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# Negotiated Selves: Mapping EFL Teachers' Personality Trajectories for Communicative Pedagogy

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## ABSTRACT

Speaking from an intersectional perspective, the personality of EFL instructors influences the development of personality-specific teaching styles. As such, research has explored the relationship between the personalities of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers and various teaching variables. However, the developmental aspect of EFL teachers' intra-personal negotiations has been overlooked in previous research, despite the potential that tracking teachers' personality (re)constructions can offer a critical understanding of pre-service EFL teachers' evolution over time into effective in-service EFL pedagogues. To address this gap, this study employed a narrative approach to gain insight into a single EFL teacher's retrospective understanding of how their personality evolved over their pre-service and in-service teaching career with the pursuit of becoming an effective communicative EFL teacher. Data was gathered through a self-reported personality document, a written narrative, and two rounds of semi-structured interviews. The data were then analyzed using qualitative data mining and coding techniques. The study found that some pre-service personality traits of EFL teachers act as obstacles to becoming effective EFL teachers. However, over about five years, cultural, pedagogical, and professional factors as some compelling drivers lead to EFL teachers' intra-personality negotiations, resulting in their

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gradual evolution into effective communicative pedagogues. The study also concludes that methodologically, a narrative approach to capturing the longitudinal psychosocial transformations of EFL teachers can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of EFL teacher development.

***Keywords:*** EFL; Negotiated Self; Teacher Personality; Personality Negotiation; Communicative Pedagogy

# 1. Introduction

According to the researcher[1], the essence of teaching lies in the expression and function of the teacher's personality. Additionally, the nature of the teacher's relationship with their students or their fundamental approach to teaching is determined by their personality (ibid). Consequently, over the years, significant research efforts have been directed towards comprehending various aspects of effective teaching, teacher outcomes, and learner-related issues by examining the general personality traits of pre-service and in-service teachers[2–5].

Foreign language instructors are not exempt from having distinct personalities, and it is equally factual that "Every foreign language teacher develops a teaching style of pedagogical activities and techniques that especially matches his or her personality"[6]. Since English is the lingua franca[7,8], there has been a particular research focus on the personalities of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, and research in this area remains relevant today[6,9].

Existing literature indicates that previous studies have examined the types of personalities of EFL teachers, as well as their unique characteristics. However, it is noteworthy that most of these studies are correlational investigations, which predominantly explore the correlational aspects of EFL teachers' personalities and other issues of teaching and learning EFL. For instance, recent studies have examined the relationship between EFL teachers' occupational burnout and their personality[10], personality and EFL teachers' academic achievement[11], EFL teachers' personality, autonomy, and teaching styles[12], personality and EFL teachers' teaching preference[13], and personality and EFL teachers' ambiguity tolerance and risk-taking.

A significant challenge in correlational studies is their assumption of personality as a static entity. However, in reality, personality is a developmental construct that previous studies have overlooked. Personality development involves the dynamic construction and deconstruction of integrative characteristics that distinguish an individual from others in interpersonal and behavioral aspects[14]. The researchers[15] argue that personality development follows a continuum, with variations in intensity and changes influenced by life contexts and experiences. Similarly, the researcher[1] posits that teachers' personalities undergo direction, turns, and modifications during their preparation and teaching careers. Moreover, the researchers[15] suggest that personality has a subjective dimension that can be described narratively. Thus, a narrative inquiry appears to be the best approach to capture EFL teachers' personality adaptations throughout their careers as effective language teachers. Regrettably, such studies are lacking in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap and provide a new perspective on EFL teachers' professional development and teaching practices from the standpoint of personality negotiations and adaptations. The outcomes of this study are expected to have a significant impact on TESOL teacher education, particularly pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' personalities.

## 1.1. Objectives and Research Questions

This investigation aims to understand the evolution of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' personalities, as they adapt and negotiate their character traits across the span of their teaching careers. In pursuit of these objectives, the research endeavors to address the following inquiries:

(a) What particular personality traits do prospective EFL teachers bring with them as they embark upon their teaching journeys?

(b) How do EFL teachers engage in a process of personality negotiation to enhance their effectiveness in language pedagogy?

## 1.2. Literature Review

### 1.2.1. Conceptualizing Negotiated Self

Negotiated self refers to the non-static feature of an individual's identity. The premise of this notion is that identity

is a fluid phenomenon, and it is, precisely, subject to being shaped and reshaped. In other words, identity is socially constructed and reconstructed while diverse social contexts (e.g., a school, a class), within which an individual (e.g., an EFL teacher) lives and interacts normatively or according to the traditional expectations, act as the influencer of identity (re)constructions [16]. The concept of the negotiated self is understood in a mix of some interconnected ontological terms. *Self-verification*, for example, is a part of the process of having a negotiated self. In this process, an individual seeks self-verification of who they are or who they should be according to the preferences of others or perceivers (e.g., head teacher, colleagues, EFL students) [17]. Accordingly, a novice teacher who has been a tacit persona all his life before entering teaching may feel an urge to negotiate his personality and start assuming an extroverted teacher. Another functionality of identity negotiation is *relational enactment* of identity (re)construction. This dimension is the premise of redefining oneself according to the types and dynamics of relationships that individuals are bound by Gelfand et al. (2006) [18]. In that sense, an EFL teacher is a facilitator (according to the contemporary teacher philosophy) in the communicative language teaching approaches. This facilitating role shapes a friendly and open persona of an EFL teacher after all. A communicative EFL teacher aware of this facilitator-learner relational dimension of their profession feels an interpersonal compulsion to negotiate their self if they are not already a facilitating persona. This can be similar to what the researcher [19] calls *the person in the doing.* The third dimension of negotiated self or identity negotiation is self-reflection [20]. That is, the negotiated self emerges from an individual's reflection and articulation of the experiences and learning, therefore, which leads to the individual's necessity of negotiation in personality for professional or academic, or social development (e.g., pedagogical development). Precisely, the negotiated self is the product of ongoing contextual and relational interactions, reflections, and articulations towards learning, development, and adaptation.

### 1.2.2. Personality: The Focus on the Five-Factor Theoretical Model

This investigation into the personality transformation of EFL educators is founded on the Five Factor Model of personality, commonly known as the Big Five [21–24]. This model has been predominantly utilized in explaining personality in EFL/ESL learning and teaching for the past four decades [25], and has been consistently employed to comprehend the personality of EFL teachers in the context of various pedagogical and professional matters [26]. The Big Five identifies and describes five major personality traits, encompassing the domains of "neuroticism," "extroversion," "openness," "agreeableness," and "conscientiousness" [21–24]. Under these five overarching terms, there are several sub-traits of personality that researchers are interested in exploring to comprehend the teaching profession and the individuals who embody it [27,28].

According to researchers [29], "Neuroticism is the opposite of emotional stability. Individuals high on neuroticism tend to experience negative feelings such as embarrassment, pessimism, and low self-esteem" (p.46). In connection with the teaching profession, the researchers [30] explain that teachers with a neurotic personality trait are prone to view job-related stressors, such as classroom disruptions or interactions with students, negatively. This results in stronger feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Regarding extroversion, the researchers [29] contend that "Individuals high on extraversion tend to be sociable and assertive" (p.46). The researchers [31] add that such individuals are likely to appear enthusiastic, energetic, talkative, and dominant. Explaining the extroverted personality of teachers, the researchers [30] note that those with high levels of extroversion may perceive their working environment more positively and may activate more social support than those with low levels of extroversion. As a result, extraverted teachers are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

As for the third personality trait, the investigators [29] explain that "Openness to experience is characterized by attributes such as open-mindedness, active imagination, and independence of judgment" (p.46). The scholars [21] explain that the openness of an individual measures the extent of their interest in aesthetics, ideas, values, feelings, and actions. The researchers [30] further explain that teachers who are more open-minded about their environment or workplace are more likely to view their struggles at school (such as challenging students) as an opportunity for personal growth.

Regarding agreeableness, individuals with high levels of this personality trait tend to exhibit attitudes and behaviors related to social relationships, including tolerance, trust,

emotional sensitivity, altruism, modesty, compliance, and tender-mindedness [21,29,31]. According to the scholars [30], teachers with high levels of agreeableness are more likely to experience positive interpersonal relationships with students, colleagues, and parents due to their tendency to feel warmth and affection. Due to their inherent proclivity towards warmth and affection, individuals with high levels of agreeableness exhibit lower rates of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment.

Conscientiousness is a fundamental personality trait that pertains to an individual's aptitude for organization and planning. An individual who possesses conscientiousness is characterized by their reliability, initiative, sense of obligation, self-control, determination, pursuit of excellence, and competence, as delineated by the investigators [21,23,31]. The researchers [32] explicate that a teacher who displays a high degree of conscientiousness possesses the capacity to proactively alter their working environment, thereby ameliorating the stressors inherent in the teaching profession.

### 1.2.3. Development Trajectory of the Big-Five: The Gestures for Personality Negotiations

Although personality traits exhibit a certain level of durability in the form of cognitive, behavioral, and affective patterns [33], research evidence, such as that presented by the researchers [34–36], confirms that personality undergoes significant change over time as a result of maturation and contextual experiences. The development of personality is contingent upon a multitude of factors, including diverse and fluctuating circumstances and cultures. As individuals progress through various life stages and face distinct life circumstances, they experience a transformation in their personality traits, resulting in a gradual attainment of stability [37]. The process of becoming a teacher is similarly influenced by situational and age-related factors. In the case of educators, age does not merely represent a biological phenomenon but rather an episodic element of their teaching career. The two main stages of this career trajectory are the “pre-service” and “in-service” phases, which denote the “entry” and “development” of teachers as individuals, respectively [38]. As reported by the scholars [39], the personalities of teachers undergo changes over time and as a result of their teaching experiences.

According to the researchers [37], the personality trait of conscientiousness tends to increase from young adulthood to middle age due to improved management of personal relationships and careers during this phase of life. This age range is typically associated with pre-service teachers [40,41], who by middle age have already accumulated substantial experience in their profession. In the field of education, both students' and teachers' conscientiousness or related variables are generally considered to be intentionally modifiable towards desirable outcomes, as evidenced by studies [37] which emphasize the importance of teachers' continued development and effectiveness over time.

It has been posited that agreeableness, a distinctive aspect of one's character, undergoes an increase in magnitude as individuals age, attaining its zenith between the ages of 50 and 70 [42]. Notably, a meta-analysis conducted by the researcher [38] reveals a positive correlation between agreeableness and instructional efficacy, which is acknowledged to evolve with time. Thus, it can be inferred that teachers' agreeableness is a trait that may be modifiable throughout their professional trajectory.

According to researchers [37,42], neuroticism and extroversion, two personality traits, tend to exhibit a modest decline as individuals age. In contrast, the researchers [43] found that individuals who desire to teach exhibit higher levels of extroversion compared to non-teaching students. This finding suggests that the trait of extroversion tends to increase when transitioning from non-teaching to teaching tracks, likely due to efforts to improve teaching effectiveness and reduce burnout. Nonetheless, novice teachers are susceptible to uncertainties and stress-induced experiences that can result in negative emotions such as high neuroticism [44]. However, over time, teachers can lower their levels of neuroticism by cultivating a supportive social climate, developing emotional competence, and striving to achieve their desired level of effectiveness in teaching (ibid).

### 1.2.4. Effective Teacher’s Personality: Towards Effective Language Pedagogy

According to the researchers [45], a teacher's personality is considered an essential aspect of their identity as an educator. Consequently, it is often recommended that teachers be assessed from a holistic perspective that takes into account their entire being to determine their effectiveness [46]. Numerous dimensions of a teacher's personality have been examined in the literature, including psychological aspects, subject

knowledge, pedagogy, and socio-affective skills, among others. The combination of these dimensions can result in an effective teacher being characterized as dogmatic, permissive, direct, concerned, intolerant, frank, nervous, enthusiastic, understanding, and dedicated [47], possessing subject matter expertise, utilizing appropriate teaching techniques, demonstrating content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, exhibiting compassion, charisma, humor, and honesty [48].

Effective pedagogy and personality are closely linked, as noted by the researcher [46] based on the comprehensive teacher traits outlined above. Moreover, the investigator's [49] longitudinal study highlights that a teacher's thinking and perspective on children's behavior, development, learning, and teaching evolve based on personal and professional experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how a teacher's personality adapts to professional development, viewed longitudinally from the pre-service to in-service career phases. The present study aims to capture the narratives of how pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' personalities undergo adaptation as they become effective EFL educators over time.

### 1.2.5. Trajectory of EFL Teachers' Personality Divergences: A Focus on Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers

Considering the recent trends in scholarly investigations, exemplified by the works of the scholars [50,51], it can be asserted that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors generally exhibit the personality traits explicated in the previous section. Despite research examining the relationship between teachers' personalities and various teaching outcomes, such as those conducted by the researchers [12,52,53], studies that explore the personalities of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers themselves are relatively scarce. The investigator's [54] study reveals that the beliefs of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers regarding effective instructors as individuals are influenced by their experiences. Furthermore, their [54] findings corroborate the researchers' [55] suggestion that there is a developmental trajectory in EFL teachers' beliefs about effective instructors as individuals. Specifically, both pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, regardless of their teaching experience, share seven personality traits, namely "patience, kindness, friendliness, strictness, knowledge, giving learners responsibilities, and being loving and caring" [54]. This result is consistent with the researcher's [56] study, which indicates that pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' beliefs about effective instructors as individuals are shaped by their past experiences and cultural background. In contrast, in-service EFL teachers value a more complex set of higher-order professional attributes of effective instructors as individuals, such as being "energetic, humorous, understanding learners' needs, holding positive attitudes toward teaching, having communication skills, motivating learners, being a predictor, being an artist, and having management skills" [54]. They [54] suggest that the development of these intricate, higher-order personality traits is a result of in-service teachers' years of experience, feedback, and evaluation from learners, colleagues, and supervisors. In short, the literature suggests that EFL teachers' beliefs about effective instructors as individuals change from a narrow conceptualization to a deeper, experiential awareness of their personality traits. However, there has been no empirical study thus far that captures the trajectory of personality change in EFL teachers. This is the reason why the present study is undertaken.

### 1.2.6. (In)stability of Teachers' Personality: Conceptualizing Negotiated Teacher's Self

The stability of a teacher's personality is a topic of much debate, with some arguing that it is a stable trait while others contend that it is a changing disposition [57]. This debate centers on the dichotomy of whether good teachers are born or made. They [57] argue that if personality is in a constant state of flux, it would not be useful in predicting teaching success or understanding whether teachers are born or made. However, the researchers conclude that while personality does change throughout one's life, there must be a certain level of stable and measurable personality traits.

Longitudinal studies by the researchers [58] suggest that personality changes over 40 years, while the scholars' [57] study on the stability of teachers' personality found that the personality traits of young-adult, pre-service teachers do not reasonably change during the first three years of their five-year teacher education at university. Similarly, the researchers [59] found that the personality traits of pre-service teachers of special education do not change at all. However, it is important to note that pre-service and in-service teachers are distinct groups, with the latter group having more experience and professional development. The investigators [54] suggest that in-service teachers have a personality that is

shaped by their experiences, which is different from that of pre-service teachers who retain their personality traits from their days as learners.

The transition from pre-service to in-service teaching episodes presents an opportunity for in-service teachers to adapt and develop new personality traits, which may contribute to their effectiveness as pedagogues. To date, no empirical study has explored this episodic personality transition in EFL teachers. This study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the personality adaptations of EFL teachers as they transition from pre-service to in-service teaching episodes. A narrative approach is deemed most suitable for capturing the nuanced changes in personality that occur during this transition.

### 1.2.7. A Brief Introduction to X

At the time of this study, X is 34 years of age and has been serving as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher for a period of five years at a distinguished private school located in the city of Jhenaidah, Bangladesh. X has earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in English literature from a prominent university in Bangladesh, and has completed some ELT coursework as part of his degree studies. Furthermore, X has received basic teacher training known as SEQAEP, which is provided by the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh, and has also acquired two Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs from a distinguished TESOL teacher educator of a university in Bangladesh. During the interview and demonstration class, X's introverted personality was displayed, which gave the school recruiter pause in considering him for employment as an EFL teacher, as confirmed by the school chairman. Nonetheless, despite his reserved nature, X has proven to be one of the most effective EFL teachers at the school, as of the time of this study.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. The Design of the Study

In the realm of teacher and teacher education, the utilization of narrative inquiry serves a pivotal role in comprehending how teachers acquire knowledge regarding teaching through their personal stories or self-described experiences[60]. By means of narratives, teachers are able to cultivate a deeper self-awareness by reflecting on their own past experiences[61]. In line with this, the researcher[59] posits that teachers can retrospectively explain their experiences of developing views about a particular subject and its pedagogy, which other scholars[61,62] agree with and how they ultimately became teachers of that subject. The present study endeavors to comprehend how an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher recounts the changes in their personality and their transformation into an effective EFL teacher. To achieve this aim, we have employed a narrative study methodology. The rationale behind selecting a narrative study approach for an EFL teacher is that such qualitative research facilitates the documentation of teaching practices and thereby encourages the opening up of academic discourses[63]. Narrative data are reflective[64,65] and grounded in individual experiences of a phenomenon, internal or external, often explored using a qualitative approach[66,67].

### 2.2. Data

Following the researcher's[68] triangulation methodology, the data utilized in this study were procured from four distinct sources: (1) self-reported pre-service personality documentation, (2) self-reported in-service personality documentation, (3) written narrative accounts, and (4) semi-structured interviews.

### 2.2.1. Data Collection

The data collection process was initiated with a written authorization from the chairman of the board of management. After securing permission to collect data from the relevant school authority, we gained access to the targeted EFL teacher. We elucidated the purpose of our research and sought the teacher's concurrence to participate in the study. The teacher consented and requested to remain anonymous, to which we agreed, identifying him as X in our research paper. During our second meeting with the teacher, we presented him with a self-reported personality negotiation form. The form comprised five tables, each delineating one of the Big Five personality traits. These tables featured two columns, with the left-hand column representing pre-service personality traits and the right-hand column detailing in-service personality traits. X was requested to indicate the degree of each personality trait using a scale of O (not at all), 1 (to some extent), 2 (moderately), and 3 (to a high degree).

After marking out all the personality traits across his pre-service and in-service trajectory, we obtained the data form from X. The second document obtained was X's written story detailing his personality negotiations during his university graduation and his five-year teaching career. Due to his busy teaching schedule and familial obligations, it took X nearly a month to write the story. In the third phase of our data collection process, we conducted two interviews with X to obtain a comprehensive oral account of his personality negotiations during his in-service and pre-service EFL teaching career. Both interviews spanned over two hours each.

### 2.2.2. Data Analysis

In order to trace the personality changes of EFL teachers, we employed a straightforward text mining method as described the researchers [69]. The self-reported personality data were carefully analyzed by repeatedly reading and representing the qualitative data, following the researcher's [70] method. The lead author only recorded personality traits that were fully agreed upon, while the second author conducted a second round of reading and cross-checking. To present our findings, we organized the changes in personality as binary pairs, such as "solitude seeker" versus "socially posited," and presented them in a tabular format. This allowed us to easily identify key trends, as suggested by the researcher [71]. The results of the self-reported personality data were then interpreted in conjunction with the written and oral narratives provided by X and the lead author. The written narratives were coded following our research questions, and the interviews were transcribed and coded using his [72] qualitative data coding methods. The codes were organized into different categories of initial coding, axial coding, and selective coding, as recommended by the investigators [73]. After multiple meetings for data analysis, the lead author and the second author negotiated the codes and identified key themes emerging from the selective coding. These themes, along with selective narrative quotes, were woven together to create a cohesive story of X's personality changes and his journey towards becoming an effective EFL teacher.

## 3. Findings

The primary objective of the study was to comprehend the pre-service personality attributes that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors exhibit in the context of their profession. Specifically, the research examined the personality traits of a certain individual, denoted as X, who embarked on a career in EFL teaching. X demonstrated extroverted tendencies with a proclivity towards "solitude," "callousness," "social phobia," and "scopophobia." Furthermore, X displayed neuroticism through characteristics of being "stress-affected," having fluctuating moods, emotional instability, and being susceptible to anxiety. X's agreeableness was hindered by their self-focused nature and interpersonal conflicts. Additionally, X exhibited deficient conscientiousness marked by indifference to schedule management, carelessness, disorderliness, and a propensity for ad-hoc activities.

Upon analyzing self-reported personality documents, the study found significant changes in X's extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. The transition of X from a graduate to an EFL teacher, along with the corresponding alterations in their personality, is detailed in **Table 1** below.

The second objective of this current investigation was to gain a deeper comprehension of the manner in which English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators navigate their inherent personality traits in order to achieve efficacy in their profession. Specifically, the study utilized the written and spoken accounts of X, which effectively detail his personal journey of personality metamorphosis, with the express purpose of illuminating the process of becoming an effective EFL instructor.

Upon commencing EFL instruction, X realized that instructing at a private educational institution entailed a colossal workload for teachers and that teaching as a vocation in this domain could be exceedingly taxing. Specifically, to maintain a professional status and succeed as an effective EFL teacher, X transitioned into a stress manager, cultivating an unwavering disposition that is emotionally stable, flexible, and resilient. In his own words, X explained: *"As a teacher of a private institute, I must contend with routine stress caused by the overwhelming workload."* The root of his anxiety stems from the students and the classroom environment: he feels weighed down by the responsibility of lesson planning, classroom management, and the concern that his pupils are not acquiring English language skills. Stress also arises from interactions with guardians and school administrators. X elaborated on this, stating that: *"...because I am*

*under stress from students, I remain apprehensive about the success of all my pupils in achieving proficiency in English and fluency in speaking. Managing six classes presents a challenge for me, and I experience stress when I interact with guardians and school administrators."*

Simultaneously, X transformed his personality as he endeavored to align himself with the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum and methodologies. He resolved to employ Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques and endeavored to exemplify an ideal model of an English language educator and user, thereby ensuring that his students received instruction that was both rigorous and accurate.

**Table 1.** X's change of personality variables.

| Personality Traits (Big-Five) | Personality Transformation | |
|---|---|---|
| | From Pre-Service Personality | To In-Service Personality |
| **Extroversion** | Solitude<br>Callous<br>Social phobia<br>Scopophobia | Social<br>Cautious<br>Conversative<br>Attention seeker |
| **Neuroticism** | Stress affected<br>Mood switching<br>Emotionally disestablished<br>Susceptibility<br>Struggling | Stress manager<br>Mood stability<br>Emotionally strong<br>Easy going<br>Resilient |
| **Agreeableness** | Self-attention<br>Interpersonally conflicting | Attention to others<br>Interpersonally cooperating |
| **Conscientiousness** | Indifference to schedule management<br>Careless<br>Disorderly<br>Ad-hoc activities | Proactive for schedule management<br>Obliged<br>Orderly<br>Preparedness |
| **Openness** | Traditionalist<br>Theoretical | Openness for change, new things, creativity<br>Practical |

To effectively discharge his duties as an EFL teacher following the principles of CLT, X felt compelled to eschew his former traits of indifference, social phobia, scopophobia, and solitariness, and instead assumed a more sociable, cautious, and communicative persona. As he noted, *"Now it is communicative English. To be a communicative teacher, I have to be gregarious, engaging, and articulate. If I were to make errors in my own language usage, it would have a deleterious effect on my students' learning outcomes and potentially invite the criticism of their guardians. I make a concerted effort to converse incessantly both within and outside the classroom."*

X's proclivity for abstract and theoretical concepts can be traced back to his university studies, where he pursued a Bachelor's and Master's degree in English. His inclination towards "theoretical" and abstract ideas was further strengthened during his training as a SEQAEP teacher. Despite possessing knowledge about teaching, X's perspective shifted towards practicality as he gained experience in the field. He transformed into a flexible and adaptable ELT practitioner who recognized the importance of learner diversity and communicative language teaching methods. X transcended his self-imposed theoretical boundaries and repertoire, adopting an open approach and mindset towards creativity and novelty in EFL teaching methods. In his own words, X explained, *"Although I acquired a wealth of theories during my BA and MA studies, I now understand that teaching is a practical endeavor. Not all theories are applicable in my context. My students come from diverse backgrounds and possess varying abilities and learning styles. Therefore, I remain open to experimentation and creativity in my teaching methods."*

X was known for possessing traits of indolence, an inadequate regard for timeliness, and a lack of conscientiousness as a student of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This demeanor persisted throughout his academic years, even until he had advanced into his adulthood. However, upon venturing into the realm of EFL education as a professional, his outlook underwent a transformative shift. X's daily pre-

occupation with ensuring that each lesson was conducted efficiently, achieving all of its intended learning objectives in a timely fashion, led to a marked change in his attitude towards punctuality. Time management, he realized, played a critical role in the successful delivery of a language lesson. As a professional EFL educator, punctuality was of paramount importance. He remained conscientious in his approach, always considering the holistic language acquisition of his students. As X himself affirmed, *"I am keen to avoid any misuse of instructional time, ensuring that every aspect of the lesson is covered within its allocated time frame. Although I myself struggled with time management as a student, I am acutely aware of the importance of delivering a comprehensive language lesson. Failure to teach every component of the lesson could cause my students to miss out on crucial linguistic aspects."*

X's transformation also encompassed a shift in his disposition from a reclusive graduate to a socially embedded EFL instructor. In his pursuit of mastering the art of "whole-class" teaching, X redirected his focus from "self" to "others," namely his students, and crafted a set of EFL pedagogies centered around the philosophy of "no-child-left-behind" and accountability. This resulted in his evolution into a type of EFL instructor who places a premium on nurturing student-teacher relationships, providing support, assistance, and care to his students in their quest for academic and personal success. In his own words, X revealed, *"I eschew solitude and find myself in high spirits as I immerse myself in the company of my students. As a teacher, I never devalue or disparage my pupils, but rather, I go out of my way to lend a helping hand to those who may be struggling."*

# 4. Discussion

In accordance with the researchers[58], it is widely accepted that personality tends to evolve over a span of 40 years. Prior research conducted by the researchers[57,59,74] reveals that personality traits during a four-year college tenure and a five-year teacher education program (BA and MA) in English language instruction remain largely consistent. Our own investigation concludes that X's personality exhibits no significant change during the course of their non-teacher education curriculum for BA and MA in English language and literature, as well as during their pre-service basic teacher training, Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEF), offered by the Ministry of Education. Past scholarship indicates that pre-service teachers, in general, tend to maintain the personality traits that were prevalent at the onset of their teaching career[54]. X's narrative demonstrates that an EFL teacher may enter the profession with personality traits that are inadequate for the effective performance of their duties. Specifically, these might include "solitude," "callousness," "social phobia," and "scopophobia," "stress-affected," "mood-switching," "emotionally disestablished," "susceptibility," "self-attention," "interpersonally conflicting," "indifference to schedule management," "carelessness," "disorderliness," and "ad-hoc activities."

The extant literature reveals that the personality of pre-service teachers transforms as they continue to age within the teaching profession[55]. The narrative of X corroborates the discovery made by the researcher[73] that the personality of teachers generally exhibits a developmental trajectory. X's account substantiates the notion that the personality of an EFL teacher is not immutable but rather malleable. Furthermore, X concludes that the conscious and deliberate transformation of an EFL teacher's personality can be fueled by their professional aspirations and pedagogical commitment towards becoming an effective EFL teacher.

According to previous literature, it has been established that there exist seven key personality traits that are commonly found in both pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. These traits include kindness, friendliness, strictness, knowledge, the tendency to give learners responsibilities, as well as being loving and caring, as indicated by the investigator[54]. Further revelations from X's account confirm that these personality traits tend to change as one progresses along the trajectory of pre-service and in-service EFL teaching career. X concludes that the transition from graduation to profession is a pivotal period that may trigger these changes in personality traits. This finding from X's account is in line with the earlier notion put forth by the researchers[43] that personality changes are commonly observed in non-teaching professionals when they enter the teaching profession.

Previous literature has demonstrated that conscientiousness among teachers can be intentionally altered to align with educational objectives[41]. Additionally, research has indicated that teachers can reduce their levels of neuroticism by fostering a positive social climate, enhancing emotional com-

petence, and striving to meet the criteria of effective teaching over an extended period[44]. Through X's experience, we learn that a pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher who was impacted by stress can evolve into a stress manager by recognizing the demanding nature of teaching in a private school and the challenging pedagogical essentials of EFL instruction, including lesson planning, classroom management, and the responsibility of ensuring English learners acquire the language. X's narrative underscores that a commitment to delivering effective EFL instruction that prioritizes students' language acquisition can transform pre-service teachers who may initially exhibit carelessness, disorderliness, and ad-hoc decision-making into conscientious professionals who are prepared, accountable, and dedicated to achieving superior learning outcomes.

The concept posited by the researchers[43] that there exists a distinction in the personalities of those engaged in teaching and non-teaching roles is further reinforced in the narrative of individual teacher X. In addition, X's account highlights the correlation between a teacher's effectiveness and their cultural characteristics, as described by the investigator[56]. X's personal story expounds on the efforts of an in-service EFL teacher to become an effective practitioner, which often involves assimilating with the TESOL culture. Furthermore, X's account reveals that aligning one's pedagogical practices with the CLT curriculum and adopting communicative methodological approaches can result in a transformation of one's extroverted traits. As X's story illustrates, becoming a model English language teacher necessitates shedding pre-existing characteristics such as callousness, social phobia, scopophobia, and solitude, and instead cultivating traits of sociability, caution, conservatism, and attention-seeking.

According to the researchers[54], prior research suggests that exposure to various parties, such as students, colleagues, school managers, and parents, can contribute to the development of intricate, high-level personality traits that align with professional requirements or a context-sensitive teacher model[41,75]. X's account further indicates that although pre-service EFL teacher training programs that exclude teaching practicum can enhance one's knowledge about teaching, they may also result in theoretical constraints. Nonetheless, through in-service EFL career experiences and practical encounters in actual classrooms, a pre-service EFL teacher who is theoretically confined may transform into an EFL teacher who is methodologically and pedagogically receptive.

A prior investigation conducted by the investigator[49] in 2002 revealed that teachers' pedagogical cognizance of their students' learning undergoes a gradual evolution. X's narrative illustrates a noteworthy transformation from an indolent graduate of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) into a rigorously punctual EFL educator owing to the elevated level of professional obligation inherent in the latter role. X's account further attests that when an EFL teacher may prioritize the achievement of teaching objectives and the advancement of their learners' language acquisition, even an initially lackadaisical pre-service teacher may attain an exceptional level of conscientiousness.

The research conducted by the scholars[76] revealed a positive correlation between agreeableness and teaching efficacy. Correspondingly, X's personal account highlights how a pre-service EFL teacher with a proclivity for solitude and self-direction may evolve into a socially engaged EFL teacher during in-service teaching. X's narrative further elucidates that a teaching philosophy centered around "whole-class teaching" and valuing the diversity of language learners with varying abilities may transform an EFL teacher into a skilled rapport builder and facilitator, exhibiting attributes such as support, attentiveness, and concern for every student. These qualities have been identified by the researcher[56] as intricate and sophisticated higher-order professional attributes.

The above discussion, which highlights EFL teachers' intra-personality negotiations towards becoming effective EFL pedagogues, can be encapsulated through the following diagram (**Figure 1**):

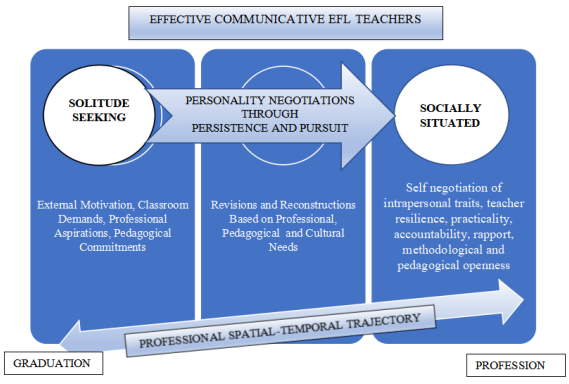



**Figure 1.** The Trajectory of EFL Teachers' Intra-Personal Negotiations towards Effective Communicative Language Pedagogy.

# 5. Conclusions

Essentially, foreign language instructors develop over time a unique teaching style and adopt language pedagogies that are best compatible with their diverging personalities and vice versa. As such, there has been a research focus on understanding how the personality of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is correlated with or intersects with various professional and pedagogical facets such as burnout, academic achievement, autonomy, teaching styles, preferences, ambiguity tolerance, risk-taking, and so on. However, prior research has overlooked the fact that EFL personality is a dynamic construct that evolves along a professional *spatial-temporal* trajectory in response to various life situations, including teacher education, graduation, and pre- and in-service episodes of language teaching careers, etc. Therefore, without considering the developmental aspects of EFL teachers' personality, it is impossible to capture their trajectory towards *becoming* effective EFL teachers.

Thus, the present study aims to investigate the personality traits that pre-service EFL teachers bring when entering EFL teaching and how they negotiate their personality traits during their in-service EFL teaching career over five years. The study is based on the narrative of a single EFL teacher (X) and concludes that his pre-service personality, developed as a person and a learner, was incompatible with the ideal personality prototype in the space of EFL classrooms and school ecology. This internal personality essence of the EFL teacher was not converging as a scaffold into becoming an effective EFL teacher. Many of his personality traits, including solitude, callousness, social phobia, scopophobia, stress susceptibility, mood switching, emotional instability, susceptibility to influence, self-absorption, interpersonal conflict, indifference to schedule management, carelessness, disorderliness, and ad-hoc activities, counteracted in the process of emerging as a communicative EFL teacher.

However, the EFL teacher's narrative suggests that the personality of an EFL teacher undergoes revisions and reconstructions. An intentional transformation takes place seamlessly within an EFL teacher as an inevitable response to the external motivations, classroom demands, professional aspirations, and pedagogical commitments towards becoming an effective EFL teacher. A stretch of the self-negotiation of an EFL teacher's intrapersonal traits initially begins with the transition from graduation to profession. The teacher's resilience develops over time, and the pre-service EFL teacher who was once stress-affected becomes a stress manager. His personality negotiation co-occurs with his perseverance and pursuit of adopting more effective, outcome-based, and student-oriented EFL pedagogy. In addition, the study concludes that EFL teachers' professional development is realized through the simultaneous negotiations and interactions between personality and pedagogy over five years. In the case teacher's professional trajectory, it is evident that accountability of effective EFL teaching transforms the pre-service teacher who was previously careless, disorderly, and ad-hoc into an EFL teacher who becomes diligent, well-prepared, and conscientious about students' learning outcomes.

In order to fit into the TESOL culture of CLT and communicative methods and approaches, the EFL teacher shed his previous callousness, social phobia, scopophobia, and solitude to become a CLT teacher with traits such as being social, cautious, conversational, and seeking attention. The EFL teacher also transitioned from a lover of abstract ideas to a practically fitting EFL teacher with methodological and pedagogical openness, and adoption and adaptation. Serious in-service professional commitment towards students' language learning led to the EFL teacher's negotiation of personality from a lazy graduate to a punctual and contentious EFL teacher. His teaching philosophy, typified by "whole-class teaching" and appraisal of "mixed ability language learners," may cause a negotiation from a solitude-seeking graduate to a socially situated EFL teacher who eventually becomes a rapport builder and a facilitator with support, spreading attention, and care for every student.

These findings may be developed into generalizability through further positivist research findings, and personality as a crucial construct and factor may be incorporated into language teacher education and language teacher development for pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. This study also implicates that exploring EFL teachers' narratives of personality revisions and transformations can be an effective means of understanding EFL teacher development. Furthermore, the study leaves room for further research on how EFL teachers' personality negotiations take place as they gain more expertise and experience beyond five years.

**Limitation**

The study is limited to only one EFL teacher's narrative.

So, the findings do not admit generalization, but they carry the possibility of contextual transferability.

## Author Contributions

The contributions to this study were distributed among the authors as follows: Conceptualization: M.S.A. and A.A.; Methodology: M.S.A. and A.A.; Formal analysis: M.S.A. and A.A.; Investigation: M.S.A., M.H.H. and M.M.U.; Resources: S.F. and M.N.P.; Data curation: M.S.A.; Writing—original draft preparation: M.S.A. and M.N.P.; Writing—review and editing: M.N.P., A.A. and H.A. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Informed Consent Statement

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of the study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions. However, the data may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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