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Motivations for and Perceptions of Becoming an EFL Teacher: Adaptation and Validation of the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale among English-Majoring Students in Iran

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Abstract

This study investigated the validity and measurement invariance of an adapted version of the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice scale for assessing prospective teachers' motivations for and perceptions of choosing to become teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Iran. To this end, 173 pre-service teachers who intended to pursue EFL teaching as their future career completed the adapted instrument, named the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice–English as a Foreign Language (FITefl-Choice) scale. The collected data were analyzed using a combination of exploratory and confirmatory factor analytic techniques to examine the internal structure of the adapted scale, followed by measurement invariance testing to evaluate the stability of the model across demographic groups. The analyses supported a parsimonious factorial structure that demonstrated stronger conceptual coherence and empirical adequacy than competing models. In addition, the results indicated that the measurement properties of the scale were consistent across gender and university type, suggesting that the instrument functions equivalently across these groups. The theoretical and practical implications of using the FITefl-Choice scale are discussed, and recommendations for future validation studies of this adapted instrument are provided.

***Keywords*:** Validation, Measurement invariance, the FITefl-Choice scale, Teaching motivations and perceptions, English-majoring students

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INTRODUCTION

Second language (L2) teaching is a demanding profession, and the number of qualified language teachers is declining worldwide (Kissau et al., 2019a, 2019b). This decline can be attributed to several factors. First, many language teachers perceive their profession as highly demanding (Lamb, 2017), requiring them to demonstrate strong proficiency in the L2 while also possessing broad knowledge across various subject areas to ensure effective and engaging instruction (Faez et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2013). Second, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly perceived as a threat to language-related professions (Tavares et al., 2023). Advanced language models and AI-powered tutoring tools have led some prospective and current L2 teachers to question the long-term viability of language teaching as a career. Third, comparatively low salaries, heavy workloads, and limited opportunities for professional advancement have further discouraged individuals from entering or remaining in the field (Sulis et al., 2022).

At first glance, these challenges appear to contradict the initially high motivations and positive pre-service perceptions that prospective teachers typically report when choosing language teaching as a career. If such a discrepancy truly exists between initial expectations and subsequent professional realities, investigating it would greatly contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that undermine retention and satisfaction. The problem is that no valid and reliable instrument exists to measure initial expectations and pre-service perceptions in the field, though other domains of education have long recognized the significance of these constructs and developed robust tools to assess them. Some of these tools include the Motives for Becoming a Teacher scale (Jungert et al., 2014), the Factors Influencing Motivations for Becoming a Teacher questionnaire (Mori, 1966), and the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice) scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012). These tools have made it possible to examine how individuals' decisions to enter the teaching profession relate to their professional identity and to a wide range of teacher- and learner-related

variables across different educational subdomains. Among the tools developed for this purpose, the FIT-Choice scale has been the most widely used in both research and practice. Consequently, it has also been the most extensively examined with respect to its psychometric properties, and existing research consistently supports its reliability and validity for assessing individuals' motivations for and perceptions of becoming a teacher.

Despite the extensive use of the FIT-Choice scale across educational contexts, its application has remained largely domain-general, with limited attention to language-specific teaching contexts. Teaching a foreign language entails distinctive professional demands, including sustained language proficiency, identity negotiation, and sensitivity to global and local labor markets, which may shape prospective teachers' motivations and perceptions in ways not fully captured by generic teacher motivation instruments. This limitation is particularly salient in the Iranian context, where English-majoring undergraduates form the principal group of prospective English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, yet no adapted and psychometrically validated instrument currently exists to examine their motivations for and perceptions of choosing EFL teaching as a career. Addressing this gap, the present study adapts and validates a context-specific version of the FIT-Choice scale and examines its factorial structure and measurement invariance among Iranian pre-service EFL teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The motivation for becoming a teacher is a multifaceted phenomenon. People choose this profession for a variety of reasons, including the desire to fulfill deep personal aspirations, the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in students' lives, relatively good job security compared to many other fields, manageable working hours, and the intrinsic and emotional rewards of working with students every day (Goller et al., 2019; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Watt et al., 2012). For some, teaching also offers a profound sense of purpose or a chance to give back to the community (Leech et al., 2019; Watt

& Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012). While financial compensation is often modest, the intrinsic rewards and long-term stability continue to draw passionate individuals to the profession. Furthermore, people hold particular perceptions of what being a teacher entails. Teaching is widely regarded as an intellectual and noble pursuit that commands respect within society. Many view it as a stable, family-friendly career that aligns with raising one's own children, provides a structured yet creative environment, and carries a certain social prestige (Goller et al., 2019; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Simić et al., 2022). Others are drawn to the image of the teacher as a mentor or role model who remains engaged with ideas and young minds (Leech et al., 2019; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017). These positive societal perceptions, combined with the belief that teaching is more than merely a job, continue to attract individuals who value meaning and contribution over purely financial or status-driven rewards. However, exploration of these motivations and perceptions has traditionally been anecdotal. It was not until the past two decades that educational researchers began to systematically and scientifically investigate the reasons why people choose to become teachers. This shift became particularly feasible with the development and widespread adoption of the FIT-Choice scale. Introduced by Watt and Richardson (2007), the FIT-Choice framework provides a theoretically grounded, psychometrically robust instrument that measures a comprehensive range of motivations, including ability-related beliefs, intrinsic value, job security, time for family, social influences, prior teaching and learning experiences, and social dissuasion factors.

The provision of the FIT-Choice scale has enabled researchers to examine motivations for, and perceptions of, becoming a teacher from several perspectives. The majority of these studies have focused on profiling the reasons for choosing teaching as a career across a wide range of school subjects, teacher populations, teaching levels, and national contexts, (Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Shang et al., 2022; Watt et al., 2012). Collectively, these studies demonstrate consistencies in choosing teaching as a professional path among different teacher populations (e.g., the salience of working with

young people, prior positive experiences, societal status, employment prospects, salary conditions, and cultural values attached to the teaching profession).

In a large-scale, cross-cultural study (Australia, the United States, Norway, and Germany) with primary/elementary and secondary teacher students, Watt et al. (2012), found that pre-service teachers consistently rated intrinsic value and teaching ability as their strongest motivations for choosing teaching as a profession, followed closely by the desire to work with children/adolescents and to make a social contribution. Personal utility values (job security, time for family, and transferability) and social influences were typically rated lower, while choosing teaching as a fallback (last-resort) career was the least endorsed motive across all three contexts. In Ireland, Hennessy and Lynch (2017) validated the FIT-Choice scale with 143 first-year post-primary pre-service teachers. Their findings largely mirrored international patterns: prior teaching and learning experiences together with teaching ability emerged as the highest-rated motivations, underscoring the importance of subject-specific expertise and positive prior encounters with teaching in the Irish system. A desire to work with children/adolescents positively predicted satisfaction with the choice of teaching, whereas selecting teaching as a fallback career was negatively associated with job satisfaction. More recently, Shang et al. (2022) conducted one of the largest single-nation applications of the FIT-Choice scale, surveying 2,618 Chinese pre-service teachers at universities. In contrast to most Western studies, social utility values (especially shaping the future of children/adolescents, enhancing social equity, and making a social contribution) emerged as the most influential cluster of motivations, followed by prior teaching and learning experiences. Intrinsic career value and perceived teaching ability were rated lower. Rural-origin pre-service teachers and females participating in Shang et al.'s (2022) study reported significantly higher social utility motivations, while fallback-career motivations were notably low. These findings reflect the enduring cultural emphasis in China on teaching as a morally valued, socially contributory profession despite ongoing concerns

about teacher shortages and retention.

In one of the studies specifically examining motivations to become a foreign language teacher, Kyriacou and Benmansour (1999) surveyed 83 Moroccan pre-service teachers of English and 69 British pre-service teachers of French using a 22-item questionnaire developed by the researchers. For both groups, the highest-rated reasons were intrinsic and altruistic (e.g., "I enjoy the subject I will teach" and "The language is important to me"). Additional highly ranked motives specific to foreign language teaching included enabling pupils to become more internationally minded and facilitating the teacher's personal involvement in another culture. However, significant cross-cultural differences emerged between the groups: Moroccan participants placed greater emphasis on job security, social prestige, language use, and teaching as a stepping-stone to other careers, whereas British participants more strongly endorsed working with children and geographical job mobility. The authors concluded that, despite contextual variations, intrinsic enjoyment of the subject and altruistic desires dominate the decision to become a foreign-language teacher. Similar patterns were observed by Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) who found that Slovenian pre-service English teachers were primarily driven by intrinsic enjoyment of the subject and altruistic goals.

In a U.S.-based study on motivations to become a world language teacher, Kissau et al. (2019a) administered the FIT-Choice scale to 74 pre-service world language teachers and conducted follow-up interviews and focus groups. Consistent with research on teachers in general, the strongest motivational factors were teaching ability, intrinsic career value, and social utility values (desire to shape children/adolescents and make a social contribution). However, "love of the language" emerged as a uniquely powerful and distinguishing influence for world language candidates. Extrinsic factors such as salary and job security ranked low and showed no relationship with commitment to remaining in teaching. Qualitative data further demonstrated deterrents including low salary, lack of respect for the profession, heavy workloads, and perceived difficulty of the L2 culture

requirement. The authors concluded that recruitment efforts should emphasize intrinsic and altruistic rewards while explicitly addressing love of language as a key attractor for this specific population. These results were also confirmed in an international extension of their U.S.-based work (Kissau et al., 2019b). Consistent with prior research, Kissau et al.'s (2019b) findings indicated that the strongest motivators shared by American (n = 54), German (n = 233), and Chinese (n = 11) pre-service foreign language teachers were love of the language, social contribution, shaping children's futures, and teaching ability; least influential were time for family, job transferability, and social influences. Significant cross-cultural differences included Americans rating most factors highest and reporting greatest career satisfaction, while Chinese participants rated them lowest and were least satisfied; Germans perceived highest salary. All groups viewed teaching as demanding and expert-level but low in salary and status. Studies with teaching other foreign languages have also been carried out in the literature. For instance, Gu et al. (2021) compared motivations to teach Chinese as a second between 325 native and 325 non-native pre-service teachers in China, using a 24-item questionnaire adapted from the FIT-Choice scale, supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Both groups of teachers rated cross-cultural, intrinsic, and altruistic values highest; however, non-natives rated extrinsic value and social influence significantly higher than natives.

Although earlier studies of prospective L2 teachers typically relied on researcher-designed questionnaires that lacked rigorous psychometric validation (e.g., Kyriacou & Benmansour, 1999; Kyriacou & Kobori, 1998), more recent investigations have increasingly adopted the theoretically robust and psychometrically validated FIT-Choice scale (Watt & Richardson, 2007). However, the original FIT-Choice framework was developed and validated with general pre-service teachers rather than L2 teachers. To date, only limited evidence supports its construct validity when applied specifically to L2 teacher candidates (e.g., Zhang et al., 2020), potentially violating the principle that score interpretation must be contextualized to the target population (Zumbo, 2009). One notable exception is Zhang et al. (2020), who

adapted and validated a 33-item version of the FIT-Choice scale with pre-service teachers of Chinese as a second language, identifying a six-factor structure (intrinsic value, cross-cultural value, altruistic value, extrinsic value, fallback career, and social influence) through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Nevertheless, the assumption that the factor structure and item functioning of the FIT-Choice scale remain appropriate for prospective EFL teachers—the largest population of L2 teachers worldwide—has not been sufficiently tested. Accordingly, the present study aimed to (a) develop and validate an adapted version of the FIT-Choice scale specifically for pre-service EFL teachers, termed the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice–English as a Foreign Language (FITefl-Choice) scale, and (b) examine its measurement invariance across gender and university type, given the growing number of group-based comparisons in L2 teacher research and the necessity of ensuring that instruments measure equivalent constructs across subgroups. In line with these aims, the study addressed the following research questions:

(1) To what extent does the adapted FIT-Choice scale demonstrate adequate psychometric properties and construct validity among Iranian English-majoring students?
(2) Does the adapted FIT-Choice scale exhibit measurement invariance across gender and university type among Iranian English-majoring students?

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 173 undergraduate students majoring in English-related programs at state-run universities (n = 94; 54.3%) and Islamic Azad University branches (n = 79; 45.7%). With respect to gender distribution, 105 (60.7%) were female and 68 (39.3%) were male. Their ages roughly ranged from 20 to 27 years (M = 22.4, SD = 1.9). All of the participants self-reported as native speakers of Persian who had studied EFL through the Iranian formal

education system prior to university entry. In addition, a majority of the participants (n = 103; 59.4%) reported having attended private language institutes, where they had studied English for an average of 4.2 years (SD = 1.6), suggesting additional exposure to the English language beyond the school curriculum. At the university level, they were enrolled in one of three disciplines: English Language Translation, English Language and Literature, or Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Only those who had already completed key language teaching courses—such as *Principles and Methods of Language Teaching*, *Methods of Teaching Language Skills*, and *Language Testing* (or courses with similar titles)—were included in the sample. It was assumed that these students had likely given some consideration to pursuing a career as EFL teachers and were better informed about their reasons for choosing language teaching as a future profession. None reported holding a full-time position as a language teacher, although 23 participants (13.3%) indicated that they had sporadic EFL teaching experience, primarily with beginner-level learners.

Instrumentation

The FIT-Choice scale is a widely used self-report instrument that assesses pre-service and in-service teachers' motivations for choosing teaching as a career, as well as their perceptions of the teaching profession (Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt et al., 2012). The scale consists of two primary modules: one measuring motivations (e.g., teaching ability, intrinsic career value, social influences, and fallback career) and the other evaluating perceptions of the profession (e.g., required expertise, task demand and difficulty, social status, salary, and social dissuasion). The validity and reliability of the FIT-Choice scale have been extensively supported across diverse educational contexts, subject areas, and teacher populations (including both pre-service and in-service teachers) in numerous countries (e.g., Eghtesadi Roudi, 2022; Fokkens Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012; Goller et al., 2019; Gratacós Casacubierta & López-Jurado Puig, 2016; Kılınç et al., 2012; Leech et al., 2019; Nesje et al., 2018; Salifu et al., 2018; Simić et al.,

2022). The FIT-Choice scale comprises 60 items: 42 items assessing motivations and 18 items assessing perceptions of the profession. Both sets of items are rated on a seven-point Likert scale. Motivation items range from 1 ("not at all important") to 7 ("extremely important"), whereas perception items range from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("extremely").

For the purposes of the present study, the original FIT-Choice scale items were adapted to better reflect the specific realities and challenges of English language teaching. Specifically, the terms "English," "language," or "English language" were systematically inserted into relevant items whenever applicable. For example, generic references to "teaching" were changed to "teaching English" (e.g., "Teaching English is a career suited to my abilities"), items concerning the subject matter were modified with "language" (e.g., "My friends think I should become a language teacher"), and items referring to the broader professional field were adjusted to "English language" (e.g., "A language teaching qualification is recognized everywhere"). Additionally, because the participants were undergraduate students who had not yet begun their professional teaching careers, all past-tense references in the original scale (e.g., "I chose to become a teacher because…") were converted to the present tense (e.g., "I am choosing to become an English language teacher because…") or rephrased using future-oriented or hypothetical constructions as appropriate. These modifications ensured that the adapted instrument was fully appropriate for prospective EFL teachers in the Iranian higher-education context. The adapted instrument was termed the Factors Influencing Teaching Choice–English as a Foreign Language (FITefl-Choice) scale.

Data Collection Procedure

All data in this study were collected from university students during the 2024-2025 academic year. The potential participants were identified through a network of university instructors teaching in English-related programs (English Language Translation, English Language and Literature, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at state-run universities and various

branches of Islamic Azad University in Tehran and Semnan provinces. One of the researchers personally attended regular class sessions (with prior permission from the instructors), briefly explained the purpose of the study, and invited students who met the inclusion criteria to participate. The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher. Participation was entirely voluntary; students who agreed to take part were given the questionnaire only after providing informed consent. All participants were explicitly assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential and that no identifying information would be disclosed. Completing the adapted FIT-Choice scale took approximately 20–30 minutes.

Data Analysis

The following statistical analyses were conducted on the collected data. First, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to identify items with adequate factor loadings and to inform decisions regarding item retention, guided by commonly accepted criteria for factor interpretability and model parsimony. As part of this exploratory phase, Pearson correlation analyses were also conducted to examine relationships among the emerging dimensions and to evaluate the extent to which theoretically related constructs could be meaningfully distinguished. Building on these preliminary findings, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was subsequently used to test the hypothesized nine-factor model against competing models, with model adequacy evaluated using multiple CFA indices in line with established guidelines. Finally, measurement invariance was examined across gender and university type through a sequence of increasingly constrained models, with invariance supported when the imposition of equality constraints did not result in a substantive deterioration of model fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked to what extent the adapted FIT-Choice scale

demonstrates adequate psychometric properties and construct validity among Iranian English-majoring students. The EFA results revealed that 51 of the original 60 items had factor loadings of 0.30 or higher, whereas the remaining nine items fell below this commonly accepted cutoff (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Accordingly, only the 51 items with satisfactory loadings were retained for subsequent analyses. The retained items, their factor loadings, and their respective factors are shown in Table 1. The results also indicated that the reliability coefficient for the overall FITefl-Choice scale was 0.89, with reliability coefficients for the individual factors ranging from 0.73 (Task Return) to .84 (Social Utility Value); all these values were above the recommended cutoff of 0.7 (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023). The reliability coefficients for the individual factors are also presented in Table 1.

Pearson correlation analyses were then conducted to examine the relationships among the theoretical dimensions of the FITefl-Choice scale. The original model posits nine first-order factors that load onto two higher-order modules, with the motivations module comprising six factors (Teaching Ability, Intrinsic Interest, Personal Utility Value, Social Utility Value, Prior Teaching and Learning Experiences, and Fallback Career) and the perceptions module comprising three factors (Task Demand, Task Return, and Satisfaction with Choice). The Pearson correlation analyses revealed that the nine first-order factors were intercorrelated (positively or negatively), with coefficients ranging from –0.39 (between Teaching Ability and Fallback Career) to 0.61 (between Social Utility Value and Satisfaction with Choice); all other correlations fell within this range. These results suggest that, although the factors tap into related underlying constructs, each contributes unique variance to participants' responses on the FITefl-Choice scale. In contrast, several first-order factors in the original FIT-Choice scale comprise subdimensions. For example, Personal Utility Value includes the subdimensions "Job Security," "Job Transferability," and "Time for Family", and Task Return includes the subdimensions of "Social Status" and "Salary." Correlation analyses showed that most subdimensions within the same factor were highly intercorrelated, with many coefficients exceeding $r = 0.7$ and

reaching as high as r = 0.84 (between Job Security and Job Transferability). These high intercorrelations indicate substantial overlap and potential multicollinearity, suggesting that treating subdimensions as fully separate factors would diminish their unique contributions to explained variance and risk unstable parameter estimates in subsequent analyses (Loewen & Gonulal, 2015). Accordingly, theoretically related subdimensions were combined during the modeling phase to yield a more parsimonious and psychometrically robust factor structure (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2012). Based on these findings, a structural model comprising nine first-order factors was hypothesized for the FITefl-Choice scale and subjected to CFA and measurement invariance testing in the later stages.

Table 1: EFA Results for the FITefl-Choice Scale

		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9
MOTIVATIONS: I am choosing to become a teacher because …										
	Teaching Ability (α= 0.74)									
1.	I have good language teaching skills.	.631								
2.	I have the qualities of a good language teacher.	.602								
3.	Teaching English is a career suited to my abilities.	.457								
	Personal Intrinsic Value (α= 0.81)									
4.	I am interested in language teaching.		.684							
5.	I like language teaching.		.596							
6.	I have always wanted to be an English language teacher.		.518							
	Personal Utility Value (α= 0.77)									

7.	A language teaching qualification is recognized everywhere.	.818
8.	Teaching English will be a secure job.	.760
9.	As an English language teacher I will have a short working day.	.731
10.	Teaching English will be a useful job for me to have when travelling.	.649
11.	English language teaching will offer a steady career path.	.622
12.	English language teaching will provide a reliable income.	.505
13.	As an English language teacher I will have lengthy holidays.	.476
14.	Part-time English language teaching could allow more family time.	.393
15.	Language teaching hours fits with the duties of having a family.	.357
	Social Utility Value (α= 0.84)	
16.	Language teaching allows me to provide a service to society.	.739
17.	I want a job that involves working with children/adolescents.	.647
18.	Language teaching allows me to benefit the socially disadvantaged.	.620
19.	Language teaching allows me to have an	.583

	impact on children and adolescents.		
20.	I want to help children and adolescents learn English.	.527	
21.	I like working with children/adolescents.	.511	
22.	Language teaching will allow me to influence the next generation.	.479	
23.	Language teaching allows me to shape child and adolescent values.	.437	
24.	English language teachers make a worthwhile social contribution.	.402	
25.	Teaching English enables me to give back to society.	.353	
	Antecedent Socialization (α= 0.75)		
26.	My family think I should become a language teacher.		.835
27.	Do others tell you language teaching is not a good career choice?		.774
28.	I have had positive English learning experiences.		.705
29.	People I have worked with think I should become a language teacher.		.581
30.	I have had inspirational language teachers.		.511
31.	Are you encouraged to pursue careers other than teaching English?		.472

32.	My friends think I should become a language teacher.	.399		
	Fallback Career (α= 0.79)			
33.	I am unsure of what career I want.		.610	
34.	I have not been accepted into my first-choice career.		.583	
35.	I will choose language teaching as a last-resort career.		.527	
	PERCEPTIONS: Please show how much you agree with each question below.			
	Task Demand (α= 0.82)			
36.	Do you think language teachers need highly specialized knowledge?			.749
37.	Do you think teaching English is hard work?			.716
38.	Do you think teaching English is a highly skilled occupation?			683
39.	Do you think teaching English requires high levels of expert knowledge?			.627
40.	Do you think language teaching is emotionally demanding?			.590
41.	Do you think language teachers need high levels of technical knowledge?			.538

42.	Do you think language teachers have a heavy workload?	.451	
	Task Return (α= 0.73)		
43.	Do you think language teachers have high morale?		.725
44.	Do you think language teachers earn a good salary?		.685
45.	Do you believe language teachers are perceived as professionals?		.519
46.	Do you think teaching English is well paid?		.463
47.	Do you think language teachers feel valued by society?		.369
48.	Do you believe English language teaching is a well-respected career?		.317
	Satisfaction with Choice (α= 0.82)		
49.	How carefully have you thought about becoming an English language teacher?		.561
50.	How happy will you be with your decision of becoming an English language teacher?		.505
51.	How satisfied will you be with your choice of becoming an English language teacher?		.472

In the following, CFA was run to examine the construct validity of the model. For deeper analysis, the hypothesized 9-factor was compared with two other

hypothesized models: A single-factor/unidimensional model assuming all the items loading on a single latent factor and an 18-factor model assuming all original FIT-Choice subdimensions as separate first-order factors. Several CFA indices were employed for this purpose, including Chi Square ($\chi 2/df$), Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). As for the interpretation of these indices, the guidelines from Brown (2006) were utilized: $\chi 2/df$ values less than 5 show good model fit: SRMR values less than .08 indicate acceptable fit; RMSEA values less than 0.06 suggest good fit; and CFI and TLI values higher than 0.9 are recommended for good fit.

The results of the CFA analyses are presented in Table 2. As shown in the table, the hypothesized structure of the FITefl-Choice scale, comprising nine first-order factors, met all the specified CFA fit index criteria: $\chi^2/df = 3.52$, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.92, and TLI = 0.92. In contrast, both the unidimensional (single-factor) model and the 18-factor model failed to demonstrate adequate fit, as they violated most of the established CFA fit index criteria. Consequently, the nine first-order factor model was substantiated as having stronger conceptual coherence and empirical adequacy for explaining the variance in participants' responses to the FITefl-Choice items. A schematic representation of the structural model of the FITefl-Choice scale with nine first-order factors is shown in Figure 1.

Table 2: CFA Results for the Three Tested Models of the FITefl-Choice Scale

CFA index	Cutoff	One-factor model	Nine-factor model	18-factor model
$\chi 2/df$	< 5	9.17	3.52	7.24
SRMR	< .08	.11	.06	.08
RMSEA	< .06	.08	.05	.07
CFI	> .90	.73	.92	.88
TLI	> .90	.71	.92	.89

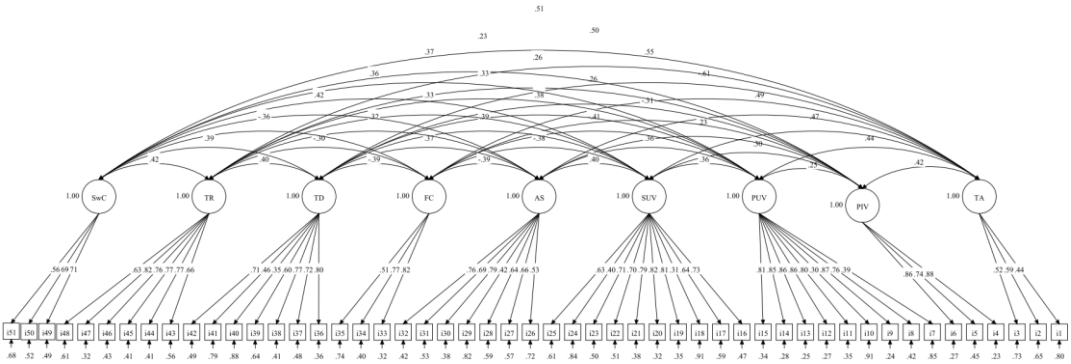

Figure 1: The Structural Model of the FITefl-Choice Scale (TA = Teaching Ability; PIV = Personal Intrinsic Value; PUV = Personal Utility Value; SUV = Social Utility Value; AS = Antecedent Socialization; FC = Fallback Career; TD = Task Demand; TR = Task Return; SwC = Satisfaction with Choice; i = item)

Research Question 2

Research question2 asked if the adapted FIT-Choice scale exhibits measurement invariance across gender and university type among Iranian English-majoring students. Measurement invariance analysis extends structural equation modeling to determine whether the factor structure of a scale operates equivalently across different groups (Meredith, 1993; French & Finch, 2006). Establishing measurement invariance is essential before comparing group means on a construct, as it ensures that the scale measures the same underlying dimensions in the same way across groups. Without testing for invariance, differences in scores may reflect measurement-irrelevant variance rather than true differences in the construct (French & Finch, 2006). In the present study, multilevel CFA (French & Finch, 2006) was used to test the measurement invariance of the FITefl-Choice scale separately across gender (male vs. female) and university type (state-run universities vs. Islamic Azad University) among English-majoring students in Iran.

In multilevel CFA for invariance testing, a series of nested models impose increasingly strict constraints on the baseline model substantiated by

CFA (Luong & Flake, 2023). The configural model tests whether the same factor structure holds across groups; the metric model constrains factor loadings to be equal across groups; and the scalar model further constrains item intercepts to be equal (French & Finch, 2006). Measurement invariance of the test or questionnaire is supported if the imposition of these constraints does not significantly deteriorate model fit. Fit evaluation for invariance relies on the chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$), where a non-significant result ($p > 0.05$) indicates no deterioration from added constraints.

Table 3 presents the results of measurement invariance testing for the FITefl-Choice scale across gender (male vs. female students). As the table shows, all constrained models met acceptable CFA fit criteria (Brown, 2006). The chi-square difference tests were non-significant: $\Delta\chi^2 = 473.9$ ($p = 0.17$) for the configural model, $\Delta\chi^2 = 38.5$ ($p = 0.09$) for the metric model, and $\Delta\chi^2 = 34.1$ ($p = 0.08$) for the scalar model. Table 3 also presents the results of measurement invariance testing for the FITefl-Choice scale across university type (state-run universities vs. Islamic Azad University). As with gender, all models demonstrated good fit according to CFA indices. The $\Delta\chi^2$ tests were all non-significant: $\Delta\chi^2 = 580.6$ ($p = 0.28$) for the configural model, $\Delta\chi^2 = 62.7$ ($p = 0.16$) for the metric model, and $\Delta\chi^2 = 51.8$ ($p = 0.13$) for the scalar model. Overall, these results confirm that the FITefl-Choice scale measures the same constructs equivalently in both male versus female respondents and state-run versus Islamic Azad university contexts, establishing measurement invariance across gender and university type.

Table 3: Results for the Measurement Invariance Across Gender and University Type

			Gender			University type		
CFA index	**Cutoff**	**Baseline model**	**Configural model**	**Metric model**	**Scalar model**	**Configural model**	**Metric model**	**Scalar model**
$\Delta\chi^2$			473.9	38.5	34.1	580.6	62.7	51.8
p	>.05		.17	.09	.08	.28	.16	.13
SRMR	<.08	.06	.06	.06	.07	.06	.06	.06
RMSEA	<.06	.05	.05	.05	.05	.05	.05	.05
CFI	>.90	.92	.92	.91	.91	.92	.91	.92
TLI	>.90	.92	.92	.92	.91	.92	.92	.92

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study set out to adapt and validate the FIT-Choice scale for assessing Iranian English-majoring students' motivations for and perceptions of choosing English language teaching as a future career. The FIT-Choice items were adapted to reflect the context-specificity of English language teaching (Zumbo, 2009), and the adapted scale (i.e., the FITefl-Choice scale) was completed by 173 respondents majoring in English-related programs at both state-run universities and Islamic Azad University branches in Iran. The collected data were then submitted to EFA and CFA to examine the construct validity of the FITefl-Choice scale. The measurement invariance of the scale was also examined across gender and university type to substantiate its suitability for use in group-based studies.

The EFA results showed that 51 items adapted from the FIT-Choice scale had factor loadings above the minimum cutoff. More importantly, the results indicated that most subdimensions within the first-order factors exhibited substantial overlap and multicollinearity, which violated the principle of parsimony in the structural modeling of the FITefl-Choice scale. Similarly, the CFA results indicated that a structural model with nine first-order factors provided a more interpretable fit to the data than both a unidimensional model and an 18-factor model that treated all subdimensions as first-order factors. Previous studies have consistently supported the multidimensionality of the FIT-Choice scale. However, the majority of studies in general education have favored a structural interpretation in which all subdimensions are modeled as first-order factors. This divergence between the structural interpretations of the FITefl-Choice scale and the original FIT-Choice scale may be attributed to the ecology of the L2 teaching profession. It is hypothesized that, for many student participants in Iran, becoming an English teacher is simultaneously perceived as a respected and skilled occupation, a secure fallback option when alternative employment opportunities are limited, and a demanding career characterized by long working hours and modest pay (Karimpour et al., 2024; Kazemi, 2024). Owing to these shared perceptions, participants tended to

provide highly similar responses to items that the original FIT-Choice scale conceptualizes as distinct constructs (e.g., items related to social status and salary, and those related to social equity and social influence).

As a result, these constructs did not emerge as clearly differentiated dimensions in the present data. The notion that the motivational structure underlying entry into the L2 teaching profession may differ from that associated with teaching other subject areas (e.g., Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012; Goller et al., 2019; Hennessy & Lynch, 2017; Nesje et al., 2018; Watt et al., 2012) is further supported by Zhang et al. (2020), who validated the FIT-Choice scale among pre-service teachers of Chinese as a second language (CSL). Although Zhang et al. (2020) identified a six-factor structure for the FIT-Choice scale in the CSL context, the commonality between their findings and those of the present study lies in the support for a more parsimonious structural solution in L2 teaching contexts, whereby first-order factors, rather than their subdimensions, are treated as distinct constructs. This approach allows for a simpler and psychometrically robust factor structure. Finally, the results of the measurement invariance analyses indicated that the nine-factor structure of the FITefl-Choice scale assesses equivalent constructs among prospective EFL teachers across gender and university type, thereby substantiating the validity of the scale for use in group-based comparative studies involving these variables.

The instrument adapted and validated in the present study is of significance for both practice and research in L2 teaching and teacher education. The FITefl-Choice scale can be used to identify highly motivated teacher students who are more likely to pursue the EFL teaching profession over longer periods and are less likely to leave their chosen career. Educational systems, both private and state-run, are facing increasing challenges in recruiting language teachers (Kissau et al., 2019a, 2019b); therefore, instruments that can support this agenda are greatly needed. In addition, the validated instrument can be used to trace changes in EFL teachers' motivations and perceptions of EFL teaching across their career trajectories, thereby informing more evidence-based decisions regarding the

retention of EFL teaching staff. From a research perspective, the FITefl-Choice scale can serve as a valuable tool for examining relationships between prospective teachers' initial motivations for and perceptions of EFL teaching and a wide range of teaching-related variables, such as L2 teachers' life satisfaction, emotional experiences, job burnout, grit, self-efficacy, professional identity, and instructional engagement. Owing to the lack of valid and reliable instruments, previous studies investigating the relationship between L2 teaching motivation and other teaching-related variables have often overlooked EFL teachers' initial attitudes toward EFL teaching. As a result, their conclusions have been limited in explaining the processes underlying the observed relationships; the FITefl-Choice scale can help address this limitation by capturing these initial motivational and perceptual processes.

Future research could further strengthen and expand the validation of the FITefl-Choice scale in several ways. First, it is recommended that the criterion-related validity of the scale be examined by comparing it with theoretically related and divergent constructs, such as L2 teacher attitudes, anxiety, job satisfaction, and wellbeing. Second, evidence regarding the test-retest reliability of the instrument would be valuable, particularly for studies investigating changes in teacher and learner variables (e.g., motivation, emotions, job satisfaction, burnout, wellbeing) over time or following interventions. Establishing temporal stability is crucial for using the scale in longitudinal or intervention-based research. Third, while the present study examined measurement invariance across gender and university type, future studies could extend invariance testing to additional variables, such as pre-service versus in-service teachers, educational background, and language proficiency, to further support the generalizability of the scale across different groups. Fourth, other robust statistical techniques, including Rasch modeling, could complement factor analysis to provide additional evidence on item functioning and scale validity. Finally, we acknowledge that the sample size in the present study was relatively modest compared to some larger-scale validation studies. Future research could employ larger and more diverse

samples to enhance the generalizability and robustness of the FITefl-Choice scale. Such studies would provide stronger evidence for the reliability and validity of the instrument and support its use in a broader range of L2 teaching contexts.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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