

## Exploring EFL Teacher's Agency and Self-efficacy in their Professional Practice among Indonesian EFL Teachers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> agency, self-efficacy, motivation, professional development</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1358">http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1358</a></p>	<p><i>Studies on language teachers' agency and self-efficacy have shown that both are essential elements of teachers' identities and practices. However, only some researchers have explored how teachers perceive their agency and self-efficacy in the Indonesian context. Thus, this study aimed to investigate how English teachers perceive their agency and self-efficacy in their teaching practices and environments. This study employed a mixed method study in which both quantitative and qualitative data were utilized to answer the inquiry. The results shed light on how teachers perceive agency with school conditions, how they perceive their self-agency, and their aspiration to become agentic teachers. It was revealed that the majority of the teachers perform professional development to stimulate their agency and efficacy. Challenges were also explored in this article. The evidence of this study imparts policy and practice implications as well as future research direction to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' agency and efficacy as well as to foster the practice in school contexts.</i></p>
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### 1. Introduction

Teaching is a sublime and essential profession because what a teacher gives to her students can affect the growth of her students' personalities and their life course growth. Whatever the sociocultural and political context, a teacher remains a living model for her students to imitate and the determining strand in education (Tkáč & Gabrhelová, 2020). They stressed that the efficacy and quality of education depend on the cognizance of great responsibility a teacher bears that can be noticed from her endeavors to self-reflect, self-educate, and self-improve in the personal, moral, and professional domains. Teachers should believe and have passion for their job because they have unwavering confidence in their meaningfulness.

In Indonesia, teaching is a professional occupation, as stated in Indonesia's Law of Teacher and Lecturer Number 14 the year 2005, "Teachers are professional educators with the primary task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students on early childhood education, formal education, primary education, and secondary education". As a professional, teachers have to master the four competencies, namely pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies (UU 14-2005 Guru Dan Dosen, 2005).

Pedagogic abilities include the capacity to plan learning, execute the learning process, evaluate the processes and effects of learning, and apply research findings to enhance learning quality. Personal competencies comprise empathy, a positive view of others and oneself, authenticity, and goal orientation. Social competence is related to the capacity to value social diversity and environmental preservation, articulate ideas coherently, effectively, and clearly, build a positive work environment, and promote community involvement. Professional competence can be defined as teachers' capability of the content. In this case, they are able to design and utilize the content properly, to be able to design, implement, and compile research reports, develop and disseminate innovations, and design, implement, and assess community service.

As can be seen from the above explanation of the teacher's law, agency and self-efficacy are not explicitly mentioned. However, they are reflected in some of the clauses, such as the ability to foster a class and work atmosphere which belongs to social competencies. This ability can be said as an example of the agency. As stated by Loo et al., (2017), agency is one's ability to initiate action in their local context and is affected by their work context (Loo et al., 2017). Moreover, an agency can also be seen in teachers' autonomy in the classroom. The agency enables teachers to understand school practices and dynamics. It is argued that neglecting this aspect may set aside the importance of schools as the centers of democratic practice (Riveros et al., 2012). In contrast, teachers' self-efficacy is implicitly demanded in the pedagogic and professional competencies. As Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the confidence of the individual about her or his ability to perform a particular task or activity through the necessary behavior or attitude. Here, a person's agency is closely related to her self-efficacy because self-efficacy can provide her with informed freedom to execute or display particular tasks or duties.

Bjork (2005) pointed out that the more extensive space of autonomy for Indonesian teachers is relatively new. The long history of rigid centralization on the part of the government contextualized that situation. Indonesian teachers are used to waiting for directives from the top. This top-down style of organizational system is strongly affected by Javanese culture, which tends to be hierarchical. Long colonialization history had printed its marks in people's way of institutional life, which is known as the 'slave mentality'. Moreover, Bjork also highlighted the findings that showed that most teachers, especially those who teach at public schools, viewed themselves primarily as civil-servant, while teachers from private schools with religious nuance saw themselves, first of all, as educators. Now, the government attempted to foster schools' and teachers' autonomy by implementing a new curriculum namely Kurikulum Merdeka (Freedom Curriculum). It provides flexibility for educators to create quality learning that suits the needs and learning environment of the students. Hence, with this type of curriculum, the senses of agency and efficacy are significantly contributed. The authors see the two kinds of responses related to different concepts of agency.

Responses from public school teachers reflected the agency as a practice of choosing (Miller & Gkonou, 2018) and those from private school teachers indicated agency as a form of resistance (Cohen et al., 2020). This issue of autonomy in composing syllabi and pedagogical tools is well related to teachers' agency and teacher's self-efficacy. Thus, Bjork had shown how the macro level, that is, the educational reform policy from the government, affected the micro level, which is the agency and the self-efficacy of the teachers.

Furthermore, Lestari et al. (2021) showed that the macro and micro levels of the exercise of teachers' agency might differ from one context to another. The government's education policies and training form the macro level of agency, while the teachers' translation of the policies in local and particular contexts shapes the micro level of agency. Teachers' self-efficacy supports teachers' agency. Lestari et al. (2021) affirmed this claim by explaining that to practice their agency, English teachers should possess a firm belief in their ability to tackle the problems and challenges they face in ELT. This perceived self-efficacy is grown thanks to training and experience that a teacher had.

The notion of teacher identity offers various scopes and might be seen differently depending on the perspective. However, teacher identity has some relation with several aspects like emotion, agency, self-efficacy, etc. Agency is defined as the proactive action employed by the teachers. Research on teacher agency in the Indonesian context is still limited to school-based experience. A study conducted by Sutono & Budiraharjo shed light that in liberal art education, the agency is transformed by a strong school culture (Sutono & Budiraharjo, 2020). They also mentioned that future research on agency should be conducted in public school contexts. A similar finding was obtained by a study conducted by Lestari et al. (2021) investigating teachers' agentic response toward the English as a Foreign Language curriculum. Teachers incorporate local culture as their strategy to enact agencies in the classrooms. Cirocki & Farrell (2019) underlined the importance of peer observation and feedback in developing EFL teachers' self-efficacy. They also emphasized that self-efficacious teachers usually strive to improve their good teaching practice. While (Rahmawati & Wirza, 2022) found that highly efficacious EFL teachers can effectively handle the difficulties found during online classes, such as unfinished assignments, demotivated pupils, etc. They also discovered that teacher self-efficacy is closely linked with the workplace context and the students' demography. That's why the authors found that it is crucial to comprehend the issues of teachers' self-efficacy in different contexts of teaching. This finding confirmed the finding of a study conducted in the Turkish context by Polatcan et al. It is reported that teachers with strong professional self-efficacy are effective in teaching and learning which teacher agency largely depends on (Polatcan et al., 2021).

Teacher agency is primarily defined as emphasizing "responsibility, commitment, self-evaluation, strong judgment, and connection to the common good and attention to what people do" (Edwards, 2015). When teachers experience fulfillment and enjoyment in their work, then they can voluntarily undertake other works beyond the perception of the teachers' obligation. Thus, what U. Rahman et al. (2014) concluded was valid. They concluded that job satisfaction played a significant mediating role between self-efficacy and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Here, OCB means a natural attitude and behavior that is voluntary. The persons who displayed it expect no rewards. In this way, self-efficacy, which bears job satisfaction, develops OCB; when OCB develops, the agency also grows. Moreover, some researchers underlined the importance of the community of peer teachers (Cirocki &

Farrell, 2019; A. Rahman, 2018). Members of this community can support and assist each other in enhancing instructional practices, confirming suitable teaching applications, and skills in accepting and giving feedback. They emphasized that the teacher's involvement in such a community of reflective practitioners can grow collegiality and self-efficacy. Hence, the collective agency supports personal agency.

Studies on teachers' agency and efficacy have gained interest among scholars. In the international context, some researchers have attempted to investigate the development of agency as a response to curriculum reform (Min, 2019; Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). Min (2019) investigated the structural relationship between school culture, self-efficacy, and teacher agency development toward the national curriculum reform in South Korea. Findings indicated that supportive principals and teacher-teacher relationships directly influenced individual teachers' agency. In addition, teachers' self-efficacy and outcome expectation both directly influenced their agency (Min, 2019).

The more recent study (Polatcan et al., 2021) examines the effect of transformational leadership behaviours of school principals on teacher agency. It was correlational research and was conducted with 349 teachers working in Anatolia regions. The results of this study affirmed the previous study that a direct relationship was found between the transformational leadership practices of principals and teachers' behavior. It had a moderate effect on teacher agency and self-efficacy.

Research on the topic of teachers' agency and efficacy is still underexamined in the Indonesian context. Indonesia still puts great emphasis on the importance of English language teachers' proficiency (Zein, 2016). Rarely do the teachers pay attention to their self-agency and self-efficacy. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by exploring the agency and self-efficacy of EFL teachers from junior and high schools by answering the following research questions: To what extent do EFL teachers perceive agency and self-efficacy in their professional practice in teaching?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Teacher Agency**

Priestley et al. (2015) conceptualized the notion of teacher agency through the ecological perspective, where we see agency not as the capacity of an individual but as what individuals and groups can achieve. Moreover, this capacity is highly correlated with the particular ecologies in which teachers work, such as cultures, structures, and relationships. This concept is strengthened by Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech (2020), who pointed out that human agency is bordered by contexts and circumstances. Lasky (2005) defined agency as both individual and social influence. The individual influences include emotion, belief, knowledge, and identity, while the social influences include policy, language, norms, and social structure). In the context of language policy and planning, the concept of teacher agency is defined as effective strategies to deal with various challenges and bring about directed changes carried out by policymakers (Ali & Hamid, 2018).

Furthermore, they also claimed that the practice at the agency level might vary depending on the circumstance in which it is operated. It may happen at macro and micro levels (Ali & Hamid, 2018). Guidelines, training modules, and policies are the product of the agency at the

macro level. On the other hand, the micro-level covers how teachers respond to these policies according to the situation in which they work (S. Zhao & Baldauf, 2012).

To enrich the understanding of how the agency is achieved and of the factors that promote or hinder agency, Emirbayer & Mische (1998) offered more detail in a three-dimensional, temporal-relational perspective on the agency. The three dimensions are, namely, iterational, practical-evaluative, and projective (Priestley et al., 2015). The agency is influenced by both prior experiences (formal education and training as well as informal professional and personal experiences) as well as by long-term and short-term goals that are reflected in the educational practices, according to the iterational and projective dimensions. The iterational dimension deals with three aspects that contribute to teacher agency, namely personal and professional capability, as well as values. All of which are correlated with their prior knowledge and practices. The projective dimension covers both long-term and short-term goals. An agency can be achieved in a concrete situation. It is reflected in the practical-evaluative dimension, where cultural, structural, and material aspects play a significant role (Priestley et al., 2015). It can be visually presented in the following diagram.

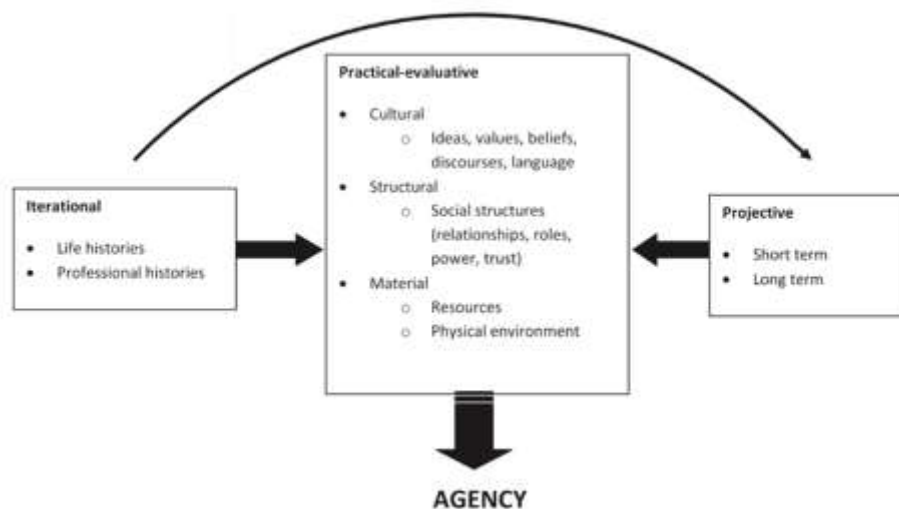


Figure 1 Three Dimensions of Agency

## 2.2 EFL Teachers' Agency in Classrooms

The investigation of teachers' agency in EFL classrooms was conducted by Sutono & Budiraharjo in 2020. They investigated how teachers transform and develop their agency in a liberal arts education of Jesuit school culture. The findings indicated that liberal arts education had constructed a powerful academic climate that shaped teachers' agency, specifically from systemic and epistemic levels (Sutono & Budiraharjo, 2020). Another study, however, did not show positive results concerning agency and school culture. Adnan (2017) investigated teachers' agencies in Malaysian Islamic Schools. Based on the study, the strict and religious environment, unfortunately, hindered teachers from acting on their own. Moreover, unsupportive colleagues also play pivotal roles in their agency transformation. In this context, some English teachers receive unpleasant responses whenever they initiate new actions. As a result, they chose to act based on the usual tradition (Adnan, 2017). Meanwhile, Nguyen & Bui (2016) investigated teachers' agencies through different lenses. They investigated how teachers respond to the new English national curriculum. The result

indicated that teachers are able to practice their agency as comprehensive policy practitioners in a high manner. Previous studies provide different perspectives of how teachers perceive and act based on their own will.

### **2.3 Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Pereira et al.(2019) unearthed the findings that teachers may have various self-efficacy beliefs at the same time. They outlined six profiles of self-efficacy beliefs in teaching, namely Profile 1 (Highly-Inefficacious), Profile 2 (Moderate Globally-and-Instructionally-Confident), Profile 3 (Highly-Efficacious), Profile 4 (Globally-Unconfident), Profile 5 (Student-Engagement-Efficacious), Profile 6 (Student-Engagement-Inefficacious). Every form of self-efficacy belief might become the background for other self-efficacy beliefs. The general confidence of teachers and particular tasks' self-efficacy beliefs are accommodated by the six profiles. This awareness reflected that teachers might vary in efficacy in terms of different areas.

Moreover, regarding self-efficacy, Mehmood (2019) contrasted novice teachers with experienced teachers' self-efficacy. He stressed that more experienced teachers had made their successful past experiences the capital for boosting a bright future in their teaching profession. Their self-efficacy is raised because of the accumulation of mastery experiences that prompt them to have higher confidence and optimism in administering their teaching. While novice teachers, who had minimum mastery experiences, felt a little bit disheartened when they experienced negative responses or feedback from their students. Though they joined the teaching force zealously and enthusiastically, the negative teaching experiences of the novice teachers had been deemed as a setback to their professional identity as a teacher. Mehmood (2019) also found that in-service teachers, to satisfy the need to grow in their profession, need positive feedback and encouragement from their team leader. A leader who practices transformative leadership can enhance their teachers' self-efficacy in terms of emotional and professional support. The more self-efficacious teachers may transform themselves from being a follower to a leader.

Meanwhile, Bachtiar (2019), who investigated the impact of a Professional Development program in Indonesia on EFL teachers' self-efficacy in three different dimensions: classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategy, discovered that teacher participants perceived that being highly self-efficacious helped them to value and make use of their teaching skills while motivating their students at the same time. The teachers believed that high self-efficacy guarantees a successful teaching career. They also saw that high self-efficacy facilitates teachers to decide on teaching problem solutions. Bachtiar (2019) underlined the finding that the close relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' pedagogical knowledge and understanding is well noticed by the teacher-participants. The result of his study showed that the Professional Development program had indeed compelled transformation in the teachers' view and practice of self-efficacy. The EFL teachers in the study had been improving their teaching undertakings, especially in instructional strategy, based on the shift in their self-efficacy belief.

A similar study on teachers' self-efficacy was conducted by Catalina et al. (2021). They brought to the surface the finding that teachers' language proficiency was positively and weakly correlated with the teachers' efficacy in classroom management as observed by the pupils. Interestingly, the student participants in this study did not count their teacher

language competencies as the deciding factor for their involvement in the process of learning. Catalina et al. (2021) concluded that although the teacher's language proficiency is vital for the success of EFL learning, it is not the sole factor for the effectiveness of fruitful EFL teaching.

The investigation of EFL teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management is also carried out by Listiani et al. (2019). They found that factors that had influenced EFL teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management were the teaching experiences the teachers had, the teaching skills of the teacher, and the student's situation. They stressed the finding that most authoritative teachers felt very confident in managing their classrooms. They displayed high self-efficacy by being flexible and reflective in their teaching practice. Moreover, possessing skills such as student involvement skills, subject matter expertise, and class management skills could boost the EFL teacher's performance. The teaching skill that affects the self-efficacy of the participants is the mastery of the subject matter; the teachers with knowledge and expertise tended to be more creative in teaching; thus, it would provoke students' active participation and make the classroom atmosphere conducive to the teaching process. The third factor discovered by Listiani et al. (2019) was the students' situation. Varied students' situations when attending the class affected the responsiveness of the students, the flow, and the ending of the class.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The present research is a mixed-method study. According to Yustina et al. (2020), the mixed-methods study is a type of research to collect and analyze the data by combining quantitative and qualitative research in a series of research to understand the research problem. The data were obtained through questionnaires and interviews. Employing the explanatory sequential type of the mixed-method design, the researchers first conducted a survey with the questionnaire, then based on the result of the quantitative data collection, administered the interviews to gain quantitative data supporting the qualitative ones as it had been delineated by Ivankova et al. (2006). In this research, researchers used quantitative data analysis techniques with a descriptive approach. A quantitative approach is a research strategy that primarily applies the postpositivist paradigm to knowledge development (such as thinking about cause and effect, reducing to variables, hypotheses, and specific questions, using measurement and observation, and testing theory) and uses research techniques like experiments and surveys that need statistical data (Creswell, 2009). To support the quantitative data, qualitative data were obtained through interviews. Gill & Baillie (2018) deemed interviews as advantageous to the researchers to know more deeply the phenomena, reasons, and motives of the respondents.

#### **3.2 Participants**

Teachers involved in this study were secondary English teachers who teach in three different school contexts: state school, Islamic private school, and Christian/Catholic private junior and high schools in Central Java and DIY. The researchers invited novice and experienced teachers to participate in this study. Their teaching experiences ranged from 1-5 years to more than 21 years of teaching.

### 3.3 Instruments

A questionnaire was employed to gather the data. The questionnaire was adapted from Tunku et al. (2018) and consisted of 6 parts (Professional Beliefs, Self-efficacy Beliefs, Teacher Affiliation, Collegial Leadership, Teachers' Aspirations, and Teachers' Professional Agency) in the form of three Likert-scale and three open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were optional in nature. The reliability of the questionnaire has been examined by Cronbach Alpha in SPSS with a score was .791. It indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire has high consistency and functions well.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

A Likert-scale range table from Sözen & Güven (2019) and Budiyono (2015) was used to analyze the quantitative data collected from the close-ended questionnaire. The scale is shown in table 1. In addition, To support the descriptive analysis from the quantitative data, open-ended questions were also served in this study.

**Table 1. Likert scale range**

Category	Value	Range
Strongly disagree	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral	3	2.61-3.40
Agree	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21-5.00

## 4. Findings

This section provides the results of the close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The close-ended questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to find out the participants' degree of agency and self-efficacy. Thus, the data are presented in tables and elaborated. Meanwhile, the results of the interviews are presented based on themes.

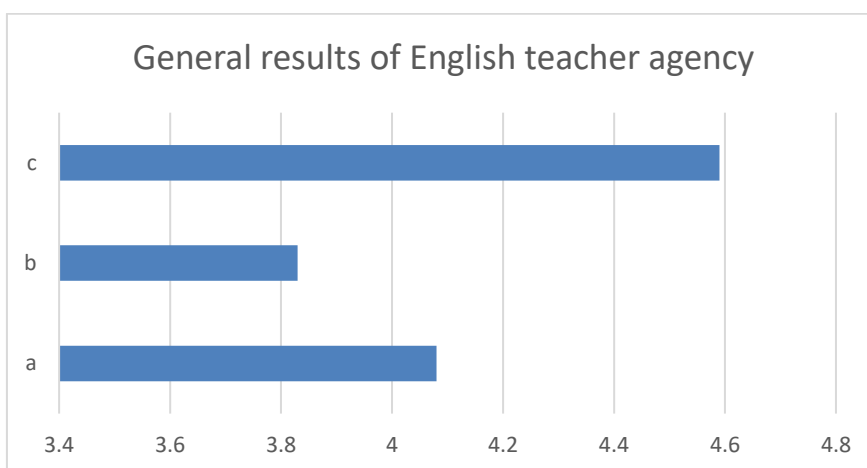


Figure 1 The results of the quantitative data were divided into three themes.

Teachers' perception of agency related to school conditions, teachers' perception of their self-agency and self-efficacy, and teachers' perception of their aspiration to be agentic teachers. As presented in graph 1, teachers had the highest average on their perception of



their aspiration to be agentic teachers, followed by their perception of agency related to school conditions. What is an interesting point from the graph is that although their aspiration to be an agentic teacher is the highest, the mean score for their perception of their self-agency and self-efficacy was the lowest among the three categories. A more detailed explanation of each theme is presented below.

#### **4.1. Teachers' Perception of Agency Related to School Condition**

The first theme focused on teachers' perception of agency related to the school condition. The school condition means how colleagues and principals interact within the school environment. The results of their perception are presented in graph 2.

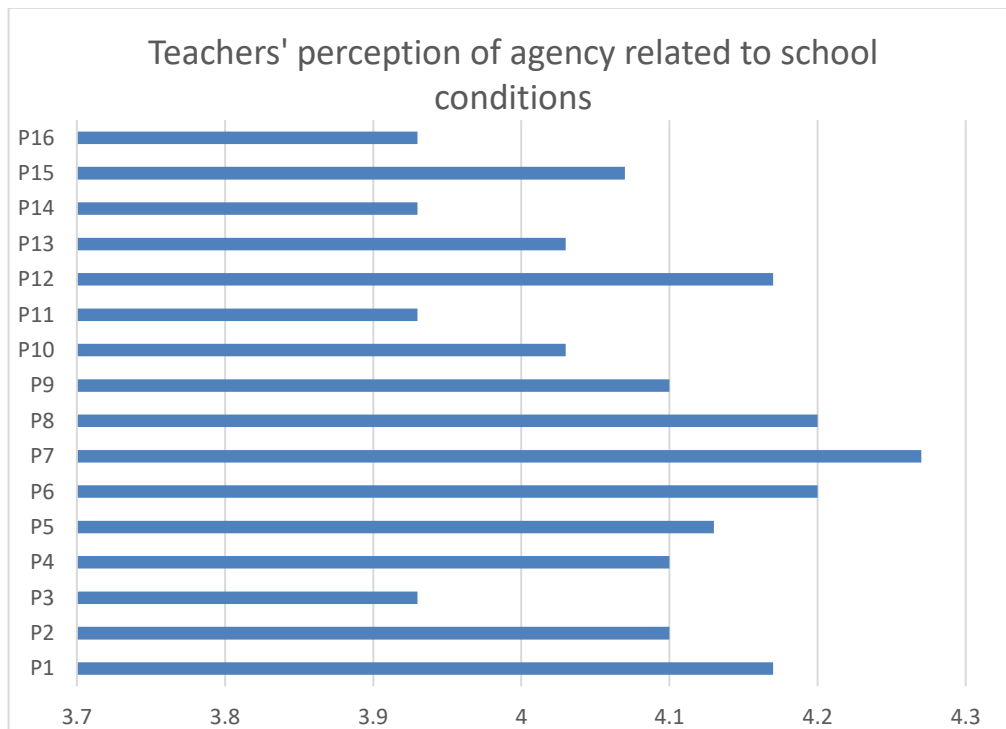


Figure 2 Teachers' perception of agency related to school conditions

Based on the statistical result regarding teachers' perception of the environment of the school, it can be seen that P7: "Teachers provide strong social support for their colleagues." gained the highest mean score ( $M=4.41$ ). It indicated that most of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. However, during the interview session, the participants could not elaborate on their answers regarding the support they gave and got from their peers. The answers were considered normative, as stated by teacher two and teacher 4:

"For learning innovation, we only discuss it. If there are obstacles or positive things in class, we can share them with other English teachers, whereas with others, I only share information through the school WhatsApp group, that's all." (Teacher 4)

Another participant also clarified the statement:

"From colleagues, they usually share information if there is a webinar or a training on how to design HOTS tests. We feel supported when we have to make HOTS tests." (Teacher 1)

On the contrary, the results suggested that four statements had identical mean scores, which were P3: "Teachers and schools accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm."; P11: "The principal listens to and accepts teachers' suggestions."; P14: "The principal puts suggestions made by the teachers into operation."; P16: "The principal treats all teachers as his/ her equal." (M=3.93). These statements obtained the lowest scores among other statements. The mean scores indicated that most of the teachers were neutral toward the statements.

The interview results showed different results, especially regarding statement P11. The teachers felt that the principals are supporting enough.

"Yes, he supports us. Next semester, teachers are asked to study LMS. He also allocated more than Rp. 170.000.000 for the installation." (Teacher 3).

Regarding statement P3: "Teachers and schools accomplish their jobs with enthusiasm.", One of the teachers felt a low sense of collegial agency among the teachers; he would instead do it individually.

"I am a passive teacher when it deals with other teachers' practices. I just innovate myself; if they see and then they are inspired, they will find out by asking me." (Teacher 1)

To sum up, the majority of participants have tried to provide social support for their colleagues by sharing their problems and giving positive support to each other. Conversely, statements that involve the perception of the principals got low mean scores. However, based on the statements of some of the participants, they felt supported by their principals, whereas they want to improve their professional development of proposed innovation in schools.

#### 4.2. Teachers' Perception of Their Self-Agency and Self-Efficacy

This theme highlights teachers' perception of their self-agency and self-efficacy. Graph 3 revealed teachers' perceptions towards

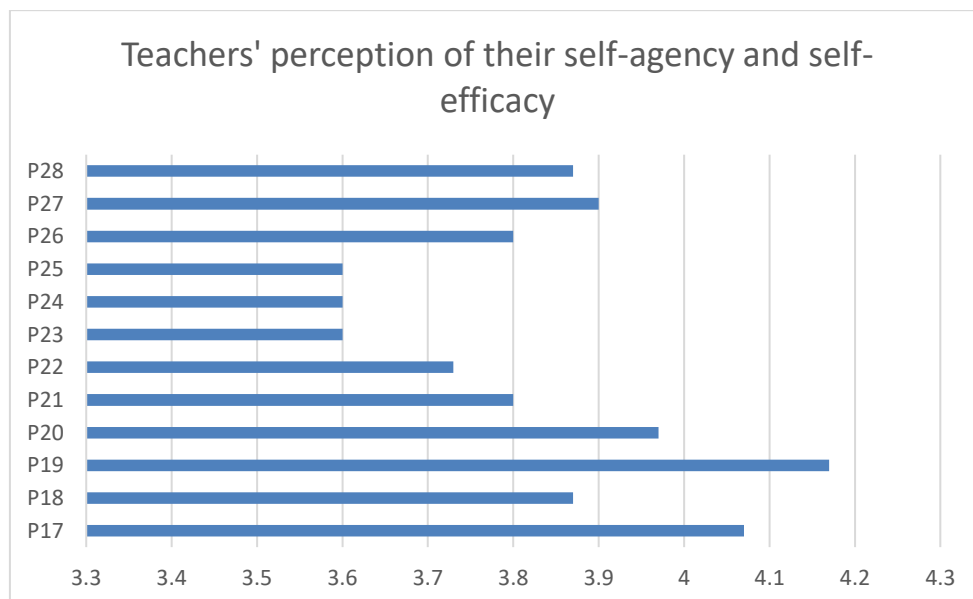


Figure 3 Teachers' perception of their self-agency and self-efficacy

Graph 3 depicts the teachers' perception of their agency. Most of the participants shared strong agreement on P19: "Motivating students who show low interest in school work." (M= 4.17). Teachers like to motivate their students to learn English. The elaboration on how they motivate the students are explained based on the following interview transcripts from some of the teachers:

"...then give motivation by saying that learning a language is different from learning physics or math; there is no right or wrong as long as we try to use English. I always give them motivation during the class and also provide games to invite their engagement." (Teacher 2)

"I try to apply learning techniques, for example, the jigsaw method in reading, using jeopardy games in reading, metacognitive in writing, then using technological tools such as quizziz, word wall, and so on." (Teacher 4)

It is also worth noting that the majority of the participants had high self-efficacy in their ability to develop new teaching materials. It was reflected by statement P17= "I am able to develop new resources" (M=4.09), representing the second highest. The interview session revealed that most of them like to develop their professional practice by joining seminars/webinars, attending international conferences, and pursuing a master's degree.

"What I have participated in was a seminar at the German-Indonesian Institute, then training from Universitas Indonesia. In 2010, there was an overseas program. I went to Sydney, where I gathered with Asia Pacific teachers." (Teacher 3)

"I also made improvements by attending workshops and seminars held by schools and universities. I am also currently taking a Master's degree to upgrade my academic and professional skills." (Teacher 4)

On the other hand, P23, P24, and P25 obtained the same average and were the lowest at the same time; they only got 3,64. Those statements are P23: "I try my best to expand my professional influence in the process of curricular change."; P24: "I make innovative suggestions to implement the curriculum."; P25: "I voice out my opinions regarding syllabus content.". Their perceptions are neutral when it comes to making professional influence or voicing out their opinions and suggestion within the institution. This statement is supported by their statements during interviews:

"...because I'm new, it's impossible for me to criticize other teachers. I just focus on my teaching practice." (Teacher 1)

In general, teachers like to motivate students to study English by providing a link between their interests and the lesson. For example, by adjusting the topics of the lessons to their interests. On the other hand, they did not like to have an immense contribution when it comes to collegial agencies. For example, when they have to voice out their opinion or judgment or make changes that affect the practices within the group or institution.

#### **4.3. Teachers' Perception of Their Aspiration to be Agentic Teachers**

The third theme sheds light on teachers' aspirations to become agentic teachers. The details are as follows.

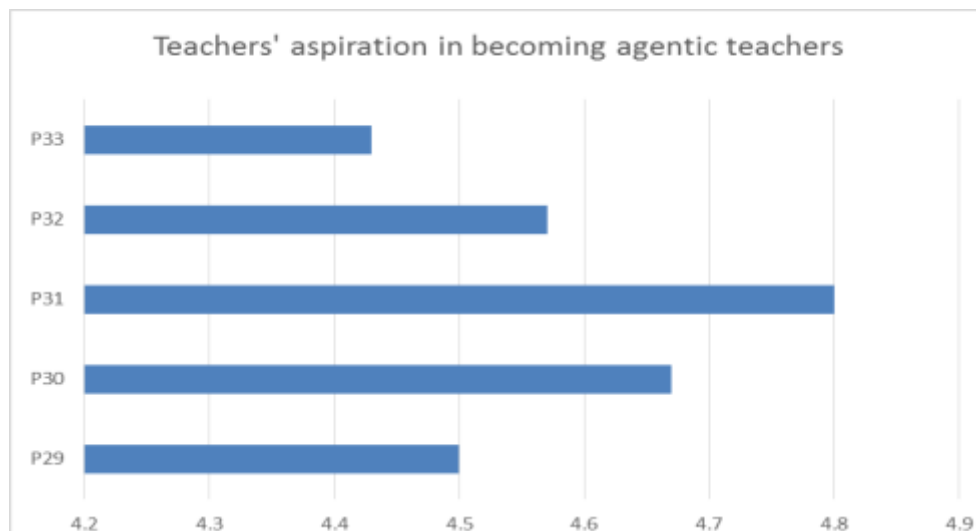


Figure 4 Teachers' aspiration in becoming agentic teachers

The last graph highlights teachers' aspirations. The graph showed that P31: "I wish to be a teacher who makes a difference in students' lives." (M=4.8). What inspires them to become agentic teachers is that they want to have a positive impact on students' lives. However, during the interview, in addition to students as their aspirations, they also mention other factors such as role model and their beliefs.

"The factor is my anxiety. When the students seemed passive, then I made innovations in class, and they were enthusiastic about learning. that inspires me to be innovative and creative, so the students love English class."(Teacher 4)

"From a religious standpoint, being a teacher is a form of worship. The second is to put into practice the knowledge that I have obtained from undergraduate or ppg. I also have a role model who inspires me in becoming a creative and innovative teacher." (Teacher 1)

Similar to the finding showed in the second theme that they did want to voice or make suggestions for their professional practice in schools, most of the teachers also shared low agreement on statement P33: "I myself want to be a very involved teacher ." (M= 4.43).

Based on the data, it can be concluded that teachers strongly agreed that they are inspired by their students and role models like lecturers in becoming better teachers. Furthermore, some of them mentioned the value of becoming a teacher as a form of worship in their religion. However, when it comes to collegial agencies, they more likely did not want to be very involved.

#### 4.4. The Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Becoming Agentic Teachers

To provide a thorough discussion on teachers' agency and self-efficacy, the researcher also explored the challenges of becoming agentic teachers during the interviews. Overall, there were three main challenges they encountered in becoming agentic teachers. The first is related to administrative tasks. One of the teachers mentioned that one of his weaknesses in teaching is administrative tasks.

"The biggest challenge for me is administration. I am really lacking in documenting what I have done, even though it might be needed." (Teacher 3)

In addition to demanding administrative tasks, he also added that students' motivation and English proficiency also became a challenge when he wanted to make innovations.

"...then students don't want to speak English. Building courage for students to be open in speaking English is challenging; they have to find their passion." (Teacher 3)

This statement was confirmed by another teacher that students' passive behavior in the classroom hindered their actions in becoming agentic teachers.

"I did not encounter many challenges because I like being a teacher. So the challenges are from the facilities and the students." (Teacher 4)

The last challenge is related to facilities. One of the teachers explained that lack of LCD and internet connection is one of the problems encountered when he wants to make teaching innovations in the class.

"... however, there are obstacles related to the facilities in each class such as LCD and internet which are not available in all classrooms." (Teacher 4)

## **5. Discussion**

According to the results of the data analyzed, English teachers perceived agency as the ability to give social support to their peers. This finding is supported by other researchers (Fatatin Birrina & Emaliana, 2022; Jiang et al., 2020; Siswanto & Kuswandono, 2020; J. Xu & Fan, 2021) who reported that agency was also mediated by institutional support in the form of creating an autonomous and supportive culture. Together, the teacher and the community build an agency through reciprocal cooperation (Siswanto & Kuswandono, 2020). This finding is affirmed by Sutono & Budiraharjo (2020), who claimed that agency is transformed by a strong culture. Despite their high agreement towards peer support, it was shown that teachers showed lower agreement regarding the collegial agencies and agencies performed by their principals. Additionally, they tended to operate alone rather than as a group, which indicated exclusion and non-compliance (Teng, 2019). This finding confirms the practical dimension of agency proposed by Priestley et al., where cultural, structural, and material aspects play an important role (Priestley et al., 2015). Teachers' agency is transformed by the culture as well as the relationship between peers and principals. Their perception towards their principals, however, needs further investigation considering the results from the interviews that all participants felt supported by their principals. This area is worth further investigation acknowledging the finding of a previous study conducted by Polatcan et al., who found a direct correlation between the transformational leadership practices of school principals and teachers' behavior (Min, 2019; Polatcan et al., 2021). It seems that principals who care about teachers' development can increase teachers' efficacy in managing class and coping with difficulties. These qualities can be associated with the agency.

The subsequent highlighted finding is related to teachers' self-agency and self-efficacy. Regarding self-agency, they perceived their self-agency as the ability to motivate their students. In addition, they motivate their students by providing activities and materials which match students' interests. This finding is supported by Bidari (2021), who found that agency is needed to cater to the needs and aspirations of students (Bidari, 2021). Other studies also

revealed that the teachers' ability to reconcile the contradiction caused by the lack of textbooks is also a form of agentic action. It was reflected by adapting the textbooks, such as adding original assignments, adjusting the textbook exercises, omitting exercises, adjusting their instruction to the test, and managing their classes (Listiani et al., 2019; J. Xu & Fan, 2021; Y. Zhao & Mantero, 2018). Furthermore, this claim is affirmed by Polatcan et al. (2021) who found a significant correlation between agency and efficacy. Teachers with strong professional self-efficacy are effective in performing their duty, applying strategies, seeing the possibility of success, and solving problems (Bachtiar, 2019; Polatcan et al., 2021).

The perception of agency and self-efficacy among English teachers was linked to their professional growth, English language acquisition, and upcoming academic endeavors (G. Xu & Kim, 2022; J. Xu & Fan, 2021). In this study, teachers pursued Master's degrees and joined seminars and training as a form of professional development. A study conducted by Xu in 2021 revealed that Teachers made effective use of the resources at their disposal and used them as chances for their own personal learning, such as participating in training programs and communicating with colleagues (J. Xu & Fan, 2021). This belongs to iterational and projective dimensions in which both past experiences, such as formal education and training, as well as informal professional and personal experiences, as well as long- and short-term goals that are reflected in educational practice, have an impact on teachers' agency (Priestley et al., 2015).

Regarding their aspiration as teachers, they are motivated mainly by their students in becoming agentic teachers. They want to make a positive impact on students' life. They also mentioned their belief and role model as their motivation in becoming agentic and qualified teachers. Teachers' beliefs and values are essential in the construction of teacher agency (Robinson, 2012). Despite the aspiration of being agentic teachers, they did not want to be involved teachers in the school community. This finding supports the result in the first theme regarding the school environment. It was shown that teachers and schools did not show high enthusiasm when accomplishing the job. This finding is quite unfortunate, considering the importance of community and peer teachers to stimulate a sense of agency (Cirocki & Farrell, 2019).

Some challenges were encountered by teachers when they wanted to make innovations in the classrooms. They lack facilities, student motivation, and administrative tasks. This is confirmed by G. Xu and Kim (2022), who investigated the agency of English student teachers. It was found that they encounter conflicts between their personal expectations and the demands of the curriculum, such as those imposed by assignments, teaching inspections, and grading systems. Within those conflicts, they may feel limited by institutional rules. (G. Xu & Kim, 2022). While English teachers in the Indonesian context encountered difficulties in terms of facilities, students' motivation, and administrative tasks, teachers in the Malaysian context encountered different challenges. Unsupportive colleagues play pivotal roles in their agency transformation. In this context, some English teachers receive unpleasant responses whenever they initiate new actions. As a result, they chose to act based on the usual tradition (Adnan, 2017).

## **6. Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore English teachers' self-agency and self-efficacy in their professional context. There were three major themes found in this study. The first emerging

theme is teachers' agency concerning the school environments. It was found that most of the teachers provide social support to peers. The perception of the principal's agency needs further investigation as this study found different results from the questionnaire and the interviews. The second theme concerns the teachers' self-efficacy and self-agency. As previously found from the previous studies that self-efficacy can considerably affect teachers' agency, this study corroborates the findings that English teachers like to join and improve their academic and professional qualifications by pursuing Master's degrees or attending seminars. The last theme is about teachers' aspirations in becoming agentic teachers. The finding indicated that their beliefs and values aspired them to teach. However, the projective dimension, which is reflected in short and long-term goals, still needs further investigation as none of the participants mentions them in this context of the study. In becoming agentic teachers, they also encountered challenges, namely students' motivation, lack of facilities, and demanding administrative tasks. The finding of this study showed the need for the stakeholders and principals to foster agency in their school environments by performing transformational leadership as well as providing more adequate facilities in schools. This study also invites future research to provide further scrutiny of teacher agency in relation to the school context, namely colleagues' and principals' support, as these two aspects affect the ways in which teachers can nurture their agency and self-efficacy in their professions.

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