# Designing and Validating a Professional Identity Model for Iranian EFL Experienced and Novice Teachers: A Sequential Exploratory Mixed-Methods Research

Neda Shahmoradi[1] , Fazlolah Samimi[2] , Farah Shooraki[3]

[1]PhD Candidate, Department of English, Maybod Branch, Islamic Azad University, Maybod, Iran.
*nedashahmoradi8433@gmail.com*

[2]Corresponding author, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Bandar-Abbas Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bandar-Abbas, Iran.
*fazl.samimi67@gmail.com*

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of English, Maybod Branch, Islamic Azad University, Maybod, Iran.
*f.shooraki@gmail.com*

| Article info | Abstract |
|---|---|
| **Article type:** Research article | **Abstract** |
| | Professional identity is considered as one of the main mechanisms of each educational system including English language teaching (ELT) in Iran. The primary intention of this exploration was to devise qualitative and quantitative modeling of EFL teachers' professional identity. In so doing, it benefited from a sequential mixed methods design. As the study sample, three groups of participants were selected. The first cluster comprised 50 male and female (25 novice and 25 experienced) EFL teachers who were interviewed in the qualitative segment for the purpose of model development. The second group included 100 male and female (50 novice and 50 experienced) EFL teachers who partook in the pilot study (i.e., exploratory factor analysis). The third group included 300 male and female (150 novice and 150 experienced) EFL teachers who participated in the quantitative section of the study (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis). All three groups were selected using convenience sampling. To collect the data, a semi-structured interview and a researcher-made questionnaire were used. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) (using exploratory confirmatory factor analysis), and Cronbach's alpha test. The results of data analysis led to the proposition of a qualitative and a quantitative model of professional identity. As shown by the results, the proposed qualitative and quantitative models consist of two main categories. Moreover, the results showed that the proposed models enjoy an acceptable level of validity and reliability and hence have certain implications for the field of ELT.

***Keywords:*** *Identity, Professional Development, Professional Identity, Teacher Professional Identity* |

# 1. Introduction

Professional identity is considered as one of the main modules of each pedagogical setting including English language teaching (ELT) in Iran (Sadeghi & Sahragard, 2016). The last two decades have been characterized by taking the notion of identity construction of teachers into account (Sadeghi & Sahragard, 2016).

According to Kumaravadivelu (2012), Acquiring a holistic comprehension of their professional identity, convictions, and principles is crucial for teachers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their teaching persona. This implies that professional identity and teachers' role in teaching are closely interrelated. The trend of research on effective teaching has moved from the emphasis on certain behaviors and competencies of teachers to teacher self, cognition, beliefs, and professional identity that determine their behavior in the classroom (Han, 2016; Karimi & Mofidi, 2019). In other words, in recent years, not only is effective teaching associated with certain competencies, characteristics, and behaviors of teachers, but also the emphasis is on some other notions which play an important role in effective teaching, among which professional identity can be mentioned.

Moreover, the importance of teacher professional identity is prevalently observed in the recent trend taken by ELT researchers in general and teacher education researchers in particular (Rots et al., 2013). Some studies have suggested that learning to teach is more about developing a professional identity than acquiring knowledge (Nguyen, 2008).

Gradually, this notion found its way into research in the field, and consequently concerns about it increased. He and Lin (2013) defined teacher professional identity as teachers' professional self-concept and their professional self-perception as educators. Teachers' professional identity is of a paramount role in their interpretation of the curriculum and textbooks, teaching styles, and understanding students' learning (Caihong, 2011). As Burn (2007) argued, At the core of teaching practice and professional dedication lies the professional identity of educators. Caihong (2011) further suggested that exploring teachers' professional identity can make great contributions to the transformation of curriculum, teaching in the classroom, and the learning of students. The above arguments show that EFL teacher identity is of significance in the ELT field. Accordingly, it has been touched on in previous studies from different angles. However, upon examining the existing literature, it becomes apparent that a significant body of research has been done with respect to the professional identity of EFL teachers (e.g., Davaribina & Fanaee, 2021; Gholamshahi et al., 2021; Gracia et al., 2021; He & Lin, 2013; Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Khodamoradi et al., 2021; Meihami, 2021; Parsi & Ashraf, 2020; Riahipour et al., 2020; Saphier & West, 2009).

Despite a plethora of studies on professional identity, scant consideration has been given to an Iranian model of professional identity that goes through a qualitative base on which an instrument would be developed and tested to build a model, taking the amount of their teaching experience into account.

For instance, in the context of Iran, Khodamoradi et al. (2021) developed and validated a survey to measure EFL potential teachers' professional identity. This study just used the related literature and the previously developed professional identity scales as the main data for the questionnaire development. Moreover, as the title speaks for itself, as the evidence of neglecting the role of teaching experience, the target population of this study has been EFL prospective teachers. In another similar local study, Gholamshahi et al. (2021) developed and validated an EFL teacher-imposed identity questionnaire based on the existing literature and interviews. This study has been delimited to imposed identity. Furthermore, in the foreign context, in the study by Gracia et al. (2021), a questionnaire was developed for the assessment of pre-service teachers' professional identity. This is also a clear case of inattention to the role of teaching experience in forming EFL teachers' professional identity. Additionally, no model development goal was sought in this study.

Given that teaching experience is of significance in the professional identity construction of teachers, and with a view to the important role of the professional identity of teachers in teacher effectiveness and consequently students' learning, this research gap is worth addressing. This seems more necessary when we refer to the argument that professional identity development improves teachers' self-assessment and gives them a better image of themselves (Heidari & Rezaei, 2013). These circumstances prompted the researchers to undertake the study with the main aim of qualitative and quantitative modeling EFL teachers' professional identity formulating the following research questions:

Research question 1. What Iranian model of professional identity for novice and experienced EFL teachers appears through qualitative data?

Research question 2. What model of professional identity for Iranian EFL experienced and novice teachers finds fit indices through numerical data?

This inquiry in Iran highlights the prominence of considering how teachers perceive themselves in their profession. The qualitative and quantitative models proposed can serve as a guide for teacher training programs and professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing EFL teachers' identity and performance.

One possible contribution to the field of EFL teaching or education more broadly is the integration of professional identity development into teacher

education curricula. By including activities and reflection exercises that promote self-awareness and self-evaluation, future teachers can be better equipped to navigate the challenges of the field and establish a strong sense of professional identity.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Teacher Professional Identity

For many years, Scholars have become intrigued by the notion of professional identity and researchers' attention across a broad spectrum of domains related to education.; however, there is no universally acknowledged definition of it in the field. (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). After reviewing twenty-two articles linked with professional identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) divided professional identity inquiries into three clusters: a) research studies concentrated on its construction, b) research studies concentrated on its features, and c) research studies concentrated on teachers' narratives about their professional identity. Professional identity is a construct that accounts for what a teacher perceives of himself in his profession and his interactions with others. It is the result of the dynamic interaction between personal and environmental factors, encompassing various societal connections. (Danielewicz, 2001). This shows that professional identity is centralized around social interactions. Further, as put forth by Gee (2001), professional identity is built upon teachers' inner state and their practices.

Professional identity cannot be conceived in the absence of dynamicity and plurality since they form the personality and what is generated through social activities (Varghese et al., 2005). In addition, Gee (2001) believes that a teacher's professional identity could be shaped and re-shaped based on the way she/he acts in a specific context and others react to her/his actions. Besides, professional identity is the outcome of one's professional aspects that represent how a teacher shows himself as a teacher in the teaching profession (Beijaard et al., 2000, 2004).

What is more, teachers' professional identity has flow. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2000), this implies that teachers' professional identities are shaped by their personal histories, their current teaching practices, and their hopes and dreams for the future. Stated differently, professional identity is a constantly evolving and ever-developing construct which involves thinking about one's past experiences, present practices, and future goals. (Varghese et al., 2005).

Conventionally, the knowledge of the subject matter by the teacher is a pertinent segment of an instructor's professional knowledge core (Beijaard et al., 2000). Subject matter expertise as the identity would be highly critical for teachers. It means that it is essential for teachers to have mastery over the domain they teach.

This knowledge entails having a profound and comprehensive perception of the concepts taught to learners and their connections. By mastery over the subject area, teachers would be able to modify curriculum and educational programs, generate productive exercises and assignments, describe things exhaustively, identify students' strengths and weaknesses, and address learners' misconceptions appropriately (Beijaard et al., 2004). Furthermore, mastery over the subject area permits teachers to have productive interactions with learners, encourage them to participate in the lessons actively, and provide clear answers to any subject-related questions being raised by students (Hotaman, 2010). Therefore, researchers in the domain of education strongly argue that teachers must acquire subject matter knowledge during teacher training programs and before becoming a teacher (Bennett & Carre, 1993).

According to Gee (2001), discourse identity underlies that a person is identified as a specific individual due to her achievements and acceptance by other people. Therefore, to be recognized as a teacher, an individual must participate in teacher education programs and obtain certification; then, people would recognize him/her as a teacher possessing knowledge in a particular subject area and is authorized to step into the classroom and practice the teaching profession.

Pedagogical expertise means the teacher's knowledge, which helps him perceive issues related to non-technical and instrumental actions that lead to students' knowledge acquisition (Beijaard et al., 2000). In other words, teaching is not merely about knowledge transmission and teachers should utilize their skills to consider their students' moral and ethical dimensions. Hence, acquiring such expertise is essential for teachers since ethical, social, and emotional dilemmas are things teachers progressively encounter in postmodern societies.

According to Gee (2001), institutional identity refers to "how actively or passively the occupant of a position fulfills his role" (p. 103). In other words, regarding institutional identity, teachers, as occupants of the educational institute, actively perform their responsibilities regarding developing their students' moral, social, and emotional dimensions and developing their academic knowledge (Gee, 2001).

In addition, according to Beijaard et al. (2000), teachers have the required skills and knowledge for performing and accelerating learning tasks by attaining didactical expertise. In other words, these skills help teachers to prepare, implement and assess learning tasks. This knowledge promotes the transfer of knowledge efficiently and directs teachers towards process-oriented teaching in which students are actively involved knowledge construction and utilization (Vermunt & Verschaffel, 2000). So, attaining didactical expertise is assumed crucial in impacting teachers' insights about professional identity.

Teachers, as didactical experts, try to deal with the organization of teaching-learning activities. Stenberg et al. (2014) studied teachers' identities through the lens of didactical position. They believed that teachers should orchestrate and encourage student learning. Regarding 'orchestrating position', teachers should learn how to organize their teaching activities to support students learning. The teacher is a facilitator and should be aware of different ways that he can use to create an environment that leads to productive interaction among learners. Teachers consider students' diverse learning styles and use various methods to accommodate individual differences.

Regarding the 'encouraging position', teachers are motivators. In other words, in order to accomplish meaningful learning, they motivate and inspire students. They try to make learning processes a pleasant experience for students and encourage them to want knowledge.

This type of identity can be classified as an institutional identity. According to Gee (2001), institutional identity refers to "how actively or passively the occupant of a position fulfills his role" (p. 103). Regarding institutional identity, teachers fulfill their duties and roles by organizing, performing, and facilitating teaching-learning activities.

## 2.2. Empirical Studies

In a study which was conducted by Bukor (2015) about the construction of teachers' identity on language instructors, interviews, autobiographical reflection, and a guided visualization activity were employed. It was revealed that the way people express their beliefs, perceptions, and interpretations is influenced by their previous experiences. The research findings suggested that the professional identity of the subjects was firmly rooted in their personal life history. Therefore, the teachers' beliefs and interpretations embedded in their family environment had the potential to influence their identity as well as their pedagogical philosophy, experiences as a pupil, profession-related preferences, and educational activities. The outcomes indicated that the exploration of the experiences of teachers in their life trajectories and the ways they influenced the teachers' teaching can deliver an inclusive realization of the issues contributing to the construction of teachers' identities. This study has been rich in terms of the research tools used to gather the data. Moreover, its findings are informative and enlightening by revealing the factors contributing to teachers' professional identity. However, it has not specifically dealt with modeling the professional identity of teachers.

Mora et al. (2016) compared two groups of Mexican new EFL teachers to examine how they dealt with their professional identities. Three of them were brought up and educated in Mexico and the next three were educated in the USA.

The researchers analyzed their academic records to probe the interconnections between the professional identities of the teachers as well as their level of engagement in academic and professional pursuits. The study detected that teachers who had been schooled in their local settings succeeded to shape a firm identity because of various factors such as stable family conditions and even changes in their life path. However, the returnee counterparts' teacher professional identity can be best described as fragmented since they experienced an unstable situation in their families and had unpleasant alterations in their life stages. This study has been constrained to the interplay between the life conditions of new teachers and their professional identity. It has been limited in scope and objectives and refrained from conducting any exploratory analysis of teachers' professional identity.

In a study conducted by Nguyen (2016) in Vietnam, the ways English teachers attempted to make room for enhancing their practice as well as shaping their identity in a local setting were scrutinized. Therefore, narrative interviews were administered to English teachers who worked in different primary schools. According to the results of the data analysis, at first, these subjects believed that self-education and learning from colleagues was not enough to support teachers' professional growth. Consequently, they sought other ways to enhance their professional identity by forsaking pedagogical and epistemological restrictions to find new practices and identities. To put it another way, their professional growth was not merely limited to teaching expertise and concepts obtained from co-workers in primary schools but also extended to the instructional activities and discourses in other circles. Along with new activities, the teachers shaped their new professional identities due to engagement in different communities. The strong point of this study is that primary-level teachers' professional identity has been touched as a gap in the research on professional identity. Moreover, it has benefited from an exploratory qualitative approach which is an appropriate one to probe the nature of identity. However, no modeling objective has been sought in this study.

Investigating the correlation between professional identity and self-esteem, Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018) conducted a study among EFL teachers who worked at several language institutes. Structural equation modeling was used for data analysis. Finally, the researchers reported that all of the self-esteem sub-constructs were positive and significant predictors of professional identity including adaptation, communication knowledge, commitment, and satisfaction. As far as the association between professional identity and other psychological traits is concerned, this study adds to the profession. But no investigation of the mediating role of teaching experience has been conducted in this study.

In a mixed-method study undertaken by Abedi Ostad et al. (2019), the principal focus of this study was to examine the dynamic nature of the professional identity of EFL teachers, taking into account their level of commitment and job satisfaction. Using structural equation modeling, it was revealed that job satisfaction significantly affected self-expectation as well as teachers' responsibilities. Consequently, external effective factors had an impact on their job satisfaction. By influencing teachers' responsibilities in addition to their citizenship behavior, job satisfaction could predict their commitment in a direct and indirect manner. However, teacher commitment, affected teaching conduct, citizenship behavior, and instructional skill and knowledge of the participants. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative steps of the study were compatible. An overlap between the three constructs was observed in the qualitative step conforming to the findings of the quantitative part. As a positive point, this study has utilized a mixed-methods approach which is considered as a great advantage for the validity of the findings. However, similar to the above studies, no modeling has been conducted, taking the role of teaching experience into account.

Nazari and Molana (2020) traced the identity development of a new EFL teacher during her first year of working. The interview data analysis revealed that various persons including authorities, students, family members, fellows, and the teacher herself have a hand in the teacher's identity development. The objective of Parsi and Ashraf's (2020) study was to explore the links between pedagogical experience, professional identity, and critical thinking by enlisting the participation of EFL teachers from a range of language institutes and public schools who filled the Critical Thinking Scale and the Teacher Professional Identity survey proposed by Honey (2000) and Liou (2008), respectively. The teachers were entered into the study using availability sampling. The participants' years of teaching experience ranged between 4 and 23. Based on measures of Pearson correlations, EFL teachers' critical thinking and teaching experience were significantly related. A similar association was reported between their teaching experience and professional identity as well as between their critical thinking and professional identity. Furthermore, employing multiple regression analysis, it was discovered that teaching experience significantly predicted professional identity. Considering the results of this research, it is suggested that policy-makers and teachers working in the domain of teaching English as a foreign language, provide ways for the development of critical thinking and the professional identity of EFL teachers. Since identity formation is not achieved in a vacuum, but it is dependent upon several factors, this study is considered as an appropriate one by recognizing this issue from a dynamic viewpoint. However, it cannot be denied that professional identity does not lend itself well to the descriptive quantitative approaches.

In another recent study on the identity formation of teachers in online settings, Nazari and Seyri (2021) addressed this issue through their exploration of changes in the identity formation of teachers from face-to-face to distance learning classroom settings during the COVID-19 outbreak. Focus groups, semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires through which the participants reported their educational practices were exploited to obtain the study data which were then analyzed based on which alterations in the identities of the teachers were characterized by six elements including emotional adjustment, instructional differences related to subjects, promoted reflectivity, pressures like insufficient professional readiness, low agency, and more responsibilities, conceptual transformations in becoming enthusiastic teachers about new technology, and (in)consistencies in identity expansion. The researchers finally provided policy-makers and teachers with suggestions for promoting awareness among different groups on using technological instruments to accelerate the adjustment to online teaching practices. Clearly, this study is comprehensive by recruiting a collection of different data collection tools within a mixed-methods approach. But similar to most of the studies reviewed in this paper, the place of teaching experience and a modeling approach is missing in this study. This gap is what the present study aimed to fill.

Finally, as stated in the problem statement section, there exist some studies in the existing literature (e.g., Gholamshahi et al., 2021; Gracia et al., 2021; Khodamoradi et al., 2021) which aimed to develop a scale of EFL teachers' professional identity. Yet, research paucity is obviously seen in dealing with teachers' professional identity formation by attending to the role of teaching experience and taking a modeling approach, taking a mixed-methods approach.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Participants

Both male and female EFL teachers constituted the population of this study who were teaching at different private institutes. As the study sample, three clusters of participants selected. The first cluster consisted of 50 male and female (25 novice and 25 experienced) EFL teachers who were interviewed in the qualitative section of the study for the tenacity of model development. The participants at this phase were selected through purposive sampling and the institutions were randomly chosen. It is worth mentioning that it was the saturation of data that signaled the researchers that no further interviews should be run. The second group included 100 male and female (50 novice and 50 experienced) EFL teachers who participated in the quantitative phase of the study (i.e., exploratory factor analysis). The third group included 300 male and female (150 novice and 150

experienced) EFL teachers who participated in the quantitative phase of the study (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis). The novice teachers had 1-3 years of teaching experience. According to Araujo et al. (2016), individuals with 0 to 3 years of experience are considered novice teachers, whereas those who have been teaching for more than 3 years are categorized as experienced teachers. All the three groups were selected through available sampling. Research ethics was observed in the sampling procedure by informing the participants of the aims of the present study.

**Table 1**
*Demographic Information of the Participants*

|  | WWWQualitative information | Pilot information | Quantitative information |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Male | 16 | 43 | 113 |
| female | 34 | 57 | 187 |
| Novice teachers | 25 | 50 | 150 |
| Experienced Teachers | 25 | 50 | 150 |

## 3.2. Materials and Instruments

A semi-structured interview was administered to qualitatively develop a model of professional identity of experienced and novice Iranian EFL teachers. It consisted of some open ended questions which were developed through consulting the existing literature. The interview was conducted online through WhatsApp due to the constraints imposed on the study as a consequence of Covid-19 outbreak. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant, and Verbatim transcription of all interviews was carried out, and audio recordings were made to aid this process. The interview was conducted in English. To check credibility of interview data, member checking was used. That is, the researcher showed some parts of the analyzed interviews to the interviewees to see whether their perceptions are the same with the extracted themes.in addition, credibility of interview data was re-confirmed by using low-inference descriptors. That is, some direct quotations from the interviewees were provided in analyzing and presenting the results, in an attempt to exclude subjectivity of the researchers in interpreting the findings.

On the flipside, the dependability of the codes assigned to the data was checked through an external coder who was provided with 20 percent of the data and the labels used by the researchers. As a result, the external coder and researchers came across 80 percent agreement regarding the labels (codes) they assigned to the data. Disagreements among the coders were also discussed in a separate meeting to avoid ambiguity and attain dependability.

### 3.2.1. Researcher-Made Questionnaire

To quantitatively develop a model of professional identity of experienced and novice Iranian EFL teachers, a 20- item researcher-made questionnaire was developed based on the qualitatively-developed model. Put it differently, the categories of the qualitative phase served as the items of the questionnaire which consisted of 20 five-point Likert items. The themes of the qualitative phase were also considered as the underlying factors of the questionnaire. The main reason for developing the questionnaire was to check the generalizability of the categories emerged in the qualitative phase with a large number of the participants. For the convenience of the participants, the questionnaire in the form of a Google Form was shared with the participants via WhatsApp. The questionnaire data was then subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, as well as a Cronbach's Alpha test, to evaluate the reliability and validity of the model that was developed.

## 3.3. Procedures

Data collection of this study started with selecting the sample, observing research ethics. Next, the researchers held the interview in the way explained above and audio-recorded them with the permission of the interviewees. Afterwards, the collected audio-recorded data from the interviews was transcribed verbatim to be further analyzed. To analyze the transcribed interview data, the researchers benefited from qualitative thematic analysis using MAXQDA software. First, the transcriptions were inserted into the software and the researchers read and re-read them and started coding the data. The codes appeared in the bottom left side of the software were then organized and reduced into manageable categories (20 categories). Finally, the categories were attributed to proper themes.

In the quantitative stage, after designing the questionnaire from the categories of the previous phase, the link of the questionnaire was sent to the participants through WhatsApp so that sanitary protocols and social distance could be observed in the outburst of Covid-19 pandemic.

## 3.4. Data Analysis

In this study, a mixed-methods design was employed to address the research questions, involving both interviews and surveys. The qualitative data were scrutinized using MAXQDA software to perform thematic analysis of the transcribed interview data, while the quantitative data underwent exploratory factor analysis (EFA) via the principal component method with Varimax rotation and parallel analysis in SPSS version 22. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS software was performed. Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed to examine the internal consistency of the proposed model.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Results

### *4.1.1. Qualitative Results*

In order to address the first research question, a semi-structured interview was implemented followed by the qualitative thematic analysis on the transcribed interview data. Through thematic analysis, the following themes were extracted from interviews with both novice and experienced teachers:

### 1. Attaining Professional Development

This theme says that both novice and experienced teachers seek professional development in their job. The following quotations from the interviews show this theme:

Novice Teacher 10 (T10) stated:

> *One of my main goals is to improve professionally. Professional improvement is a must for every teacher who wants to be successful in his/her job.*

In the saying of novice T12:

> *I'm acquiring teaching professional skills. Teaching is complex job and needs many skills. It is not as easy as it seems superficially. Many skills should be learnt in this job.*

As said by experienced T40:

> *I prefer to be professionally developed. To achieve professional development, I should think about my teaching regularly. In this way, I can identify problems, weak and strong points, and gaps in my teaching. Reflective thinking is very important in professional development.*

According to experienced T30:

> *I need professional development to be a qualified teacher. Being experienced does not negate the need of teachers to professional development.*

### 2. Willingness to Learn Teaching

According to this theme, novice teachers were willing to learn teaching. This is evident in the following quotations from the interviews:

As stated by novice T5:

*I try different ways to learn how to teach well. To achieve this aim, I read published articles and participate in teacher training workshops.*

According to novice T12:

*I like to learn more things about the best ways to teach. I know that I should do a variety of activities to become a good teacher. I should watch demos. I should learn from the experience of experienced teachers. I should read related files.*

As perceived by experienced T28:

*I'm very eager to learn effective teaching. I don't want to always remain a novice teacher. I tend to be known as a good teacher. I try my best to learn how to teach best.*

As mentioned by experienced T40:

*I'm willing to learn successful teaching in every possible way. I have many ways to reach this. I can consult my colleagues; review state-of-the-art articles; take part in workshops, etc.*

## 3. Being Perceived as an Unknowledgeable Teacher

According to this theme, novice and experienced teachers feared that they are recognized as unknowledgeable teachers. This is obvious in the following quotations:

In the words of novice T11:

*I want to be a successful teacher by increasing my knowledge of teaching job. It is not acceptable for me to be called a teacher without sufficient knowledge by students.*

Novice T24 stated:

*A big weak point for a teacher is that others think of him or her as a teacher with a low level of knowledge. This title is really annoying to me. I hate it.*

As perceived by experienced T37:

*When you are identified as an unknowledgeable teacher in your workplace, your prestige is spoiled. Working in such conditions is very hard and challenging. I deeply fear this.*

According to experienced T29:

*I want to be an educated teacher in the minds of students, colleagues, and parents of students. I repeatedly have heard my students' saying that teacher X has no knowledge. This has adverse effects on teaching in long term.*

## 4. Inability in Classroom Management

By this theme, it is meant that teachers are concerned to lose the control over classes. It can be vividly seen in the following quotations:

According to novice T2:

> *I am very anxious that I cannot control crowded classes. A good teacher knows that students should be managed well in classroom. Otherwise, not much positive outcomes can be expected from teaching.*

As conceived by novice T11:

> *An important element of good teaching is the ability to control the classroom. I think I am weak in this aspect of teaching. This makes me nervous.*

As believed by experience T50:

> *As a teacher, I should know what works for each classroom. A method used for class A may not be really effective for class B. Needs of students are different and recognition of this is important in teaching. This does not mean that all thing I need to become an effective teacher is coping with the class control phobia.*

According to experienced T47:

> *Class management ability is very important for me. I think teachers who can manage the time assigned to each class appropriately are more likely more successful than those without such skills.*

## 5. Being perceived as an Uncommitted Teacher

As worded by novice T7:

> *It's important to me that others don't perceive me as lacking commitment to my work. Teaching requires a strong sense of commitment, which should not be overlooked by teachers.*

As said by novice T21:

> *In my opinion, a teacher lacking commitment, organization and people is undesirable. Teachers who are uncommitted, gradually lose their prominence. I try to stick to my commitment to my work so that I can keep my positive image.*

As suggested by experienced T36:

> *I don't aim to appear as someone without any commitment for teaching. I should be accountable to system as a teacher. Accountability plays a pivotal role in teaching job.*

As maintained by experienced T42:

> *An important mission of teachers is to proliferate the excellence of their instruction with the help of preserving their commitment. This is of great importance. Lack of commitment is soon recognized by surrounding people and has negative effects on teaching success.*

Through merging the above themes, teachers' professional identity can be qualitatively depicted as follows (See Figure 1).

*Figure 1*

*The Proposed Qualitative Model of Teachers' Professional Identity*
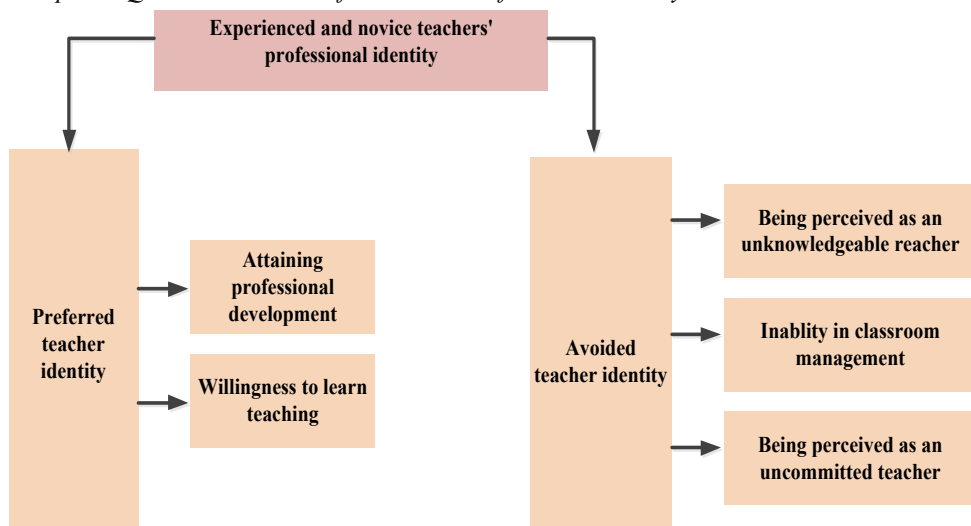


As it is depicted in Figure 1, the proposed model of teachers' professional identity consists of two main categories including 'preferred teacher identity' and 'avoided teacher identity'. Preferred teacher identity consists of those features which are expected by teachers. This category has two sub-categories including 'attaining professional development' and 'willingness to learn teaching'. By avoided teacher identity, those features are meant which are feared to be tagged by teachers. To be more specific, teachers fear from acquiring such features. This category is associated with three sub-categories including 'being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher', 'inability in classroom management', and 'being perceived as an uncommitted teacher'.

### 4.1.2. Quantitative Results

A 20-item questionnaire was developed to address the second research question using the proposed qualitative model. Then in a pilot study a sample of

100 teachers completed the questionnaire. To examine the factor arrangement of the survey, EFA via Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation was used. In addition, the results parallel analysis script was applied to regulate the ideal number of factors. Bartlett test was used to evaluate the sphericity assumption and the KMO test was used to evaluate the Sufficientcy of content sampling. The result of KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity is presented in Table 1.

**Table 2**
*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .79 |
|---|---|---|
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 481.60 |
| | df | 95 |
| | Sig. | .0001 |

The adequacy of data for factor analysis can be evaluated using two metrics: The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling sufficiency and the significance level of Bartlett's test of sphericity. According to Table 1, the KMO value for the present study was 0.79, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.6. Additionally, the significance of the Bartlett's test was less than 0.05 ($p <$ 0.0001. These findings suggest that the data was proper for factor analysis.

**Table 3**
*The Results of Parallel Analysis (PA)*

| components | Actual Eigenvalues | criterion values from PA | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3.80 | 3.54 | Accept |
| 2 | 2.10 | 1.98 | Accept |
| 3 | 1.60 | 1.36 | Accept |
| 4 | 1.40 | 1.33 | Accept |
| 5 | 1.25 | 1.16 | Accept |
| 6 | 1 | 1.10 | Reject |

The results of Table revealed that a 5-factor solution is more valid one. As a yardstick, if the actual Eigenvalue is larger than the criterion, the component will be accepted, otherwise rejected. In the case of 6th factor, the Actual value is lower than its criterion. Therefore, it is rejected. For brevity, the results have been reported only for the first 6 components.

Table 4 shows the pattern of factor loading. In this table, all 5 extracted factors and their eigenvalues over related items are presented.

**Table 4**
*The Pattern of Factor Loading*

|  | Component | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Item 1 |  |  | .50 |  |  |
| Item 2 | .62 |  |  |  |  |
| Item 3 |  |  | .47 |  |  |
| Item 4 | .56 |  |  |  |  |
| Item5 | .45 |  |  |  |  |
| Item 6 |  |  | .61 |  |  |
| Item 7 | . |  | .34 |  |  |
| Item 8 | .34 |  |  |  |  |
| Item 9 | .44 |  |  |  |  |
| Item 10 |  |  |  | .48 |  |
| Item 11 |  | .46 |  |  |  |
| Item 12 |  |  |  | .39 |  |
| Item 13 |  |  |  |  | .47 |
| Item14 |  | .60 |  |  |  |
| Item 15 |  | .57 |  |  |  |
| Item 16 |  | .49 |  |  |  |
| Item 17 |  |  |  |  | .62 |
| Item 18 |  | .39 |  |  |  |
| Item 19 |  |  |  | .51 |  |
| Item 20 |  |  |  |  | .53 |

Table 4 shows that the factor loading of all 20 items of the questionnaire was satisfactory (i.e., greater than 0.3). Thus, some evidence for the validity of the proposed model and its related questionnaire have been acquired. Based on the results of the qualitative phase of the study, and considering the contents of the specific items that loaded on each factor, the 5 determined factors were named in the following order: 1. Willingness to learn to teach, 2. Attaining professional development, 3. Being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher, 4. Inability in classroom management, and 5. Being perceived as an uncommitted teacher.

In addition, Cronbach Alpha was utilized to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, and the results are presented below:

**Table 5**
*Reliability Index*

| Reliability Statistics | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .777 | .778 | 20 |

The second stage of the quantitative phase of the study involved assessing whether the data supported or contradicted the model resulting from the exploratory factor analysis. In this step, a sample of 300 teachers completed the questionnaire. Then, confirmatory factor analysis in the structural equation modeling package (AMOS 24) was used to analyze the data. Figure 3 shows the results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

**Figure 2**

*The Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Number of Items
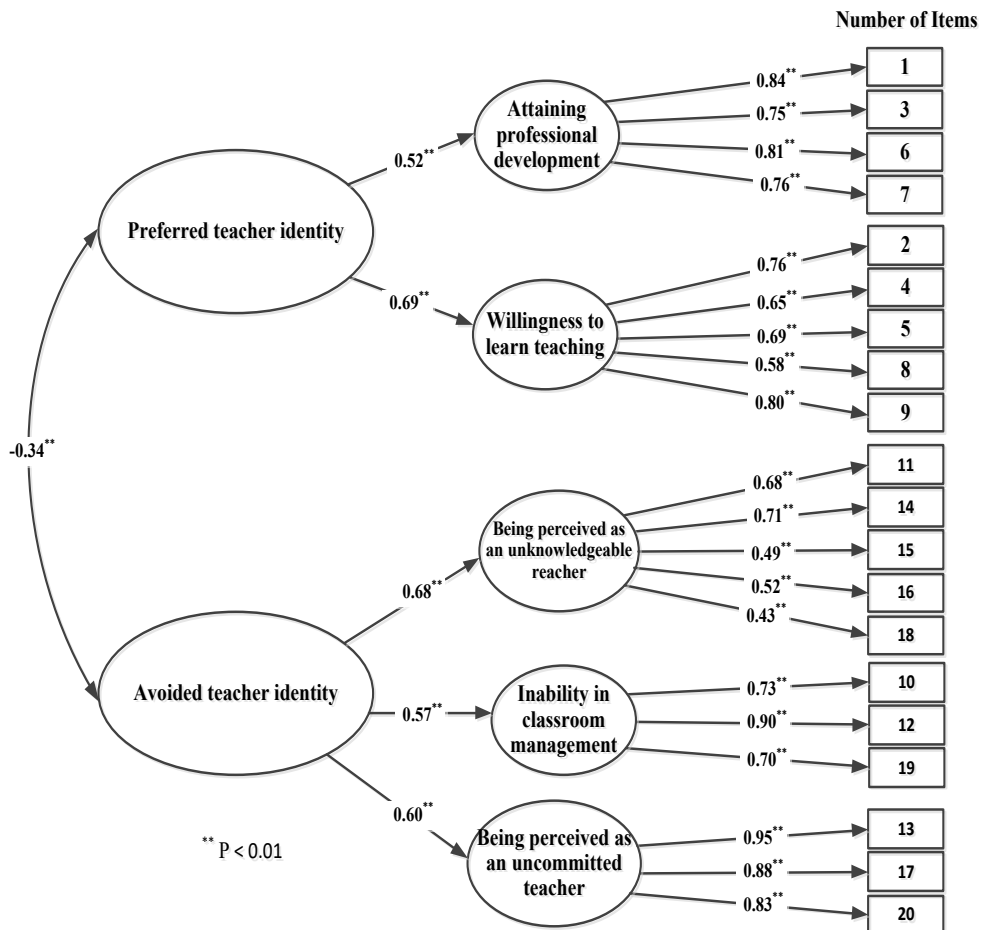


As can be seen in Figure 3, the standard coefficients of the paths are relatively strong and the minimum standard coefficient is 0.43. The study of t-values also shows the significance of the coefficients of all pathways. According to the results, the preferred teacher identity consists of two sub-categories (i.e., Attaining professional development and willingness to learn teaching), and the avoided teacher identity consists of three sub-categories (i.e., being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher, inability in classroom management, and being perceived as an uncommitted teacher), which are negatively correlated with each other in a higher level structure (r = - 0.34).

Assessing the compatibility between the collected data and the proposed model, the model fit indices were calculated and reported in Table 4 that indicated an acceptable fit.

**Table 6**

*Fit Indices of the Proposed Model of Teachers' Professional Identity*

|  | X²/df | TLI | CFI | GFI | AGFI | RMSEA | PCLOSE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fit indices | 1.34 | 0.96 | 0.93 | 0.94 | 0.91 | 0.03 | 0.14 |
| Acceptable Fit indices | < 3 | > 0.90 | > 0.90 | > 0.90 | > 0.90 | < 0.08 | > 0.05 |

The proposed model was first evaluated for its validity. Once the validity was established, the reliability of the model was then assessed in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Reliability Level for the Model*

| Model | Alpha coefficients' |
|---|---|
| Attaining professional development | 0.74 |
| Willingness to learn teaching | 0.81 |
| Being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher | 0.69 |
| Inability in classroom management | 0.72 |
| Being perceived as an uncommitted teacher | 0.80 |
| Preferred teacher identity | 0.85 |
| Avoided teacher identity | 0.89 |

Table 7 illustrates that the proposed model possesses the desired level of reliability.

## 4.2. Discussion

Analyzing the data resulted in the proposal of both a qualitative and a quantitative model of the professional identity of Iranian EFL teachers, both novice and experienced. As shown by the results, the proposed qualitative and quantitative models consist of two main categories, each composed of some sub-categories. The first category was preferred teacher identity and reflected the kinds of features which are expected by novice and experienced teachers: Attaining professional development and willingness to learn teaching. The second category was avoided teacher identity. This category represented those features which were feared from by novice and experienced teachers: Being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher, inability in classroom management, and being perceived as an uncommitted teacher. Moreover, the results showed that the proposed models enjoy an acceptable level of validity and reliability.

To interpret the results, it can be argued that a teacher's professional identity is shaped as influenced by a combination of hopes and fears, personal experiences, personal ideas and perceptions, environmental factors, etc. (Beijard et al., 2004).

This identity may reflect a teacher's future expectations for becoming a successful teacher, or his/her personal experiences from past experiences of being a students of teachers with different identities.

Furthermore, the results convince us to accept that identity formation is under the influence of others in the same way was it is affected by selves. This is why both novice and experienced teachers were willing to learn teaching and achieve professional development so that other do not think of themselves as uncommitted or unknowledgeable. This reflects the fact that identity formation is both a personal and social process wherein some factors beyond the individual herself/himself have also a hand.

The other line of argument which can be put forth in elucidation of the results is that professional identity is a dynamic unit rather than a static one. Accordingly, environmental and situational factors find the way to impact its construction and reconstruction (Riahipour et al., 2020). In the same vein, it is worth noting that professional identity is composed of a collection of varied features, comprising personal, social, affective, cognitive and metacognitive ones (Lee et al., 2013). The issues that affect professional identity are complex and interrelated which include social, professional, personal, and situational elements (Day & Kington, 2008). Teachers' personal dimensions of professional identity pertain to how their identities beyond the classroom impact their teaching practices. The situational and social dimensions of professional identity refer to the ways in which the context of a teacher's work shapes their identity as an educator. In sum, a multitude of factors, such as policies enacted at both local and national levels, contribute to the formation of the professional identity of teachers.

The outcomes of this study is consistent with the results of some previous studies some of which are presented here. In a similar study, Motallebzadeh and Kazemi (2018) described professional identity as stemming from the individual/s personal and social experiences. Moreover, in line with the present study, Motallebzadeh and Kazemi's (2018) found that professional identity is associated with experience, personal characteristics, and educational background. Additionally, Day, Elliot and Kington (2005) concluded that beside teachers' personal, emotional and useful sides of teaching, their personal features like expectations and future plans play a role in teachers' professional identity formation. Furthermore, corroborating this inquiry, in Beijaard et al.'s (2005) study, it was suggested that teachers' professional identity is significantly associated with their professional development study. Last but not least, the findings are in line with Hersi' s (2018) study, which demonstrated that professional identity and classroom management skills are interconnected notions.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

All in all, the outcomes suggest the professional identity of teachers, no matter whether teachers are novice or experienced, is a complex and multilayered notion wherein diverse factors including social, personal, situational, contextual, and emotional ones intermingle. Therefore, professional identity cannot be considered as an inherent genetic factor which is in there as a fixed and determined notion. Accordingly, it can be deduced that teachers' professional identity is in a non-stop process of construction and reconstruction. Interestingly, these matters are true about professional identity regardless of teachers' working experience. This makes the outcome more corroborated and integrated.

The results also lead to the conclusion that common social ideas about the teaching profession and good teacher, for example the image of an ideal teacher, is essential for identity formation (Mahendra, 2020). Traditions, educational culture, and practices that have been accepted socially represent common ideas that have implemented and reproduced by the people. Teacher training is one of the institutions that acts as an intermediary between common social ideas about good teacher and what introduces student teachers with existing values and norms. The bottom line is that professional identity cannot be examined without considering the meaning of social interaction and the background in which the person acts.

The results of the study on EFL teachers' professional identity in Iran can inform teacher training programs or policies aimed at enhancing professional development for novice and experienced teachers in several ways.

Firstly, the qualitative and quantitative models proposed in the study can serve as a guide for designing teacher training programs that focus on enhancing teachers' professional identity and performance. These models can be used to categorize the key aspects that impact teachers' professional identity and develop training activities that target these factors.

Secondly, the results can accentuate the concept of mentorship in supporting the advancement of novice teachers' professional identity. Teacher training programs or policies can establish mentorship programs that pair novice teachers with experienced ones.

Finally, the study suggests that teacher professional development initiatives ought to consider the cultural and contextual factors that influence teachers' professional identity. Teacher training programs or policies can incorporate cultural sensitivity training or provide resources that help teachers navigate the cultural complexities of their profession.

Apart from the implication, one possible limitation of this study refers to the reliability of the third component of the model that is "Being perceived as an unknowledgeable teacher, which is .69. Future studies can retest the its index in an attempt to re-evaluate the model. In addition, future directions of studies on professional development could include exploring the effectiveness of different types of professional development programs and interventions, as well as investigating the bearing of individual and contextual factors on the success of professional development initiatives. Additionally, research could focus on developing and implementing innovative approaches to professional development that are tailored to the needs and preferences of different groups of educators. Finally, studies could examine the long-term outcomes of professional development initiatives, including their impact on student learning and achievement.

## Acknowledgments

# References

Abedi Ostad, S., Ghanizadeh, A., & Ghanizadeh, M. (2019). The dynamism of EFL teachers' professional identity with respect to their teaching commitment and job satisfaction. *Cogent Education, 6*(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2019.1685353.

Araujo, M. C., Carneiro, P., Cruz-Aguayo, Y., & Schady, N. (2016). Teacher quality and learning outcomes in kindergarten. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *131*(3), 1415-1453, doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103190.

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175-189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902252.

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107-128.

Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*(7), 749-764.

Bennett, S., & Carre, C. (1993). Student teachers' changing perceptions of their subject matter competence during an initial teacher training programme, *Educational Researcher, 35*(1), 89-95.

Bukor, E. (2015). Exploring teacher identity from a holistic perspective: Reconstructing and reconnecting personal and professional selves. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 21*(3), 305-327. doi:10.1080/13540602.2014.953818.

Burn, K. (2007). Professional knowledge and identity in a contested discipline: challenges for student teachers and teacher educators. *Oxford Review of Education, 33*(4), 445-467.

Caihong, H. (2011). Changes and characteristics of EFL teachers' professional identity: the cases of nine university teachers. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics (Quarterly), 34*(1), 3-21.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice.* Teachers College Press.

Danielewicz, J. (2001). *Teaching selves.* State University of New York Press.

Davaribina, M., & Fanaee, M. (2021). Iranian EFL teachers' professional identity in online teaching. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 8*(3), 100-108.

Day, C., Elliot, B., & Kington, A. (2005). Reform, standards and teacher identity: Challenges of sustaining commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *21*, 563-577.

Day, C., & Kington, A. (2008). Identity, well-being and effectiveness: The emotional contexts of teaching. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, *16*(1), 7-23.

Gee, J. (2001). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education. 25,* 99-125.

Gholamshahi, A., Alemi, M., & Tajeddin, Z. (2021). Developing and validating an EFL teacher imposed identity inventory: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies, 8*(2), 91-116.

Gracia, E.P., Rodriguez, R.S., Pedrajas, A.P., & Carpio, A.J. (2021). Teachers' professional identity: validation of an assessment instrument for preservice teachers. *Heliyon, 7*(2021), 1-11.

Han, I. (2016). (Re)conceptualisation of ELT professionals: Academic high school English teachers' professional identity in Korea. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 22*(5), 586–609. doi:10.1080/13540602.2016.1158467.

Heidari, H., & Rezaei, A. (2013). Sociological analysis of students' professional identity: A case study: students of Mazandaran University. *Quarterly cultural studies, 2,* 1-29.

He, P., & Lin, A. M. Y. (2013). Tensions in school–university partnership and EFL pre- 272 service teacher identity formation: A case in mainland China. *The Language Learning Journal, 41* (2), 205-218.

Hersi, M. A. (2018). Teachers' Professional Identity Construction: A Narrative Inquiry of non-native English Speaking Teachers in Saudi Arabia (Doctoral thesis, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico). Retrieved from https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/educ_llss_etds.

Honey, P. (2000). *Critical Thinking questionnaire.* Retrieved May 22, 2016, from http://www.PeterHoneyPublications.com

Hotaman, D. (2010). The teaching profession: Knowledge of subject matter, teaching skills and personality traits. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*(2), 1416–1420. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.211.

Karimi, M. N., & Mofidi, M. J. S. (2019). L2 teacher identity development: An activity theoretic perspective. *System,81,* 122-134.

Khodamoradi, A., Mahmoodi, M.H., & Maghsoudi, M. (2021). Constructing and validating teachers' professional identity questionnaire: The case of EFL prospective teachers. *Language and Translation Studies, 55*(1), 29-61.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). *Language teacher education for a global society.* Routledge.

Lee, J., Huang, Y., Law, E., & Wang, M. (2013). Professional identities and emotions of teachers in the context of curriculum reform: A Chinese perspective*. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 41*(3), 271–287.

Liou, I. Y. (2008). English as an international language and teachers' professional identity*, Ph.D. thesis,* School of Education, Deakin University.

Mahendra, A, W. (2020). Constructing identity: Experiences of Indonesian ESP teachers in a language institute. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal, 3*(3), 229-240.

Meihami, H. (2021). EFL teachers' professional identity development through potentially exploitable pedagogical activities. *International Journal of Language Studies, 15*(2), 47-66.

Mora, A., Trejo, P., & Roux, R. (2016). The complexities of being and becoming language teachers: Issues of identity and investment. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 16*(2), 182–198. doi:10.1080/14708477.20 15.1136318.

Motallebzadeh, Kh., & Kazemi, B. (2018). The relationship between EFL teachers' professional identity and their self-esteem. *Cogent Education*, *5*(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2018.1443374.

Nazari, M., & Molana, K. (2020). Contributions of assessment-related critical incidents to language teacher identity development. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *15*(3), 442–457. https://doi.org/10.108 0/17501229.2020.1824234.

Nazari, M., & Seyri, H. (2023). Covidentity: examining transitions in teacher identity construction from personal to online classes. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *46*(3), 397-416. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768 .2021.1920921.

Oladini, Mazlum & Dasta / The relationship between iranian EFL learners' vocabulary ...

75

Nguyen, C. D. (2017). Creating spaces for constructing practice and identity: Innovations of teachers of English language to young learners in Vietnam. *Research Papers in Education*, *32*(1), 56-70.

Nguyen, H. T. (2008). Conception of teaching by five Vietnamese American preservice teachers. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 7*(2)*, 113–136.

O'Connor, B. P. (2000). SPSS and SAS programs for determining the number of components using parallel analysis and Velicer's MAP test. *Behavior Research Methods, Instrumentation, and Computers, 32,* 396-402.

Parsi, Gh., & Ashraf, H. (2020). The relationship among EFL teachers' critical thinking, professional identity and teaching experience. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 7*(1), 144-154.

Riahipour, P., Tavakoli, M., & Eslami Rasekh, A. (2020). A Change without a change: national curriculum reform and EFL teachers' motivation in Iran. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning, 12*(26), 435-463. http://dx.doi.org/10.22034/elt.2021.42087.2294.

Rots, I., Kelchtermans, G., & Aelterman, A. (2012). Learning (not) to become a teacher: A qualitative analysis of the job entrance issue. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *28*(1), 1-10. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2011.08.008.

Sadeghi, M., & Sahragard, R. (2016). A questionnaire and model of role identity for Iranian English language teachers: A structural equation modeling. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 7*(6), 1153-1163.

Saphier, J., & West, L. (2009). How coaches can maximize student learning. *Phi Delta Kappan, 91*(4), 46-50.

Stenberg, K., Karlsson, L., Pitkaniemi, H., & Maaranen, K. (2014). Beginning student teachers' teacher identities based on their practical theories. European *Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(2), 204–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.882309

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 4*(1), 21-44.

Vermunt, J. D., & Verschaffel, L. (2000). Process-oriented teaching. In R. J. Simons, J. van der Linden, & T. Duffy (Eds.), *New learning*, 209–225. Kluwer Academic Publishers.