

Comparative Analysis of Teachers' Social Emotional Learning in Iranian ESP and EGP Contexts: The Impact of Experience and Academic Degree

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ABSTRACT

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has introduced itself as a field that plays a significant role in improving teaching quality. Though the issues and topics related to SEL have been individually studied in the realms of English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), there has been little analysis, if any, undertaken in the past between the two realms at the same time. This study investigated teachers' SEL across six criteria, well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning, while considering teachers' experience and academic degree as covariates. This was done by conducting a Purposive and Snowball sampling method on a total of 128 EGP and ESP teachers in the Iranian educational system through the Panorama Social-Emotional Learning survey questionnaire. Descriptive statistics showed slightly higher overall SEL means for ESP teachers compared to their EGP counterparts. With the Trace of Pillai in 2 x 3 x 3 factorial MANOVA, the multivariate main effect of teacher type (ESP vs. EGP) was statistically significant, and teaching experience and academic degree showed statistically detectable multivariate effects, but the interaction effects of teacher type were not statistically significant. Follow-up univariate tests showed the ESP teachers rated higher than their EGP counterparts on well-being, teaching efficacy, educating all students, and school climates. However, differences in teacher self-reflection and professional learning were not statistically significant. The findings highlight the need for targeted professional development initiatives for novice teachers to promote inclusive, supportive classroom environments and improve student outcomes in both contexts.

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Introduction

Teaching English does not necessarily require an excellent command of pedagogy (Richards, 2017). It comprises a complex interplay of emotions that significantly affects student performance and educational activities (Toraby & Modarresi, 2018). These feelings are especially important for teachers because their classroom attitudes influence not only the quality of their instruction but also students' performance and interest (Frenzel et al., 2021; Tadayon et al., 2023). Frenzel et al. (2021) explain that teachers' emotions refer to the affective states experienced throughout their careers, which, in turn, affect various aspects of the second-language learning process. These feelings are a two-edged sword: they may foster a vibrant classroom atmosphere through increased

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student productivity, motivation, and confidence, or, conversely, dull the learning process and reduce teaching effectiveness (Alrabai, 2022; Burić et al., 2020; Chen, 2019). As a result, teachers' feelings and emotional orientations are central to their instructional behaviors and to the relationships they develop with students in the classroom (Chen, 2019).

However, emotions are only one aspect of teachers' social-emotional performance in educational settings. The construct of interest in this case is teachers' Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), defined as a multidimensional set of abilities, beliefs, and professional practices that facilitates effective teaching, positive relationships, and healthy school functioning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Notably, the scale employed in the current research, the Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey, measures teacher SEL across six domains: well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning (Panorama Education, n.d.). As such, although teacher emotion and emotion regulation are pertinent background constructs, they are treated here as contributory mechanisms (primarily well-being and relational classroom processes) rather than as the conceptual frame within which the study is conducted.

A considerable number of studies have investigated EGP teachers' emotions and their impact on the educational settings. For instance, Chen (2019) examined the relationship between teachers' emotions and teaching methods, concluding that positive emotions are associated with more student-centered approaches and that students tend to reciprocate their teachers' positive feelings, which, in turn, leads to greater engagement and participation in class. Likewise, Keller and Becker (2020) and Hagenauer et al. (2015) showed that teachers' emotional authenticity positively affects students' emotional reactions and the quality of relationships between students and teachers, respectively. As they argued, these relationships, in turn, positively affect teachers' emotional experiences, specifically joy and anxiety.

Teachers are advised to use emotion regulation strategies to address emotional difficulties. Such strategies include surface and deep acting, as well as authentic emotional expression, when teachers seek to regulate their emotional states and to initiate and maintain a favorable classroom climate (Han et al., 2024). Such strategies enable teachers to mitigate potential stressors in the classroom, thereby improving classroom productivity (Keller & Becker, 2020). In this regard, Lavy and Eshet (2018) emphasized that positive emotions enhance adaptive emotion regulation strategies, leading to better well-being of teachers. In the Panorama framework adopted here, these emotion-related processes are conceptually nested within broader SEL functioning. For example, sustained emotion regulation and authentic emotional expression can plausibly contribute to teachers' well-being and school climate. In contrast, reflective emotion regulation may be associated with self-reflection and professional learning.

As with EGP teachers, the emotional environment of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) warrants particular consideration for learners and teachers. As a result of the specifics of ESP courses, which concern the individual needs and challenges of specific students, ESP teachers also have particular challenges, which can cause several emotions, affecting not only the choice of the teacher but also the interest and motivation of students in the classroom setting (Zhao et al., 2022). In turn, ESP teachers' emotional experiences are predetermined by the expectations they must meet to discharge their duties effectively.

Although not as exhaustive as the studies conducted on the emotions of EGP teachers, research on this crucial aspect has gained momentum in ESP in recent years. For instance, Nazari et al. (2024) and Zhao et al. (2022) investigated ESP teachers' emotional navigation in response to pressure and their students' interest level. Their results indicated that the ESP teachers often experienced ambivalence, which could hinder their ability to make relevant pedagogical choices. Accordingly, it can be safely argued that ESP teachers' ability to manage their emotions plays a crucial role in creating a conducive learning atmosphere and seems to enable them to tackle potentially challenging situations more effectively (Nazari et al., 2023a).

Nevertheless, when the contexts of ESP and EGP are different in terms of the requirements of their tasks (e.g., field-specific materials, the objectives of learners, expectations of stakeholders), the differences can be observed not only in emotions but also in other areas of SEL inclusive practices (teaching all students), attitudes toward school climate, participation in professional learning, and self-reflection. Empirically, studies comparing ESP and EGP teachers have been more likely to examine discrete constructs (e.g., emotions, identity, or instructional challenges) than to describe teachers' SEL within a coherent, instrument-based framework. This introduces a conceptual and methodological gap: we do not have comparative evidence as to whether and how ESL teachers and EFL teachers vary in the particular domains of social-emotional functioning that current measurement systems (e.g., Panorama) characterize as indicative of social-emotional functioning of teachers.

In the meantime, the social role of teaching encompasses the interpersonal and collaborative aspects of teachers' work, emphasizing how they engage with students, peers, and larger educational communities (Toom, 2017). For both EGP and ESP instructors, the social role is crucial in shaping their ability to address students' needs and foster inclusive learning spaces (Mythiri et al., 2023). Specifically, for EGP instructors, this position entails creating collaborative classroom environments that support students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Farmer et al., 2019). EGP tutors often act as initiators of cooperation and provide a space in which group work and problem-solving are actively practiced among peers (Gillies, 2006). Moreover, their social role plays a significant role in shaping learners' communicative competence and a sense of belonging within the classroom (Farmer et al., 2019).

For ESP instructors, the social role involves working in more specific environments, requiring social skills that extend beyond general language instruction (Ghafournia & Sabet, 2014). According to Orr (2001), ESP instructors collaborate closely with industry professionals and field-matter specialists to develop curricula that meet specific professional or academic requirements. This collaboration underscores the social role of ESP instruction, as instructors must bridge language instruction and field-specific requirements. Additionally, classroom practice in ESP environments often reflects real-life settings, such as workplace collaboration, aiming to immerse learners in practical scenarios (Jendrych, 2013). Professional collaboration is a key social dimension for both EGP and ESP teachers (Ostovar-Nameghi & Sheikahmadi, 2016). While EGP teachers frequently collaborate with peers to exchange materials and instructional techniques, ESP teachers work within interdisciplinary groups (Stewart & Perry, 2005). According to Basturkmen (2014), collaboration in ESP instruction often necessitates an awareness of learners' professional domains, requiring instructors to work alongside professionals to integrate language instruction with workplace or academic requirements (Javid, 2015). Such practices not only enhance the purposefulness of ESP courses but also contribute significantly to teacher development.

This set of social-professional processes is directly aligned with the Panorama SEL domains of school climate and professional learning. It is likely to interact with factors such as teacher efficacy and the education of all students. While previous studies in the Iranian context have explored isolated emotional constructs, there remains a significant empirical gap regarding the comparative socio-emotional profiles of teachers working in the distinct professional environments of ESP and EGP. Thus, the current research is based on the Panorama domain model (Panorama Education, n.d.) and the background literature on the SEL of Iranian teachers in learning English as a second language (ESP) and English as a foreign language (EGP) and explores the investigated variables in six domains, such as well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning, considering the factors of teaching experience and academic degree.

Literature Review

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), an important determinant of both teachers' teaching and their learning, has gained significant attention in recent years (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Teachers' SEL encompasses their attitudes, mindsets, and emotions, which enable them to build positive relationships with their students and succeed in their professional lives (Panorama Education, n.d.). Given the interplay among emotion, teaching practices, self-efficacy, and other factors, exploring teachers' SEL across various contexts is both necessary and justified (Chen, 2019). Related work in teacher psychology also shows that teachers' adaptive functioning can be shaped by context-specific pressures and culturally patterned coping systems, including teacher immunity in EFL settings (Khalili et al., 2025; Zohrabi & Khalili, 2023; Zohrabi & Paydar, 2025).

Teacher self-efficacy refers to the extent to which an educator believes in their ability to advance educational goals and to implement them effectively in the classroom, thereby enhancing productivity (Bandura, 1997, as cited in Ross & Bruce, 2007). This construct, as demonstrated by Baleghizadeh and Shakouri (2017), is strongly interconnected with teachers' emotional states and may be an important factor predisposing its evolution. Further studies have shown that teachers' positive emotions significantly increase self-efficacy and support student-centered classrooms, thereby aiding student development. On the other hand, negative emotions of teachers result in job dissatisfaction and burnout, which have adverse effects on the professional development of teachers and their students' achievement (Burić et al., 2020; Chen, 2020; Frenzel et al., 2021; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Sadoughi et al., 2024). Therefore, teachers with high self-efficacy are better able to manage the emotional disruptions they face across different situations (Saleem, 2011), and a higher level of self-efficacy may be a determining factor in cultivating a positive atmosphere that enhances student outcomes (Burić et al., 2020).

In line with the Panorama domain of teaching efficacy, self-efficacy is considered here as a system of teacher beliefs that facilitates persistence, instructional quality, and confidence in relationships in challenging environments (Panorama Education, n.d.). Because ESP instruction can be associated with field-related discourse, cross-disciplinary coordination, and heightened stakeholder expectations, it may impose distinct efficacy requirements relative to EGP, thereby affecting comparative SEL profiles.

Institutional context refers to the policies, norms, and cultural factors that shape educators' emotional and professional mindsets (Fahinde et al., 2022). This is a crucial factor in enhancing teachers' sense of security, well-being, and identity development in their professional lives (Nazari et al., 2023a). It is important to pay attention to such institutional factors, as they can empower

teachers by providing opportunities to control their practices and emotional experiences, or disempower them and increase their stress (Nazari et al., 2023b; Zhao et al., 2022). These results demonstrate the significance of the interaction between teachers' desirable feelings and the institutional environment, as well as their implicit influence on the classroom environment. In Iranian EFL settings, teachers' reported issues differ across private institutes and state schools, underscoring how institutional arrangements can shape perceived pressures and workplace functioning—key aspects of climate-relevant experience (Zohrabi & Paydar, 2025).

To enhance measurement reliability, the study's primary construct is school climate, measured using the Panorama survey, which captures teachers' perceptions of the workplace in terms of relational, organizational, and professional climate (Panorama Education, n.d.). Climate may produce or be the cause of emotions and processes of identity. However, the current analysis will focus on climate as a measured SEL area that can differ both within institutional context (e.g., one university vs. one institute) and within EGP vs. ESP instructional arrangements (e.g., interdisciplinary collaboration, workload distribution).

Teacher well-being refers to the overall psychological well-being of teachers (Butler & Kern, 2016, as cited in Li, 2021). This psychological construct is significant because teachers with higher levels of well-being exhibit a range of positive emotions that profoundly affect students' engagement and performance, fostering a lively and dynamic atmosphere (Coleman, 2009, as cited in Li, 2021; Hascher & Waber, 2021). Research suggests that factors such as self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and resilience are closely interrelated in promoting higher levels of well-being and increasing teachers' capacity to address challenges (Bandura, 2000, as cited in Li, 2021). Extensive research has examined teachers' well-being across diverse contexts. For instance, Song (2023) discovered that Korean language teachers experience emotional vulnerability due to their perceived lack of English proficiency in the classroom setting. Similar findings can be found in the Chinese context, wherein neoliberal and performative discourses shape the emotional vulnerability of English teachers but can also foster agency for alternative practices (Dong & Han, 2024). Likewise, Talbot & Mercer (2018) examined how ESL/EFL teachers in the US, Japan, and Austria perceive and manage their emotional well-being and emotional regulation within their professional contexts.

The Panorama domain model identifies well-being as an essential indicator of teachers' ability to maintain successful practice. Emotional experiences and emotion regulation are relevant to the extent to which they influence well-being (Lavy & Eshet, 2018). Yet, well-being is conceptually broader than transient emotions, as it encompasses long-term psychological processes that support teaching quality and relational schoolwork (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Cross-cultural research on teacher immunity likewise suggests that work-related psychological functioning is context-sensitive, reinforcing the need to examine well-being within specific educational ecologies (Khalili et al., 2025).

The process of *critical reflection*, which involves evaluating one's personal beliefs and assumptions, is important for facilitating teachers' growth as reflective practitioners (Larrivee, 2000). Reflective practice involves two important processes: reflection-in-action, which involves adjustments during the action, and reflection-on-action, which analyzes actions after the action to improve the teacher's practice (Schön, 1983). They are reflective processes that lead to a more vigorous teaching practice in which teachers actively engage in enhancing their teaching (Hoffman & Duffy, 2016). Such reflection is an essential instrument in the ongoing growth of the teaching profession, helping teachers master instructional techniques, deepen their self-understanding, and

better meet their students' needs (Alnijres, 2024). In addition, reflective practices promote the development of professions by helping teachers recognize the relationship between theory and practice, thereby enabling them to establish inclusive and responsive learning environments (Di Gennaro et al., 2014; Mohammadi, 2023).

Self-reflection is situated within the Panorama SEL framework as an element of professional capacity that facilitates adaptive teaching, ongoing improvement, and responsiveness to students' academic and social-emotional needs (Panorama Education, n.d.). As a language teacher, reflection is particularly pertinent, as classroom activity is dynamic and culturally situated; reflective practice assists teachers in interpreting classroom specifics, adapting pedagogy, and refining how they support diverse learners in EGP and ESP environments. Consistent with this, teacher-psychology scholarship suggests that reflective orientations can be implicated in how teachers sustain themselves professionally under pressure (Khalili et al., 2025; Zohrabi & Khalili, 2023).

Professional development (PD) in education is an ongoing process that enables teachers to enhance their knowledge, practices, and skills to achieve higher student learning outcomes (Parsons et al., 2016). The components of effective PD for teachers are known to be content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation (Desimone & Garet, 2015; Garet et al., 2001), which together contribute to significant changes in their future instructional behavior. A close look at the related literature suggests that intensive, sustained professional development programs that integrate disciplinary literacy with content knowledge can enhance bilingual/ESL teachers' subject-matter expertise, pedagogical content knowledge, and instructional quality (Aguirre-Muñoz et al., 2024). Additionally, Martin et al. (2010) provided evidence that PD programs focused on instructional technology—and tightly aligned with their theoretical foundations—produce positive impacts for both teachers and students. Consistent with other SEL themes, optimal teacher SEL can likewise be fostered among students, extending the benefits of effective professional development to classroom outcomes.

In the Panorama SEL model, professional learning is the process by which teachers engage in growth-oriented practices, collaboration, feedback use, and improvement processes (Panorama Education, n.d.). It is particularly applicable to ESP or foreign language teachers who continually require ongoing learning regarding disciplinary discourse, workplace discourse, and field-specific expectations, often supported by subject specialists (Orr, 2001; Stewart & Perry, 2005). Thus, professional learning is not an auxiliary factor but a fundamental area of SEL, which can likely make a difference between ESP and EGP teachers.

Educating all students reflects the idea that teachers must meet the varying needs of every student so that learners have equal opportunities to acquire quality education, irrespective of their ability, background, or socioeconomic position (Grant & Gillette, 2007). To make education effective for all students, there must be diversification in teaching to meet diverse needs (Ouyang & Ye, 2023). Shane-Simpson et al. (2024) emphasize that the inclusion of such practices in the classroom can lead to the creation of an atmosphere wherein all students feel appreciated and valued. Other studies show that teachers who employ such pedagogy are better positioned to interact with learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Wesley & Donley, 2024). Likewise, other findings propose that such practices could culminate in positive teacher-student relationships and enhance the participation of all learners (Li & Olsen, 2022) and provide educators with practical methodologies for creating inclusive lesson plans and managing varied classroom environments (Leifler, 2020).

The concept of educating all students within the Panorama SEL framework operationalizes teachers' equity-related commitments and inclusive instruction (Panorama Education, n.d.). It is a particularly relevant area for comparing EGP and ESP contexts since both involve learners from diverse backgrounds. However, the sources of these differences (e.g., disciplinary backgrounds, professional aspirations, institutional constraints) can seriously influence how teachers understand and implement inclusion in their classroom settings.

As already illustrated, previous studies on SEL and teachers have primarily focused on the relationship between EGP teachers and their years of teaching experience, while leaving the ESP context relatively underexplored (Baleghizadeh & Shakouri, 2017). The importance of exploring both ESP and EGP contexts lies in the distinct challenges each group of teachers faces in their courses, which require varying levels of emotional and pedagogical preparation to address their unique educational settings (Sukying et al., 2023).

Critically, a lot of the current research on the subject of language education studied emotions, emotion control, identity, or emotional labor as independent variables; less has been conducted comparing ESP and EGP teachers in a single, consistent system of SEL measurement that explicitly encompasses well-being, efficacy, reflection, inclusion, climate, and professional learning. Applying the Panorama SEL survey domains (Panorama Education, n.d.) enables an integrated comparison and eliminates conceptual slippage, as the theorized and reviewed are measured and analyzed. The present study aims to investigate the potential differences between Iranian ESP and EGP teachers across six influential SEL criteria: well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning. The goal is to identify points of convergence and divergence among SEL factors and to provide a nuanced understanding of SEL across these two contexts. This study is among the few efforts to examine all these SEL themes simultaneously, specifically within the Iranian context. The research question addressed in this study is:

“Do Iranian EGP teachers and ESP teachers differ in terms of SEL across the criteria of well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning?”

Method

Design

The present study adopted a quantitative, comparative survey design to look into social-emotional factors among ESP and EGP teachers in the Iranian context. This design was purposefully chosen to allow for a systematic comparison between the two groups across multiple dimensions of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) while controlling for the potential effects of teaching experience and academic degree.

Participants

The participants were 128 male and female teachers, selected from various institutions (universities and English language institutes) in different cities across Iran through purposive and snowball sampling, owing to the difficulty in recruiting ESP teachers. The teachers held BA, MA, and PhD degrees and were selected over three months during which they were actively teaching at their respective institutions. The selection criteria required that participants have at least 1 year of teaching experience relevant to their context. Given the practical limitations of accessing ESP

teachers across institutions, purposive initial targeting of eligible teachers was employed, and snowball sampling was used to recruit additional subjects within their professional networks. Although this was a good method for reaching an inaccessible population, it introduced selection bias and limited the representativeness of the sample; hence, the results should be interpreted as situation-specific and cannot be generalized statistically to all teachers of ESP/EGP in Iran. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the commencement of the study, and the purpose of the study was explained to them to provide clarity on what was expected of them. The demographic details are presented in Table 1.

Regarding sample size, an a priori power analysis was conducted to ensure sufficient statistical power to detect group differences in a multivariate model. Particularly, because the primary inferential analysis was a MANOVA two-group (ESP vs. EGP) test with six dependent variables (SEL domains) and two factors (teaching experience and academic degree). The recommended minimum sample size of a simple multivariate analysis was $N = 120$ (specified by G Power software); hence, the final sample size ($N = 128$; 64 ESP and 64 EGP) was above the suggested limit.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Demographic	Specifics
Participants	EGP teachers (n=64) ESP teachers (n=64)
Gender	Male (n=67) Female(n=61)
Educational background	BA degree= 22.5 % MA degree=69.8 % PHD degree=7.8 %
Years of teaching experience	1-5 years= 42.6 % 5-10 years=43.4 % More than 10 years= 14 %

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

The “Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Survey” (see Appendix), created by the Panorama Education Institute (n.d.), was utilized to collect data for the present study. The choice of this survey was based on its comprehensiveness and coverage of a wide range of themes relevant to teachers. For this study, six themes were selected to examine teachers' social-emotional learning: well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning. The number of items per theme ranged from 8 to 14. Each item was assessed using a five-point Likert scale, except for teacher self-reflection, which was measured using a six-point Likert scale. The aggregate number of items was 57. Reverse scoring was applied to the well-being theme because it included both positive and negative items.

Since the development of the Panorama SEL survey was initially aimed at K-12 education, a few adjustments were made to ensure contextual relevance when applied to Iranian EFL teachers in universities and language institutes (including tertiary ESP teachers). To begin with, the teacher-facing domains selected in this study (well-being, self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning) were conceptualized as general professional capabilities that are theoretically applicable across all levels of education, rather than grade-specific. Secondly, minor contextual wording modifications were made to clarify items in tertiary contexts (i.e., replacing level-specific terms where necessary while preserving each item's meaning).

To address issues of language and cultural validity, the survey was administered in Persian, with a conventional translation and cultural adaptation process. The items were translated into Persian by two bilingual experts. The Persian version was subsequently back-translated into English by an independent bilingual translator. A small committee (two applied linguists and one educational psychologist) reviewed discrepancies between the back-translation and the original work. After piloting the final version with 18 participants, it underwent a series of revisions to ensure maximum semantic and conceptual equivalence.

The questionnaire was then made available online, and all 128 participants completed it under the direct supervision of the researchers. The internal consistency of the survey was assessed using Cronbach's alpha across the six themes, which yielded a value of 0.90. Due to the fact that the survey includes six distinct constructs, internal consistency was also examined at the subscale level. Cronbach's alpha was computed separately for each domain as follows: well-being ($\alpha = .87$), teacher self-reflection ($\alpha = .91$), teaching efficacy ($\alpha = .92$), educating all students ($\alpha = .89$), school climate ($\alpha = .95$), and professional learning ($\alpha = .92$).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. For descriptive statistics, the mean and standard deviation were reported. For inferential statistics, a factorial MANOVA was conducted with two fixed factors—years of teaching experience and academic degree—to ensure a robust analysis by controlling for their potential effects on the dependent variables.

Results

First and foremost, MANOVA assumptions were evaluated prior to inferential testing. Mardia's test indicated a departure from multivariate normality, and Box's M test was statistically significant, indicating heterogeneity of covariance matrices across groups. Since these results point to the violation of basic MANOVA assumptions, the multivariate results are reported using Pillai's Trace as the primary test statistic, which is generally known to be more robust than Wilks' Lambda under non-normality and unequal covariance matrices, especially when group sizes are equal or near-equal. In addition, effect sizes (partial η^2) are reported throughout, and the interpretation is intended to emphasize the magnitude and pattern of the results rather than p-values alone.

The research question concerns whether Teacher Type (ESP vs. EGP) differs across six SEL outcomes (well-being, teacher self-reflection, teaching efficacy, educating all students, school climate, and professional learning). Experience and Degree were treated as fixed factors. Accordingly, the main analysis was a 2 (Teacher Type) $\times$ 3 (Degree) $\times$ 3 (Experience) factorial MANOVA with six dependent variables. To directly address the central research question, the multivariate and univariate main effects of Teacher Type are reported first, followed by Degree/Experience and interaction effects (secondary).

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the six SEL domains by Teacher Type. ESP teachers had higher mean scores across most SEL domains, with the clearest differences in teaching efficacy, educating all students, and school climate. Professional learning was essentially equivalent across groups. The overall SEL score was slightly higher for ESP teachers (ESP M = 3.72) than for EGP teachers (EGP M = 3.62).

Table 2.

Means of SEL Domains by Teacher Type (ESP vs. EGP)

SEL domain	ESP M (SD)	EGP M (SD)	Mean difference
Well-being	3.70 (0.52)	3.56 (0.55)	0.14
Teacher self-reflection	3.78 (0.49)	3.66 (0.50)	0.12
Teaching efficacy	3.80 (0.54)	3.58 (0.55)	0.22
Educating all students	3.72 (0.51)	3.50 (0.55)	0.22
School climate	3.66 (0.60)	3.42 (0.61)	0.24
Professional learning	3.78 (0.47)	3.79 (0.48)	-0.01
Overall SEL (average)	3.72 (0.39)	3.62 (0.41)	0.10

A 2 $\times$ 3 $\times$ 3 factorial MANOVA (Table 3) was conducted with six dependent variables. Because multivariate assumptions were violated, Pillai's Trace was used as the primary test statistic.

Table 3.

Multivariate Tests (Pillai's Trace) for the Factorial MANOVA

Effect	Pillai's V	F	df	df (err)	p	partial η^2
Teacher Type (ESP vs. EGP)	0.114	2.20	6	103	.049	.114
Degree (BA/MA/PhD)	0.174	1.80	12	206	.050	.095
Experience (1-5/5-10/10+)	0.188	1.95	12	206	.029	.102
Teacher Type $\times$ Degree	0.072	1.25	12	206	.250	.068
Teacher Type $\times$ Experience	0.079	1.36	12	206	.185	.074
Degree $\times$ Experience	0.081	1.05	24	416	.390	.057
Teacher Type $\times$ Degree $\times$ Experience	0.064	0.86	24	416	.660	.047

As can be seen, the multivariate main effect of Teacher Type was statistically significant, indicating that ESP and EGP teachers differed on the combined set of SEL outcomes (Pillai's V = .114, $F(6, 103) = 2.20$, $p = .049$, partial $\eta^2 = .114$). Degree and Experience also showed statistically detectable multivariate effects. In contrast, interaction effects involving Teacher Type were not

statistically significant, suggesting that the pattern of ESP–EGP differences was broadly similar across degree and experience groups.

Given a significant multivariate effect for Teacher Type, follow-up univariate tests were examined for each SEL domain. Table 4 provides further details on each dependent variable.

Table 4.

Univariate Tests of Teacher Type on each SEL Domain

Dependent variable	SS_effect	df	MS_effect	SS_error	df	MS_error	F	p	partial η^2
Well-being	1.23	1	1.23	33.00	110	0.30	4.10	.045	.036
Teacher self-reflection	0.55	1	0.55	26.40	110	0.24	2.30	.132	.020
Teaching efficacy	1.80	1	1.80	31.90	110	0.29	6.20	.014	.053
Educating all students	1.40	1	1.40	30.80	110	0.28	5.00	.027	.043
School climate	1.56	1	1.56	37.40	110	0.34	4.60	.034	.040
Professional learning	0.00	1	0.00	25.30	110	0.23	0.02	.888	.000

As shown in Table 4, the ESP teachers scored significantly higher than their EGP counterparts on well-being, teaching efficacy, educating all students, and school climate, with small-to-moderate effect sizes (partial $\eta^2 \approx .036-.053$). Moreover, differences in teacher self-reflection and professional learning were not statistically significant between the two groups. Overall, the results indicate that ESP–EGP differences are not uniform across all SEL domains; rather, the clearest differences emerged in efficacy-, inclusion-, and climate-related dimensions, consistent with the argument that ESP teaching contexts may place distinctive demands on instructional confidence and inclusive, context-responsive practice.

Discussion

The findings of this study support the notion that teaching experience is meaningfully associated with teachers' Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Rather than treating experience as a continuous “predictor,” the present analysis compared teachers across experience groups (1–5, 5–10, 10+ years), and the results indicated that SEL outcomes differed across these groups at the multivariate level. As Amirian and Behshad (2016) argue, experience is a significant factor in boosting teachers' self-confidence and fostering positive emotional behavior. This could imply that experience helps teachers handle their classroom difficulties more effectively by providing practical supports and emotional stability. This point is also supported by Morgan et al. (2021) and Shin (2023), who argue that experienced teachers address both the social-emotional and academic needs of their students more effectively. Along the same line, Wu et al. (2020) and Schonert-Reichl (2017) note that, despite its indirect contribution, teaching experience is associated with teachers'

capacity to support students' SEL in the classroom setting. These advantages, however, are acquired through long-term, consistent experience across various situations, which, in turn, enables teachers to devise more effective methods for addressing and anticipating challenges.

One notable finding of this study is that teaching experience differentially influences specific SEL domains. In particular, experience-related differences were most evident in domains directly linked to professional growth and classroom responsiveness (e.g., teacher self-reflection, professional learning, and educating all students), whereas differences in well-being were comparatively smaller. Reflection can be considered a natural outcome of experience, as experienced teachers consistently reflect on the ways to enhance their teaching methods. The link between teaching experience and reflection is supported by Kheirzadeh and Sistani (2018), who suggest that experienced teachers engage in considerable reflection on the strategies they should employ, drawing on knowledge accumulated over time. However, because institutional expectations and professional learning cultures also shape reflection, experience should be interpreted as one contributory condition rather than a deterministic driver of reflective practice. The interaction effect between teachers' experience and self-reflection is intriguing, as Saziye (2016) found that pre-service teachers reflect more than experienced teachers—a finding not corroborated by the present study. This discrepancy may stem from experienced teachers' tendency to become more confident in methods they have developed and refined over years of teaching and classroom management, resulting in less self-reflection than that of novice teachers, who are more inclined to critically evaluate their practices. Alternatively, it may reflect contextual differences in professional learning structures and accountability across settings.

Likewise, professional learning is a process that improves over time, as teachers encounter diverse pedagogical challenges that require expanding knowledge to overcome these difficulties effectively (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2020). Within the Panorama SEL framework, “professional learning” reflects teachers' engagement with feedback, collaboration, and continuous improvement; thus, higher scores among more experienced teachers can be interpreted as reflecting accumulated access to professional communities and practice-based expertise rather than merely time in service. Teaching experience is also one of the factors that can enhance the capacity to educate all students; as teachers gain experience, they may become more supportive and accommodating of diverse student needs, including social and cultural requirements, which allows building classrooms that can accommodate all learners irrespective of their conditions (Podolsky et al., 2019). Nevertheless, with respect to well-being, the impact of experience was significantly lower than that for other SEL themes. This pattern suggests that well-being is more structurally constrained than skill-based domains such as efficacy or inclusive practice, and may depend on work conditions, institutional support, and broader socioeconomic pressures. It implies that psychological well-being is a more complex topic that cannot be reduced to teaching experience alone (Pei et al., 2022).

The results further showed that ESP teachers performed slightly better than EGP teachers in Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Importantly, the ESP–EGP difference was small in magnitude, indicating more similarity than divergence overall. However, the group difference was more pronounced in domains closely tied to instructional confidence and context-responsiveness—particularly teaching efficacy, educating all students, and school climate—than in professional learning, where the groups were essentially comparable. This disparity can be explained by the specifics of the ESP setting, which is designed to address learners' particular

needs and topics. Rather than attributing the difference to emotion regulation strategies (which were not directly measured), a more aligned interpretation is that ESP teaching may require heightened instructional efficacy and inclusive adaptation because of field-specific goals, interdisciplinary coordination, and diverse learner purposes, which may shape teachers' perceptions of their efficacy and their capacity to educate all students. However, the broad similarity between the SEL profiles of ESP and EGP teachers suggests that SEL is relevant to teachers across different language-teaching contexts. Both groups can understandably benefit from SEL through a more positive classroom climate, stronger teacher–student relationships, and improved learning conditions (Billy & Garrigues, 2021). It is essential to note that the modest advantage for ESP teachers does not justify devaluing the significance of SEL skills among EGP teachers; rather, it underscores the need to develop context-sensitive approaches to SEL development across teaching settings.

Another important finding of this study is the weak association between academic qualifications and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Because the academic degree was treated as a categorical variable, the findings are more appropriately discussed as “differences across degree levels” rather than correlations. Overall, degree level showed limited practical association with teachers' SEL profiles, suggesting that advanced academic credentials may not automatically translate into stronger social-emotional functioning at work. This implies that academic qualifications cannot always be equated with social or emotional competence, due to the simple fact that higher degrees primarily reflect subject-matter expertise rather than capacities such as inclusive practice, well-being, or contributions to school climate. This result should be interpreted cautiously, as the degree may matter indirectly through institutional placement, professional roles, or access to professional learning opportunities. This contrasts with Kheirzadeh and Sistani (2018), who found that academic qualifications are positively associated with SEL aspects related to self-reflection. This gap highlights an area for future research, especially regarding how theoretical knowledge and practical experience interact in the development of teachers' SEL.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore the differences between ESP and EGP teachers across six Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) criteria, modeling Teacher Type, Teaching Experience, and Academic Degree as categorical factors rather than covariates. The findings indicated that ESP teachers demonstrated slightly higher SEL than EGP teachers, although the magnitude of this difference was small and domain-specific. Teaching experience was associated with greater variation in teachers' SEL profiles, whereas academic degree was associated with comparatively limited practical variation. In light of this, teacher educators are encouraged to provide less-experienced ESP and EGP teachers with professional opportunities (e.g., workshops, mentoring, peer observation, and coaching) to strengthen SEL-related professional capacities and to support productive classroom environments. As with all research, the present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Box's Test and Mardia's Test suggested violations of key multivariate assumptions, so multivariate findings should be interpreted cautiously. In addition, purposive and snowball sampling limit generalizability, and the Panorama SEL survey was originally developed primarily for K–12 contexts; therefore, future research should replicate the

study with broader samples and further validate the instrument for tertiary ESP/EGP settings in different contexts.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

The following link provides access to the questionnaire for download.

<https://panorama-www.s3.amazonaws.com/files/sel/SEL-User-Guide.pdf>