir & Roberts, 1994), developing new approaches to teacher appraisal and evaluation (e.g., Murphey & Yaode, 2007), evaluating teacher effectiveness (e.g., Eken, 2007), and evaluating EFL teacher evaluation processes (e.g., Burden & Troudi, 2007; Davidson, 2007; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1984).

The review of teacher evaluation studies in the Iranian ELT literature also reveals that Iranian scholars have mostly investigated the procedures of teacher evaluation in the private sector (e.g., Akbari & Yazdanmehr, 2011; Ostovar-Namaghi, 2013). Regarding Iranian language program evaluation policies in the public sector, Atai and Mazlum (2013) hold that English teachers in the public schools are evaluated the same way as other teachers, such as chemistry teachers, are evaluated. Navidnia (2013) developed a model and suggested assessment procedures for Iranian EFL teachers in public schools. However, there has been scant attempt to set standards and develop an instrument for evaluating Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector.

Considering the Iranian EFL context, English is taught in different educational contexts: Public schools/universities and language institutes (Razmjoo & Riazi, 2006). Riazi (2005) argues that teaching and learning

English in the public sector are mostly directed towards knowledge of the language and its usage rather than functional communication or use. Hence, Iranian students typically tend to attend private language institutes to learn English due to the shortcomings in the public sector (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015; Kazemi & Soleimani, 2013). This has led to the growth of a new booming market in Iranian private sector for ELT education and increasing numbers of learners and teachers (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2014).

Stoyhoff (2007) highlights the importance of context in evaluation studies and argues that evaluation cannot be considered apart from the social and political contexts in which it occurs because the above factors may affect the design and suitability of an evaluation system for its designated purposes. A historical review of language teaching and learning in Iran reveals that prior to the Islamic revolution in 1979, private language institutes came to existence in a growing number of large cities and burdened the responsibility of English extension in the Iranian social context (Davari & Aghagolzadeh, 2015) and most of the language teachers in the language institutes were native speakers of English living in Iran (Nezarat-Alhossaini & Ketabi, 2013). However, as Aliakbari (2002) points out, foreign language teaching and learning were marginalized after the Islamic revolution. While after three decades, globalization, modernization, and the desire to access technology have overcome the reductionist approach and resistance to the English language and led to the growing of interest in language teaching and learning and flourishing of private English language institutes (Riazi, 2005).

Hence, taking into consideration the growing interest in learning EFL in the private sector and the lack of national standards for EFL teachers' evaluation in this sector, we aimed at setting standards and designing an appropriate instrument to evaluate EFL teachers' professional competence in the private sector. Smith (2005) argues that standards are required when we are engaged in evaluation processes focusing on teaching. McCloskey, Thornton, and Toubia (2007, p.7) declare that "there is little documentation of the processes used to develop standards for evaluating teachers" and believe in contextualization of standards to enhance their effectiveness. Likewise, scholars such as Burton (2007) and Stoyhoff (2007) contend that teacher evaluation can be conducted by adapting the existing resources such as TESOL standards.

It is worth mentioning that two large professional language teaching organizations "the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education in the United States (NCATE), and the Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)" generate standards of professional language teachers. According to TESOL (2003), professional teaching standards that are needed to prepare English teachers take into account five domains including language, culture, instruction, assessment, and

professionalism. On the other hand, NCATE identifies four domains for setting standards including content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, learning environments, and professional knowledge (Kuhlman & Knezevle, 2013).

Consequently, we drew upon TESOL (2003) standards and attempted to adapt them to the Iranian EFL context in order to make an instrument aiming at evaluating professional competence of EFL teachers in the private sector. According to TESOL (2003) standards, professional competence of ESL/ EFL teacher is made up of five domains including *language, culture, instruction, assessment, and professionalism* which is considered as the core component of the professional competence of EFL teacher. “Language and culture are considered as foundational knowledge domain in which teachers must be competent. Moreover, teaching competence is applied in the instruction and assessment domains. Thus, the four outer domains form the content and skill areas of TESOL” (Burton, 2007, p.30). How they intersect in each teacher's performance represent teacher's professionalism. Figure 1 below presents TESOL standards.

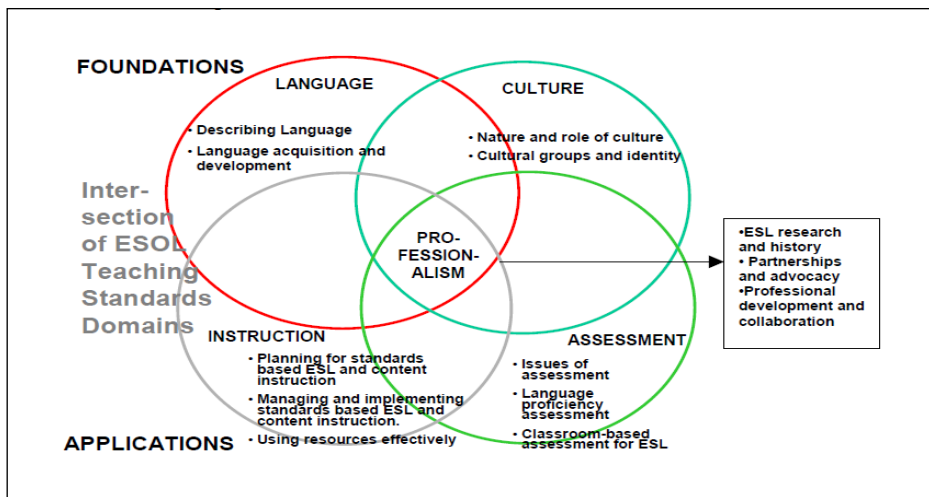


Figure 1. TESOL standards for P-12 teacher education programs. Adapted from *TESOL / NCATE program standards: Standards for the accreditation of initial programs in P-12 ESL teacher education* (p. 4), by the TESOL Task Force on ESL Standards for P-12 Teacher Education Programs, 2003, Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc.

2. Research Questions

The present study was conducted to explore the quality standards of professional competence of adult-level Iranian EFL teachers in the private

sector. Taking into consideration TESOL (2003) standards of professional competence of ESL/ EFL teacher, the following research questions were posed:

1. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating the professional competence of in-service EFL teachers in Iranian ELT private sector?
 - 1.1. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers' abilities in describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes in the private sector?
 - 1.2. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers' abilities in planning, managing, and implementing instructions domain in the private sector?
 - 1.3. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers' assessment skills in the private sector?
 - 1.4. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers' cultural competence in the private sector?
 - 1.5. What are the desired quality standards for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers' professionalism skill in the private sector?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The data were collected from two groups of participants in this study. Initially, 20 experts, henceforth called the members of the professional community, shared their ideas to set standards for the purpose of designing EFL teacher evaluation questionnaire and assessing its content and face validity. Then, 344 in-service EFL teachers in the private sector completed the final version of the questionnaire to estimate its reliability and construct validity.

Building a task force and professional community is essential throughout the standard setting process in evaluation studies (McCloskey, Thornton, & Toubia, 2007). Purposive sampling was used to select the members of the professional community regarding four important features including their status in the private and public ELT community of Iran, academic degree, major as well as the prestige of language centers these experts cooperate with. Considering the status of the members of the professional community in ELT community of Iran, as displayed in Table 1, one can see that 25% (5) of the members of the professional community have

occupied all the ELT key positions in Iran including university teacher educator in the major state universities of Iran, supervisor in the private sector, teacher trainer in the public and private sector, and EFL teacher in the private sector in their teaching experience profiles, 20 % (4) of them were university teacher educators at the major state universities in Tehran teaching pre-service EFL teachers at different levels "BA, MA, and PhD" and making major decisions in ELT community in Iran, and 25% (5) of the professional community members held three dominant positions as teacher trainer, supervisor, and at the same time EFL teacher in the main branches of wide-expanded private institutes. In fact, we can consider them as head teacher trainers and head supervisors having control over all other branches of these wide-expanded private institutes. Moreover, 10% (2) of the members just worked as teacher trainers, 5% (1) of them just worked as a supervisor, and 15% (3) of them just worked as EFL teachers in the prestigious institutes in the private sector (see Table 1).

An analysis of background education of the professional community members shows that 75% (15) of them have studied TEFL; 10 % (2) of them have graduated in linguistics; and the rest (15% (3) of them) have studied English literature (see Table 1). With regard to their degree, 45% (9) of interviewees were PhD holders, 35% (7) of them were PhD candidates and 20 % (4) of them held MA degree (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Members of the Professional Community*

Percent	Academic degree			Major			Gender		Age			Status					
	MA	PhD	PhD Candidate	Literature	TEFL	Linguistics	Male	Female	19-25	26-40	41+	University teacher	supervisor	Teacher trainer	EFL teacher	All key positions	teacher
20%							60%	40%	0%	30%	70%	20%	5%	10%	15%	25%	25%

Number of persons	4	9	7	3	15	2	12	8	0	6	14	4	1	2	3	5	5
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Next, 344 in-service EFL teachers responded to the designed questionnaire in order to do a pilot study and check its construct validity. Kahn (2006) suggests that a minimum sample size of 300 is confident for the result of factor analysis of the questionnaire. Table 2 displays the demographic information of EFL teachers responding to the questionnaire.

Table 2. Demographic Information of In-service EFL Teachers in the Private Sector

Academic degree	Major	Gender	Age	Teacher years of experience
BA	Translation	Male	19-25	1-4 years
MA Students	Literature	Female	26-40	5-10 years
MA	TEFL		41+	11-15 years
PhD	Linguistics			----- years
PhD Candidate	Other fields			
49.3%	23.1%	37.9%	31.4%	43.1%
26.2%	16.1%	62.1%	60.3%	34.8%
20%	32%		8.3%	13.8%
0.3%	7%			8.3%
4.2%	21.8%			

3.2 Procedure

Following Stoyhoff (2007) in adapting already existing standards for evaluating EFL teachers, the researchers employed TESOL (2003) standards of professional competences of teachers of English to speakers of other languages as the theoretical basis of the study. Initially, Iranian EFL teacher educators, in-service EFL supervisors, in-service EFL teacher trainers, and in-service EFL teachers who studied at PhD level and taught in the private sector were

selected purposively to be the members of the professional community in order to assess and contextualize teacher evaluation standards. To this end, we delivered TESOL (2003) teacher education standard to the professional community. Next, to achieve consensus and make decision about standards of evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector, we interviewed all the members of the professional community. It should be noted that each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes depending on the status and working experience of the professional community members. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for content analysis. Furthermore, the members of the professional community were asked to answer standards for standards assessment form (see Appendix A) in each domain i.e. language, culture, assessment, professionalism, managing, planning, and implementing instruction.

Then, the researchers identified emerging standards after performing content analysis of interviews and analyzing responses of the professional community to the standards for standards assessment form. Inter-coder reliability was also estimated to show that coding scheme was consistent across two coders. Finally, the self-assessment questionnaire to evaluate EFL teachers' professional competence was developed. First, the questionnaire was delivered to 5 teacher educators to check its face and content validity as well as clarity and wording of the items. Second, the questionnaire was distributed among 600 in-service adult-level teachers; however, 344 of the questionnaires were analyzed to estimate its construct validity and reliability.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Setting Context-Specific Standards

The first aim of this study was setting localized standards in order to design a questionnaire to assess the professional competence of Iranian adult-level EFL teachers in the private sector. To this end, the members of the professional community were asked to determine the level of importance of each domain of TESOL (2003) professional competence standards for the evaluation of Iranian adult-level EFL teachers. They were also asked to assess the importance and necessity of each performance indicator of the aforementioned domains presented by TESOL community (2003). To crosscheck their response to the interviewer, the members of the professional community were requested to fill out the standards assessment form adapted to judge the clarity and content of TESOL (2003) performance indicators in each domain of EFL teacher professional competence. Hence, the gist of constructive and valuable ideas of the members of the professional community in making consensus to employ TESOL standards for evaluating adult-level EFL teachers' professional competence is reported in the following paragraphs.

As far as the level of importance of each domain of professional competence in evaluating in-service Iranian EFL teachers is concerned, all members of the professional community stated that "EFL teachers' competence in describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes has paramount importance in teacher evaluation". As stated by one of teacher trainers, *"describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes for the one supposed to be an EFL teacher is a prerequisite and inadequate mastery over language becomes a barrier to get to know about the culture, focus on assessment, and involve in instruction"*.

Reviewing and discussing 23 performance indicators in language domain with the members of the professional community revealed their strong consensus over 13 performance indicators. In fact, they mostly claimed that "in-service EFL teachers in the private sector are supposed to be able to apply their knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to help EFL learners in acquiring language proficiency". Likewise, they believed that EFL teachers should provide students with rich language exposure, comprehensible input, scaffolding, meaningful interaction, appropriate instruction, feedback, and effective learning strategies.

Moreover, the members of the professional community responded to standards assessment form and assessed the performance indicators in language domain as a whole regarding the content of the standards and their clarity. They mostly showed agreement on the necessity, importance, appropriateness, and coverage of the needed content. However, nearly more than half of them declared that in-service EFL teachers and supervisors in the private sector cannot fully understand what each performance indicator means in the language domain. In other words, they declared that technical linguistic and teaching terms are mystifying and abstruse for some in-service EFL teachers regarding their educational levels and fields of study.

Discussing the assessment skill of in-service EFL teachers, 75% of the members of the professional community believed that assessment skill is very important in evaluating in-service EFL teachers while 25% of them reported that *"this skill is moderately important in the private sector"*. One of the teacher trainers who has worked in the widely-expanded institutes declared that *"we have everything preplanned by the language centers, and EFL teachers do not have that much agency in testing departments"*. Likewise, one of the teacher educators who had an administrative position in one of the widely-expanded language centers stated that *"only some EFL teachers as testing experts are employed in testing department and it is not necessary for all in-service EFL teachers to acquire testing skill."*

As a result, the members of the professional community highly agreed with the very ideas of EFL teachers understanding the purpose of tests,

assessing language skills and components, and doing and modeling peer and self-assessment techniques, while they showed disagreement regarding the other performance indicators related to assessment. Verifying the content and clarity of performance indicators in the assessment domain, the majority of the members of the professional community contended that "in-service EFL teachers cannot fully comprehend what each performance indicator means in the assessment domain". To reiterate, they expressed considerable disagreement over importance, appropriateness and coverage of performance indicators in the assessment domain.

With reference to cultural knowledge of teachers, 50 % of the professional community members stated that "*cultural knowledge of in-service EFL teachers is very important*", 35% of them declared that "*cultural knowledge of EFL teachers is moderately important*", and 15% believed that it has little importance. Suffice to say that the members of the professional community believe that "*knowing cultural value of the target language is not the main criterion for assessing EFL teachers in our country since there is sensitivity to the very idea of cultural assault*". In fact, they put emphasis on critical understanding of culture and intercultural competence of in-service EFL teachers in the private sector. Moreover, responses to standards assessment form demonstrated substantial disagreement of the members of the professional community over the content and clarity of the performance indicators in culture domain. In fact, they asserted that performance indicators in culture domain are not appropriate, inclusive, and necessary for evaluating Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector.

Regarding planning, managing, and implementing instruction, 95% of the members of the professional community asserted that "*in-service EFL teachers require to be competent in this domain*", while 5% of them believed that possessing these skills is moderately important for EFL teachers. It is worth mentioning that the majority of the members of the professional community asserted that planning and managing skill is as important as language proficiency for EFL teachers. Indeed, they stated that "*planning, implementing and managing skills occupy the second position of importance after language proficiency*".

Discussing planning, managing, and implementing instruction performance indicators, all members of the professional community contended that some terms including standard-based learning instruction, standard-based language learning, and standard-based learning objectives in TESOL (2003) are not comprehensible since such standards are not established by Iranian ELT community. Likewise, they asserted that some of TESOL (2003) performance indicators such as developing academic language skills of learners, providing instruction for limited formal schooling learners, and planning students learning experience based on the assessment of their

language proficiency are not the responsibilities of language teachers in the private language institutes. Analyzing responses of the professional community to the standards assessment form also showed their disagreement regarding the clarity, importance, and necessity of the performance indicators in planning, managing, and implementing instruction.

In relation to the core component of professional competence of EFL teachers "professionalism", 75% of the members of professional community considered it as important skill, while 25% of them believed that it is moderately important in evaluating Iranian EFL teachers. One of EFL teachers stated that "*moving towards professionalism is a must*".

However, the members of the professional community argued that some of the performance indicators in professionalism such as EFL teachers' awareness of law in EFL profession should not be used in evaluation of Iranian in-service EFL teachers due to the lack of national law and guidelines in this regard. They also contended that there is a degree of exaggeration in demonstrating the performance of EFL teachers such as EFL teacher advocacy for the access of EFL learners to all available academic resources as well as EFL teacher ability to serve as language, education, and professional resource. In other words, they believed that expecting EFL teachers to display the aforementioned qualities is demanding.

Finally, seeking the level of agreement of the members of the professional community over adapting performance indicators of TESOL (2003) standards to evaluate professional competence of EFL teachers, the researchers coded the whole interview transcription about 400 pages to estimate the level of agreement between two coders. Mackey and Gass (2005) stated that establishing coding reliability is crucial part of the qualitative data to ensure that coding scheme is consistent across multiple coders. Hence, estimating the level of agreement of two coders in this study, the researchers obtained the Phi-coefficient of inter-coder reliability of 0.91. The results of content analysis of interviews and analysis of responses of the professional community to standards assessment form presented that the members of the professional community reached consensus over 38 performance indicators out of 65 performance indicators suggested by TESOL (2003) to evaluate in-service EFL teachers' professional competences in the private sector. The number of emerging standards in each domain is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. *The Number of Emerging Standards and the Rank Order of Each Competence for Evaluating Iranian Adult-Level EFL Teachers' Professional Competence*

Rank order	Component of EFL teacher professional competence	The number of emerging standards for each component
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1	Describing language and understanding language acquisition and development process	15
2	Planning, managing, and implementing instruction	7
3	Assessment skills	6
4	Cultural competence	4
5	Professionalism skill	6

4.2. Developing a self-assessment questionnaire

First a 49-item self-assessment questionnaire was developed based on the emerged quality standards of the professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers in the first phase of the study (see Appendix B) and 5 teacher educators examined the face validity and wording of the questionnaire. As they suggested, some items were revised due to measuring more than one parameter or vagueness of the wording. Furthermore, two EFL teachers working in language institutes were asked to go through the items, answer them, and provide feedback at the presence of the researcher. Hence, some technical words, to mention a few, speech register and lexicon were changed to formal and informal language and vocabulary, respectively. Furthermore, examples for some terms such as learning style and strategies, or writing mechanism were provided. Next, the questionnaire was piloted and distributed among EFL teachers in different provinces of Iran. The data were also subjected to principal component analysis (PCA) using SPSS Version 21 to check whether the questionnaire was measuring the components and standards over which the researchers and the members of professional community reached consensus following the standard setting process.

Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Mayer-Okin value is 0.883, exceed the value of 0.6 and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reaches statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. Initially, performing PCA indicated the existence of 10 initial components, in contrast to the 5 components we theorized in Table 1, with Eigen values greater than one, accounting for 59.50 of the total variance. Consequently, the decision was made to run confirmatory factor analysis through using PCA for the five components of the questionnaire including EFL teachers' professional competences in describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes, planning, managing, and implementing instruction, assessment skills, intercultural skills, and professionalism skills separately, since each competence itself has more than 5 items and takes into account different theoretical background or components.

4.2.1. Component 1: Describing language and understanding language acquisition and development process

Items 1 to 18 measure teachers' abilities in describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes. PCA of these items revealed the presence of four components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 31.034 %, 7.60 %, 6.523 %, and 5.869 % of the variance respectively. As seen in Table 4, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 strongly loaded on the second component. It should be mentioned that these items respectively measure EFL teachers' conscious knowledge about their own competence in teaching phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary, pragmatics, discourse, and language proficiency.

Items 9, 10, and 11, which strongly loaded on the fourth component, are related to the EFL teachers' ability in providing students with rich exposure of language (see Table 4). As Table 4 illustrates items 17, 18, 12, 16, and 13 strongly loading on the first component measure EFL teachers' self-assessment in communicative, social, and constructive nature of language. It is worth noting that items 17, 18, 12, 16, and 13 respectively measure EFL teachers' competences in providing comprehensible input, practicing using language, establishing meaningful interaction, providing feedback, and recognizing the learners' differences in learning language. Furthermore, Items 14 and 15 relating to EFL teachers' self-assessment of their own performance and knowledge in providing learners with language learning styles and strategies strongly loaded on the third component (see Table 4). However, item eight is considered as a problematic item due to its loading on two different components which we can justify it theoretically (see Table 4). Item 8 probes whether in-service EFL teachers consider themselves as a good language model for their students or not. As Table 4 illustrates, this item equally loaded on two components, the first component is related to communicative and social nature of language and the second component is related to the conscious knowledge of language system. So, we can justify dual loading of item 8 since a good model of language should possess these two qualities. Decision was also made to delete this item; however, deleting this item reduced the reliability of the whole questionnaire from 0.95 to 0.94. Finally, we arrived at a consensus to just change the wording of the item to 'I am a proficient user of English language' instead of "I serve as a good model of language".

Table 4. *Rotated Component Matrix of Factor Analysis on the Items related to EFL Teachers' Competence in Describing Language and Understanding Language Acquisition and Development*

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
A17	.711			
A18	.672			
A12	.660			
A16	.595			
A13	.578			
A1		.679		
A2		.633		
A3		.544		
A5		0.523		
A7		.486		
A4		.481		
A6		.473		
A8	<u>0.421</u>	<u>.431</u>		
A15			.762	
A14			.737	
A5			.523	
A10				.802
A9				.690
A11				.414

4.2.2. Component 2: Planning, Managing, and Implementing Instruction

Items B19 to B31 of the questionnaire were designed to measure EFL teachers' ability in planning, managing, and implementing instructions. It should be noted that items 19 to 22 are related to EFL teachers' skill in planning instruction and items 23 to 37 are related to EFL teachers' skill in managing and implementing instruction. PCA of items B19 to B31 revealed the presence of three components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 38.96%, 9.24%, 7.95 % of the variance respectively.

As illustrated in Table 5, items 19, 20, 21, and 22 which measure EFL teachers' planning skills in the classroom environment loaded on the second component. However, the items related to managing and implementing instructions

mostly loaded on the first component. Items 29 and 30 loaded on the third component since they are related to EFL teachers' competence in employing technology for teaching English (see Table 5). As displayed in Table 5, items 23, 28, and 31 loaded on two components; though, deleting these items did not change the reliability of the questionnaire considerably. In fact, the reliability index was reduced to 0.94; whereas, it was initially 0.95. Hence, decision was made to delete these items since each one measured several factors at the same time.

Table 5. *Rotated Component Matrix of Factor Analysis on the Items related to the Planning, Managing, and Implementing Instruction Skills of EFL Teachers*

Items	Components		
	1	2	3
B24	.783		
B26	.676		
B25	.634		
B27	.600		
<u>B31</u>	<u>.564</u>		<u>.413</u>
<u>B28</u>	<u>.543</u>		<u>.448</u>
<u>B23</u>	<u>.453</u>	<u>.446</u>	
B21		.796	
B20		.729	
B19		.705	
B22		.661	
B30			.776
B29			.774
B21		.796	
B20		.729	

4.2.3. Component 3: Assessment Skills

Items 32 to 38 were induced to probe whether in-service EFL teachers understand the purpose of different kinds of tests, have ability to assess learners' knowledge of language components and skills, and use peer and self-assessment techniques in the class. PCA of items related to assessment skills of EFL teachers revealed the presence of two components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 49.32 % and 15.13% of the variance. As Table 6 illustrates items 32, 33, 34, 35, and 38 loaded on the first component since all these items measure EFL teachers' skills in assessing language skills and components of language and understanding the purpose of different kinds of tests. Moreover, items 35, 36, and 37 relating to EFL teachers'

competence in modeling and helping learners to do self and peer assessment loaded on the second component.

Table 6. *Rotated Component Matrix of Factor Analysis on the Items related to the Assessment Skills of EFL Teachers*

Item	Components	
	1	2
C33	.843	
C34	.821	
C35	.664	
C32	.621	
C33	.843	
C34	.821	
C37		.888
C36		.846
C38		.633

4.2.4. Component 4: Intercultural competence

Items 39 to 42 measure intercultural competence of EFL teachers including their ability to present similarities and differences between target language culture and their own language culture and make students familiar with critical thinking skill to enable them absorbing and rejecting target culture norms. PCA of these four items revealed the presence of one component with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 66.15% of the variance. Table 7 also shows that all items strongly loaded on one component.

Table 7. *Rotated Component Matrix of Factor Analysis on the Items related to the Intercultural Competence of EFL Teachers*

Item	Component
D40	.844
D41	.844
D39	.815
D42	.759

4.2.5. Component 5: Professionalism skill

Items 43 to 49 measure professionalism skill of EFL teachers which are related to EFL teachers' professional development and collaboration as well as their partnership and advocacy. PCA of the aforementioned items revealed the presence of 2 components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 37.44% and 20.44% of the variance respectively. As displayed in Table 8, items 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48 strongly loaded on the first component showing EFL teachers competence in professional development and collaboration (see Table 8), while items 43 and 49 loaded on the second component relating to EFL teachers' professional partnership and advocacy.

Table 8. *Rotated Component Matrix of Factor Analysis on the Items related to the professionalism skill of EFL Teachers*

Item	Components	
	1	2
E45	.772	
E48	.713	
E44	.704	
E47	.664	
E46	.648	
E49		.870
E43		.821

The descriptive statistics of Iranian adult-level EFL teacher professional competence in responding to the self-assessment questionnaire is presented in Table 9. The mean and standard deviation of EFL teachers' scores in each of the components as well as the total score of EFL teachers' professional competence are reported in Table 9. EFL teachers' professional competence scores were calculated by adding up the values of the options they selected (from 1 to 5) in assessing themselves and responding to the items. The higher a teacher's score on each of the components or total, the more competent the teacher is in that competence or her professional competence. For instance, a teacher with a total professional competence score of 243 is more competent than a teacher with an overall score of 171. In the same token, a teacher whose competence score on assessment skills is 60 is more competent than a teacher with a score of 47 on the same component.

Table 9. *Descriptive statistics of the Adult-Level EFL Teacher Professional Competence in Responding to the Self-Assessment Questionnaire*

Component	N of Items	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Understanding and describing language	18	32.00	90.00	66.6380	10.39440
Planning, managing, and implementing instruction	13	21.00	65.00	47.7057	8.51810
Assessment skills	7	7.00	35.00	24.4491	5.56230
Intercultural skill	4	4.00	20.00	12.9115	3.71610
Professionalism skill	7	7.00	35.00	21.7917	5.40074
Total Score of EFL Teachers	49	85.00	238.00	171.5144	27.69664

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study shed light on the qualities adult-level EFL teachers should possess to work in the Iranian ELT private centers. More specifically, the present study explored the quality standards of the professional competence against which Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector can be evaluated. The review of the existing literature in the Iranian ELT context revealed that teacher evaluation studies in the private sector have mainly addressed describing and assessing the procedures of teacher evaluation (Akbari & Yazdanmerh, 2011; Ostovar-Namaghi, 2013).

Since there are no published national standards to evaluate EFL teachers' professional competence in the private sector in spite of the current booming trend of private language learning institutes, the present researchers followed Burton (2007) and Stoyhoff (2007) who stress contextualization and adaptation of the existing valid standards such as TESOL in exploring context-specific standards to evaluate professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers. Additionally, the researchers partially employed McCloskey et al.'s (2007) standard setting process in setting valid and reliable standards to evaluate professional competence of EFL teachers in the private sector.

Having adapted and localized TESOL (2003) standards of professional competence of EFL teachers, we explored the level of importance of each component of professional competence for evaluating Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector. The members of the professional community in this study argued that mastering intercultural, planning, managing and implementing instruction, assessment, and professionalism skills are required by all Iranian EFL teachers, while describing language and understanding language acquisition and development processes have a paramount importance in evaluating EFL teachers since language is both a means and

an end in learning. Nevertheless, they consistently agreed on fifteen performance indicators out of twenty-three indicators suggested by TESOL in language domain. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that based on TESOL standards and emerged standards to evaluate Iranian EFL teachers, language competence of EFL teachers is defined as the connection between teachers' linguistic competence and teaching abilities. In the same vein, Wright (2002) declared that "becoming a language teacher involves a number of related processes in particular learning to create connection between linguistic or content and teaching aspects of language teaching" (p.113).

Planning, managing, and implementing instruction has got the second place of importance regarding teachers' professional competence. However, fourteen TESOL performance indicators were reduced to seven performance indicators since the members of the professional community believed that supervisors rather than teachers bear the responsibility of planning, managing, and implementing instruction in language institutes.

In fact, the emerged standards in planning, managing, and implementing instruction domain explain that Iranian EFL teachers should demonstrate their abilities in organizing teaching-learning process around language learning objectives, planning learner-centered instruction, helping learners to develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, using technology to support learners' learning, and employing varieties of tasks and activities for teaching language skills.

Considering the required skill of EFL teachers in assessment domain, the members of the professional community hold low expectation of in-service EFL teachers. Indeed, they considered TESOL standards in the assessment domain demanding for in-service EFL teachers due to the fact that EFL teachers in the private sector mainly are not in charge of language testing. Consequently, twelve suggested performance indicators in assessment domain were reduced to six mainly focusing on EFL teachers' awareness of various kinds of tests and purposes of tests, ability to assess learners' language skills and language components, modeling self-assessment, helping learners in self-peer assessment, and using criterion-referenced test. On the contrary to the member of professional community as Iranian experts in EFL field who assume assessment as moderately important competence for EFL teachers, Popham (2009) holds that assessment literacy is regarded as a target for teachers' professional development and surely it leaves significant impacts on the way these teachers assess their students. Therefore, the present study findings can help Iranian professionals in the ELT context to work towards raising standards in assessment domain for Iranian EFL teacher professional development.

On the other hand, the members of the professional community hold rather different expectations of in-service EFL teachers regarding their competence in culture; hence, eight performance indicators of TESOL in culture domain were reduced to four performance indicators with significant changes in content. In other words, they believed that TESOL standards in culture domain are designed for ESL

context not the EFL one. Indeed, the members of the professional community claimed that teachers should possess intercultural awareness accompanied by critical thinking. Findings of the present study, in terms of cultural competence of EFL teachers, are in line with Kramsch's (1995) and Secrue's (2006) studies asserting that language teaching is no longer a linguistic task. Rather, it should work for the attainment of intercultural competence and critical thinking.

With regard to professionalism, eleven performance indicators of TESOL standards are reduced to six performance indicators considered necessary and appropriate to evaluate Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector. To reiterate, it should be noted that the members of the professional community reached consensus over a number of TESOL standards including EFL teacher knowledge of research and history of ELT, partnership, and professional development and collaboration, nevertheless, they argued that performance indicators related to EFL teachers' advocacy are demanding.

It should be reiterated that the present research aimed at localizing the standards and designing an instrument to evaluate professional competence of EFL teachers in the private sector. The results may contribute to implementing a unified system of EFL teacher evaluation system in the context of private sector. The emerged standards for professional competence of EFL teachers can also be used as a guideline to English language teaching profession development as well as EFL teachers' professional development in the private sector.

Moreover, researchers hope the emerged standards and the newly-developed instrument for assessing professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector would be considered and eventually implemented at national level so that we may secure consistency in EFL teachers' quality assurance in the private sector. Indeed, based on the emerged standards, national-level policy makers may design and issue national certificates for EFL teachers working in the private sector. As Thaine (2004) puts it, the nature of evaluation of teaching is complex and problematic; however, quality assurance and accountability in the real working environment are the expectations of EFL learners.

Last but not least, we concluded that setting standards and designing a new instrument to evaluate the professional competence of Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector are fresh areas due to the variety and rising number of language institutes in the private sector as well as increasing number of EFL teachers and learners. However, in this study we took into consideration all features in selecting the members of the professional community to set standards as recommended by McCloskey et al. (2007) including knowledge and leadership ability of the members except national distribution of the professional community members. Future studies on the current topic are therefore recommended by considering national distribution of the members of the professional community.

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Appendix A: Standards for Standards Assessment Form

Note: Adapted from McCloskey, Thornton, and Touba (2007)

Content	Strongly disagree	Disagree	To some extent	agree	Strongly agree
Is each standard important and inclusive in scope?					
Does each standard appropriate for Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector?					
Does each standard fit within what in-service Iranian EFL teachers in the private sector should know and be able to do?					
Do the standards cover the breadth of the content needed by Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector in this area?					
Do the standards incorporate all what Iranian in-service EFL teachers in the private sector need to know in that domain?					
Clarity					
Can Iranian in-service EFL teachers and supervisors in the private sector understand what each standard means?					
Are standards consistent across domains?					
Comments:					

Appendix B: EFL Teacher Professional Competence Assessment Questionnaire

Dear Instructors

This questionnaire aims at assessing your professional competence as an English Language Teacher. An EFL teacher's professional competence includes ability to describe and understand language system, intercultural competence, assessment skills, planning, implementing, and managing instruction skills, and professionalism skills.

Note: We reassure you that your answers will be kept confidential.

Participant Background Information

a. *Academic degree:* BA MA Student MA PhD Student PhD

b. *Major:* Translation Literature TEFL Linguistics
Other fields

c. *Gender:* Male Female.....

d. *Age:* 19-25 26-40 41+

e. **How long have you been teaching English in Language Institutes?**

1 to 4 years 5 to 10 years 11 to 15 years more than 15 years

F. Have you ever taken real or mock exams such as FCE, IELTS, or TOEFL?

Yes No

If yes, what was your score? -----

How do you assess your own abilities in the following domains?

1. Describing and understanding language system,
2. Intercultural competence,
3. Assessment skills,
4. Planning, implementing, and managing instruction skills, and
5. Professionalism skills.

Rate your own abilities: (Never= 1, A little=2, somewhat= 3, Much=4, A great deal=5)

A: Describing and Understanding Language system

		1	2	3	4	5
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1	I help learners to develop strategies to learn the <u>phonological system</u> of English <u>in order to develop their proficiency.</u>					
2	I teach learners to apply their <u>knowledge of morphology</u> to expand their English vocabulary.					
3	I teach learners effective strategies to check their own <u>grammatical structure</u> in spoken and written language.					
4	I teach learners effective strategies <u>for acquiring and using vocabulary</u> meaningfully in spoken and written form.					
5	I help learners understand <u>how context affects the use and form of oral and written communication by providing models.</u>					
6	I teach learners <u>to use mechanics of writing</u> (Comma, semi colon, dash) appropriately.					
7	I teach learners to <u>evaluate their own writings</u> in English.					
8	I am a proficient user of English language.					
9	I try to read <u>different texts for students</u> to support their language learnings.					
10	I <u>show videos</u> to learners to support their language learnings.					
11	I establish and maintain a (Q & A) <u>question-based classroom.</u>					
12	I provide opportunities for students <u>to interact and develop their language.</u>					
13	I pay attention to <u>individual differences such as "age, literacy level, personality, and socioeconomic status of the learners"</u> in classroom activities.					
14	I make learners to get familiar with their own <u>learning</u>					

	<u>styles</u> " auditory, visual, field dependent, field independents,"					
15	I make learners get familiar with their own <u>learning strategies</u> such as " self-monitoring, repetition, note-taking, questioning,"					
16	I provide individual, focused feedback appropriate to learners' needs.					
17	I usually <u>use visual, gestures, demonstration and linguistic support such as repetition, paraphrasing to help learners understand me.</u>					
18	I regularly <u>use pair and group work to allow learners to engage in conversation with me and others.</u>					

B. Planning, Managing, and Implementing Instruction

		1	2	3	4	5
19	I am able to <u>organize a teaching-learning process around language learning objectives.</u>					
20	I plan lessons so that students can <u>meet the leaning objectives.</u>					
21	I Plan <u>learner-centered instruction.</u> Note: In learner-centered classes, both teachers and students reflect on the learning process. Teachers encourage learners to share the responsibility for their learning.					
22	I <u>plan students' learning experiences based on assessment of their language proficiency levels.</u>					
23	I help learners develop <u>listening skill</u> by <u>using listening strategies.</u>					

24	I help learners develop <u>reading skill</u> by <u>using reading strategies</u> .					
25	I help learners develop <u>speaking skill</u> by <u>practicing formal and informal</u> language.					
26	I help learners develop <u>writing skill at different proficiency levels</u> .					
27	I use technology to support language learning.					
28	I use <u>internet and its different facilities to teach English</u> .					

C. Assessment Skills

		1	2	3	4	5
29	I am aware of <u>various kinds of tests such as diagnostic, achievement, and proficiency tests</u> .					
30	I assess <u>individual learners' language skills including reading, writing, speaking, and listening</u> .					
31	I am able to assess learners' <u>knowledge of language components; i.e. grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary</u> .					
32	I encourage <u>learners to monitor their own performance</u> .					
33	I model <u>self and peer-assessment techniques</u> in the class.					
34	I help learners <u>to do self-peer assessment in the classroom</u> .					
35	I use <u>criterion-referenced assessment to measure learners' language skills</u> .					

D. Intercultural Competence

Note: Intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures. That is, an intercultural competent person should observe rules, norms, and expectations of the relationship.

		1	2	3	4	5
36	I help learners gain <u>intercultural literacy about world Englishes.</u>					
37	I try to make students familiar with <u>the cultural differences between their own language culture and the target language culture they are developing.</u>					
38	I explain intercultural issues to learners through <u>presenting similarities and differences in an attempt to improve their intercultural competence.</u>					
39	I make students familiar with basis of <u>critical thinking in order to enable them make appropriate decisions regarding absorbing or rejecting target cultural norms.</u>					

E. Professionalism Skills

		1	2	3	4	5
40	I am a member of <u>professional associations such as TELLSI "Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran".</u>					
41	I have <u>a plan to develop myself based on my needs and interests.</u>					
42	I <u>collaborate with other teachers in order to improve my own abilities in teaching.</u>					
43	I <u>take part in the in-service training courses offered by institutes.</u>					
44	I <u>study the latest research papers and use their findings</u>					

	<u>in my teaching.</u>					
45	I <u>am familiar with different teaching methods and use them appropriately in my classroom based on the needs of my students.</u>					
46	I <u>take part in scientific conferences of TEFL</u> held in <u>Iran and overseas.</u>					