

# Self-Perception and Teaching Performance: A Cross-Sectional Study of Cambodian EFL Teachers

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined Cambodian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' self-perceptions of teaching performance and differences associated with demographic characteristics. Data were collected through a bilingual online questionnaire from 63 EFL teachers in five private English schools in Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia. Teaching performance was examined across five dimensions: teaching effectiveness, teacher motivation, content knowledge, professional development, and classroom management. Descriptive statistics, an independent-samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used. Teachers rated all five dimensions highly: teacher motivation ( $M = 4.01$ ), professional development ( $M = 4.00$ ), content knowledge ( $M = 3.90$ ), classroom management ( $M = 3.90$ ), and teaching effectiveness ( $M = 3.88$ ). Gender was significantly associated only with professional development, while age was significantly associated with teaching effectiveness, teacher motivation, content knowledge, and professional development. Educational level was significantly associated with teacher motivation and professional development, whereas teaching experience was associated only with professional development. The findings highlight CPD as both professional learning and a potential channel for teachers' input into institutional support and policy decisions.

**KEYWORDS:** Cambodian EFL teachers; self-perception; teaching performance; professional development; teacher motivation

## INTRODUCTION

Teacher quality and instructional practice are closely associated with students' learning opportunities and achievement. Research has identified content knowledge, pedagogical skill, professional learning, motivation, and classroom conditions as important elements of effective teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Saphier et al., 2008). In language education, these elements operate within institutional and learner contexts that shape how teachers plan, communicate, assess, and manage learning. Professional development is particularly important because teachers need opportunities to update knowledge, reflect on practice, and respond to changing learner and educational needs (Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Research from Cambodia and neighbouring contexts similarly points to the importance of teacher knowledge, instructional practices, motivation, and

continuing professional development. Cambodian studies have examined teacher educators' practices, EFL teachers' continuing professional development, and broader teacher-education quality (Chan, 2020; Si, 2023; Sok & Heng, 2024). Evidence from Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam also indicates relationships between teacher knowledge, pedagogy, motivation, and professional learning and teaching quality (Bautista et al., 2015; Hung, 2020; Harun et al., 2025). Yet empirical work on EFL teachers' perceptions of their own teaching performance remains limited, particularly in provincial settings.

The present study addresses this gap by examining teachers' self-perceptions across five dimensions: teaching effectiveness, teacher motivation, content knowledge, professional development, and classroom management. It also examines whether these perceptions differ by gender, age, educational level, and years of teaching experience. A further

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purpose is practical: teacher perceptions can provide feedback not only for individual development but also for school-level decisions about professional learning. In this sense, continuing professional development (CPD) can function as a two-way process in which teachers contribute evidence about instructional challenges, useful materials, pedagogical approaches, and support needs to institutional planning.

Two objectives guided the study:

1. to examine Cambodian EFL teachers' perceptions of factors influencing teaching performance; and
2. to explore whether significant differences exist according to demographic characteristics.

The research questions were:

1. What are Cambodian EFL teachers' perceptions of factors influencing teaching performance?
2. Are there significant differences in perceptions based on gender, age, educational level, and years of teaching experience?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Teaching performance is multidimensional. It reflects teachers' knowledge, instructional decisions, relationships with learners, classroom organization, motivation, and opportunities for professional learning. Murnane and Phillips (1981) distinguished learning-by-doing and experience-related effects, while later studies have linked teacher qualifications, instructional practice, age, and experience with teaching effectiveness (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Fitriah et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2018). These findings suggest that demographic characteristics may matter, but their influence is not necessarily uniform across dimensions of performance.

Teaching effectiveness includes content expertise, organization, interaction, teacher enthusiasm, feedback, and classroom leadership (Donald, 1985; Richards, 2001; Marzano, 2007). Tulyakul (2019) further emphasized goal setting, feedback, interactive learning, simulations, classroom management, and positive relationships. Such work supports a view of effectiveness as a combination of instructional competence and responsive classroom practice rather than a single skill.

Teacher motivation is another important component. Motivation shapes teachers' willingness to invest effort, sustain engagement, and improve practice. Self-determination perspectives emphasize the importance of conditions that support autonomy,

competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000), while research on teacher motivation connects motivation with instructional quality and classroom practice (Perlman, 2013; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The affective dimension deserves attention here. Teachers' motivation can be affected over time by workload, recognition, relationships, and emotional demands. However, burnout and related emotional constructs were not directly measured in the present study and therefore are treated as an area for future investigation rather than as an explanation of the current findings.

Content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge provide the knowledge base for teaching. Shulman (1986, 1987) distinguished subject-matter knowledge from knowledge of how to represent and teach that subject effectively. In language education, content knowledge must therefore be translated into explanations, activities, examples, assessment, and responses to learner difficulties. Technological and pedagogical knowledge may further shape teachers' ability to select and use appropriate instructional resources (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Professional development is most effective when it is sustained, relevant to teachers' work, connected to instruction, collaborative, and coherent over time (Guskey, 2002; Hunzicker, 2010; Desimone, 2009). Importantly, CPD need not be limited to workshops or centrally prescribed training. Job-embedded learning, collaboration, reflection, and teacher participation in improvement processes can make professional learning more responsive to actual classroom needs (Gamage, 2006). This perspective supports using teachers' perceptions as feedback for institutional CPD planning rather than treating them only as recipients of policy or training.

Classroom management concerns the organization of learning, student participation, routines, behaviour, time, and relationships. Proactive classroom management and positive teacher-student interactions have been associated with more productive learning environments (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). At the same time, contemporary discussions of gender-responsive pedagogy caution against assuming that the absence of statistical gender differences means gender is irrelevant. Classroom norms, materials, participation patterns, and teacher expectations may reproduce or reduce gender bias. Because the present study did not directly examine gender-responsive practices, conclusions about

gender should remain limited to the measured dimensions.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research design and setting.** A cross-sectional quantitative design was used. Data were collected through a bilingual (Khmer and English) online questionnaire from five private English schools in Banteay Meanchey Province, northwestern Cambodia. The province has experienced growth in English education in response to globalisation and cross-border economic activity (MoEYS, 2019). The selected schools had diverse administrative arrangements and employed EFL teachers with varied backgrounds.

**Participants.** Sixty-three EFL teachers participated voluntarily. Thirty-five (55.6%) were female, and 28 (44.4%) were male. By age, 11 (17.4%) were 18–20, 32 (50.8%) were 21–30, and 20 (31.8%) were above 30. Forty-seven (74.6%) held bachelor's degrees, 15 (23.8%) held master's degrees, and one (1.6%) held another qualification. Thirty-two (50.8%) had 1–5 years of experience, 17 (27.0%) had 6–10 years, and 14 (22.2%) had more than 10 years.

**Instrument and procedure.** The questionnaire contained 29 items: four demographic items and 25 teaching-performance items, five for each dimension. Items were informed by Shulman (1986), Leithwood and Jantzi (2000), Guskey (2002), Bass and Riggio (2006), Danielson (2007), and Stronge (2018). Responses used a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Five experts in educational leadership and TESOL reviewed the instrument for clarity, relevance, significance, and comprehensibility. A pilot test with 30 EFL teachers led to revisions of unclear items. The survey was distributed through Google Forms after approval from school principals and educational department heads. Data collection lasted two weeks, and completion required about 10 minutes.

**Reliability and analysis.** Cronbach's alpha was .74 for teaching effectiveness, .74 for teacher motivation, .80 for content knowledge, .83 for professional development, .77 for classroom management, and .94 for all 25 items. Descriptive statistics were used to examine perceptions. Independent-samples t-tests compared gender groups, while one-way ANOVA examined differences across age, educational level, and years of experience. Mean scores of 3.41–4.20 were interpreted as high and 4.21–5.00 as very high. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and

confidential, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw.

## RESULTS

Teachers reported high levels across all five dimensions. Professional development and teacher motivation received the highest overall means, while teaching effectiveness was the lowest, although it remained high.

**Table 1.** Ratings of the five dimensions

| Dimension                | M    | SD   | Level |
|--------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Teaching effectiveness   | 3.88 | 0.49 | High  |
| Teacher motivation       | 4.01 | 0.47 | High  |
| Content knowledge        | 3.90 | 0.50 | High  |
| Professional development | 4.00 | 0.48 | High  |
| Classroom management     | 3.90 | 0.46 | High  |

**Teaching effectiveness.** The highest-rated item was “I effectively manage learning activities” ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ), which reached the very-high range. “I use various teaching methods to enhance learning” also received a high mean ( $M = 4.02$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). The lowest item was “I clearly explain lesson objectives and content” ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ).

**Teacher motivation.** The highest-rated item was “I maintain a positive attitude throughout the lesson” ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ), followed by “I feel motivated to improve my teaching” ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). The lowest was “I am inspired by the vision and support of my school leader” ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ).

**Content knowledge.** Teachers rated their understanding of subject content highly ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), as well as their ability to explain difficult concepts ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). The lowest item concerned school-provided resources for improving content knowledge ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ).

**Professional development.** Teachers reported high engagement in professional learning. Seeking opportunities to improve teaching had the highest mean ( $M = 4.10$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ), followed by reflection on teaching practice ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ). Applying training to classroom practice had the lowest mean ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), suggesting a useful area for CPD planning and follow-up.

**Classroom management.** Maintaining a positive classroom environment received the highest mean ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ), while ensuring active participation of all students received the lowest ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). All items remained in the high range.

**Differences by demographic characteristics.** The gender comparison showed no significant differences

in teaching effectiveness, motivation, content knowledge, or classroom management ( $p > .05$ ). Professional development differed significantly,  $t(61) = 5.508$ ,  $p = .022$ , with higher mean scores for males ( $M = 4.15$ ) than females ( $M = 3.87$ ). This result should

not be interpreted as evidence that gender itself causes differences in professional development; the study did not measure institutional access, workload, family responsibilities, gendered expectations, or gender-responsive professional learning conditions.

**Table 2.** Dimensions by demographic variables

| Demographic variable | Significant dimensions                                                                                                                    | Non-significant dimensions                                                                                                            |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gender               | Professional development ( $p=.022$ )                                                                                                     | Teaching effectiveness<br>Motivation<br>Content knowledge<br>Classroom management                                                     |
| Age                  | Teaching effectiveness ( $p=.004$ )<br>Motivation ( $p=.001$ )<br>Content knowledge ( $p=.005$ )<br>Professional development ( $p=.001$ ) | Classroom management ( $p=.148$ )                                                                                                     |
| Educational level    | Motivation ( $p=.003$ )<br>Professional development ( $p=.001$ )                                                                          | Teaching effectiveness ( $p=.074$ )<br>Content knowledge ( $p=.234$ )<br>Classroom management ( $p=.334$ )                            |
| Teaching experience  | Professional development ( $p=.010$ )                                                                                                     | Teaching effectiveness ( $p=.190$ )<br>Motivation ( $p=.145$ )<br>Content knowledge ( $p=.261$ )<br>Classroom management ( $p=.406$ ) |

## DISCUSSION

The first research question concerned teachers' perceptions of teaching performance. The uniformly high ratings indicate positive self-perceptions across teaching effectiveness, motivation, content knowledge, professional development, and classroom management. This pattern is consistent with literature that treats effective teaching as multidimensional, combining pedagogical knowledge, subject mastery, interaction, organisation, motivation, and professional growth (Donald, 1985; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Shulman, 1986).

The relatively high score on professional development is particularly important. Teachers reported seeking opportunities to improve and reflect on practice, but applying training in classrooms received the lowest item mean within this dimension. This suggests that the quantity of training alone may be less important than transferring learning into practice. School leaders could therefore use teacher feedback to design CPD with follow-up coaching, peer observation, collaborative lesson planning, and opportunities to test and adapt new approaches. CPD can also become a feedback mechanism: teachers can communicate which methods, materials, technologies, and institutional supports are effective or difficult to implement, allowing school-level planning to respond to classroom evidence.

The motivation findings also warrant an affective interpretation, while remaining within the limits of the instrument. Teachers reported positive attitudes and motivation to improve, but the study did not measure burnout, emotional exhaustion, workload, or long-term emotional well-being. These variables may affect sustained motivation and should be examined in future research. A broader model of teacher performance should recognise teachers as professionals who engage not only in knowledge transmission and facilitation but also in substantial affective and relational work.

The demographic findings indicate that the dimensions of teaching performance do not respond uniformly to background characteristics. Age was associated with four dimensions but not classroom management. Educational level was associated with motivation and professional development, and years of experience with professional development only. The absence of significant differences in most dimensions by experience differs from some earlier studies linking experience with effectiveness (Fitriah et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2018). It may indicate that experience alone is insufficient and that professional learning, institutional support, and opportunities for reflection may be more relevant to continued development.

The gender result requires particular caution. The significant difference in professional development

may reflect unequal opportunities, participation patterns, institutional expectations, time constraints, or other contextual factors rather than an inherent difference between male and female teachers. Likewise, the non-significant classroom-management result should not be taken to mean that gender is irrelevant to classroom practice. Gender-responsive pedagogy draws attention to participation, teacher expectations, learning materials, and classroom norms. These were outside the present instrument. Future studies should therefore examine gendered experiences of CPD access and classroom practice directly rather than inferring them from aggregate performance scores.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study found that Cambodian EFL teachers in five private English schools in Banteay Meanchey Province perceived their teaching performance as high across five dimensions. Teacher motivation had the highest overall mean, followed closely by professional development, while teaching effectiveness had the lowest but remained high. Demographic differences were dimension-specific: professional development varied significantly by gender, age, educational level, and teaching experience; age was also associated with teaching effectiveness, motivation, and content knowledge; and educational level was associated with motivation. Classroom management showed no statistically significant differences across the demographic variables examined.

For teachers, the findings support sustained reflection, peer collaboration, and active participation in professional learning. For school leaders, CPD should move beyond one-off workshops toward coherent, job-embedded opportunities with follow-up and classroom application. Teacher perceptions should also inform institutional decision-making: schools can gather structured feedback on training relevance, implementation barriers, materials, mentoring, and emerging classroom needs, and use that information to refine CPD priorities. This creates a reciprocal relationship between professional development and policy or management decisions.

The study also suggests considering teacher motivation alongside the affective demands of teaching. Future research could include measures of burnout, emotional exhaustion, workload, well-being, and perceived organizational support to determine how these factors relate to sustained teaching performance. Gender-responsive dimensions should

likewise be incorporated when examining classroom management and professional learning opportunities.

**Limitations.** The study involved 63 teachers from five private schools in one Cambodian province, so findings should not be generalised to all Cambodian EFL teachers. The cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions, and self-reported responses may be affected by social desirability. In addition, the study measured perceptions rather than observed teaching performance, and it did not directly measure burnout, emotional well-being, gender-responsive pedagogy, or institutional access to CPD. Future studies should use larger and more diverse samples, include public and private schools, combine surveys with classroom observations or interviews, and examine how teachers' feedback can inform CPD policy and practice.

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