

Unpacking the Interplay Between Online Instructional Settings and EFL Teachers' Evolving Professional Identity

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Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:
Received August 04, 2025
Received in revised form November 20, 2025
Accepted December 25, 2025
Published online December 28, 2025

Keywords:
COVID-19, EFL
Instructors, Online
Instructional Settings,
Online Teaching,
Professional Identity.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to higher education, impacting not only the adoption of new technologies but also affecting how EFL instructors perceive their professional identities. This study used a quantitative survey design to investigate the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding their professional identity transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, in online teaching. In addition, it also examined how online teaching has influenced teachers' professional identity in different domains. Data were collected from 35 EFL instructors selected using convenience sampling. These participants were engaged in teaching English at the university level in Iran with different genders, educational backgrounds, and teaching experiences. Data were collected through a questionnaire containing four domains with 35 items using a four-point Likert scale. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS software, enabling statistical analysis to identify patterns and trends related to the research questions. The results revealed that online teaching positively enhanced social relationships with students and colleagues, enriched the teaching experience, and boosted instructors' self-esteem. The results showed that helping the teachers adjust to online teaching is very important. In addition, the results also suggested that universities should offer ongoing professional training and encourage teamwork so that teachers can develop the digital skills, pedagogical strategies, and emotional support they need to feel confident and effective in online teaching.

Cite this article: Fallah, R., Chalak, A., & Heidari Tabrizi, H. (2025). Unpacking the Interplay Between Online Instructional Settings and EFL Teachers' Evolving Professional Identity. *Technology Assisted Language Education*, 3(4), 129-153. doi: 10.22126/tale.2026.12552.1132



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Publisher: Razi University

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22126/tale.2026.12552.1132>

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes in how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers worked, especially when classes moved online. Even though many studies have focused on using new technology for teaching, there is not as much research about how these changes have affected teachers' feelings about themselves and their jobs (teacher identity) (Abuhussein & Badah, 2024). In recent years, EFL teaching has changed a lot because of technology. Many teachers started using new tools, like Google Classroom and Zoom, to teach and connect with students remotely. According to Tarteer et al. (2021) showed that Google Classroom became an important tool for English teachers during COVID-19. The move to online teaching not only changed how teachers delivered lessons, but it also made them see their roles differently.

The context teachers are in like moving to online teaching or facing a pandemic, can really shape how they see themselves as teachers (Beijaard et al., 2004). When the coronavirus forced teachers in universities and schools to switch to online teaching, they had to adjust quickly. This was a huge change that no one expected (Fallah et al., 2021a, 2021b; Zimmer et al., 2021). Teachers used apps and programs like Moodle, Google Meet, and Zoom to manage classes, give assignments, and talk to students from a distance. Before COVID-19, technology was helpful for teaching languages, but during the pandemic, it became essential (Farrah & Al-Bakri, 2020). These rapid changes deeply influenced EFL teachers' identities in several ways: Their professional roles and duties changed. Relationships with students and colleagues became different, often more distant or digital. Many teachers' confidence, needs, and personal growth were affected both positively and negatively.

Teacher identity means how teachers see themselves in their professional role. It affects how they think about their work and their relationships with students and colleagues (Buchanan, 2015). Research shows that a teacher's identity is not fixed instead, it keeps changing because of new experiences, feelings, and changes in the work environment (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Teachers' identities changed as they learned to use new technology, faced new problems, and adapted to different ways of teaching and communicating. Instead of having one fixed teacher identity, teachers put together different pieces of their professional selves to deal with new challenges (Beijaard et al., 2004). For example, some felt more like technology experts, while others focused on student support. Understanding how online teaching affects EFL teachers' professional identities helps universities and decision-makers better support teacher needs. Palestinian EFL teachers, like many around the world, continue to adapt to these changes. However, more research is needed to understand how online teaching changes teachers' feelings about their work, their relationships, and their growth as professionals (Abuhussein & Badah, 2024; Taufique et al., 2023).

Although recent studies have explored how online teaching affects EFL teachers' professional identity (Abuhussein & Badehl, 2024; Celebi, 2022; Ulla & Perales, 2024), many focus broadly on technological adoption or general teacher challenges, leaving several

important gaps. First, while numerous works highlight teachers' struggles with technology and pedagogical shifts (Yuan & Liu, 2021; El-Soussi, 2022). Second, existing research often overlooks the interplay of teachers' emotional and professional responses to the sudden transition to fully online environments, which is crucial given the evolving nature of teacher professional identity (Fallah et al. 2021a; Ulla et al., 2024). Studies like Ulla et al. (2024) emphasize reflexivity as a key mechanism in identity development but tend to focus on limited case samples. Third, there is a shortage of comprehensive research on how institutional support, cultural factors, and technological readiness collectively influence identity transformation in online EFL teaching. Furthermore, while some scholars have discussed teacher pruners and innovative teaching practices in virtual spaces (Shahrokhi et al., 2023), challenges such as lack of resources and systemic support are underexplored. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following specific research questions.

- What are EFL instructors' perceptions towards the transformation of their professional identity during online teaching amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature review

The transformation of teachers' professional identity, especially during the rapid shift to online teaching triggered by COVID-19, has attracted increasing scholarly interest. However, research focusing specifically on EFL instructors' experiences remains limited. This review provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical work related to teacher professional identity with an emphasis on recent studies investigating identity formation in online teaching environments.

Teacher professional identity is broadly understood as how teachers define themselves professionally, encompassing their beliefs, practices, and evolving self-conceptions within social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Vokatis & Zhang, 2016; Day, 2013). It is a fluid and dynamic construct, shaped by interactions with colleagues, students, and the educational environment (Beijaard et al., 2004), as well as by personal factors such as motivation and self-efficacy (Canrinus et al., 2011). The socio-cultural perspective highlights identity as continuously negotiated through interactions ongoing across diverse contexts (Olsen, 2008). Emotional factors are also integral, influencing teachers' self-perception and resilience during professional change (Zembylas, 2003). Teachers' professional identity formation is closely linked to their motivations and responses to evolving educational reforms and contextual demands (Burn, 2007; Day, 2002). Changes such as transitioning to online teaching require ongoing reflection, adjustment, and sometimes reconstruction of professional identity (Braun et al., 2010; Canrinus et al., 2011). Collaborative professional socialization remains vital for sustaining teacher identity amidst change (William, 2010). Bibliometric reviews of teacher identity research indicated that collaborative environments, for example, professional communities of learning, during the time of change, are connected to a large extent to higher levels of professional identity development, agency, and resilience (IJCRT, 2024; Yan, 2024). These findings very clearly indicate the significance not only of ongoing collaboration but also

of social support in helping teachers to maintain and also reconstruct their professional identities in dynamic educational contexts.

Professional identity is very important for understanding how EFL teachers grow and become effective in their work. It means how teachers see themselves as professionals. This view influences how they teach, how they work with the curriculum, and how they interact with their students (He & Lin, 2013; Caihong, 2011). In research about language teaching, professional identity is seen as something that is always changing, which is dynamic and is shaped by teachers' experiences, the situations they are in, and their own thinking and reflection (Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005). For example, research by Su (2023) demonstrates that EFL teachers' digital literacy and professional identity are interrelated, and that adopting new technologies like the TPACK framework can reshape teachers' self-perceptions and teaching practices. Similarly, Satvati (2025) found that integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into language education has led EFL teachers to reconstruct their professional identities, as they adapt to new roles and responsibilities in the classroom. El-Soussi (2025) also highlights that the rapid shift to online teaching during the pandemic required EFL teachers to quickly acquire new technological skills, which in turn led to the creation of new professional identities.

Recent studies (such as El-Soussi, 2025; Satvati, 2025; Su, 2023) have shown that for EFL teachers, changing their professional identity is closely related to learning new technology and teaching methods because education is changing. For example, research by Su (2023) revealed that EFL teachers' digital literacy and professional identity are in connection with each other, and that adopting new technologies like the TPACK framework can reshape teachers' self-perceptions and teaching practices. Another study conducted by Satvati (2025) revealed that integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into language education has led EFL teachers to reconstruct their professional identities, as they adapt to new roles and responsibilities in the classroom. In addition, El-Soussi (2025) also indicated that the swift shift to online mode during the pandemic required EFL teachers to quickly learn new skills in technology.

The fast shift to online teaching during COVID-19 made this even more important. Other research conducted indicated that online teaching changes many parts of teachers' professional identity. It affects their relationships with others, how well they teach, and how they feel about themselves. But teachers also find it hard to learn and use new technology (Brown et al., 2022; Harris & Wang, 2020; Johnson & Taylor, 2021). These studies suggested that it is very important to study how EFL teachers change their professional identity with online teaching so we can create better training and support for them.

Recent empirical research has begun to investigate how EFL teachers reconstruct their identities while engaging with technology-enhanced teaching, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Yuan and Liu (2021) found that sudden online shifts challenged EFL teachers' professional roles, while El-Soussi (2022) and Celebi and Eraldemir-Tuyan (2020) reported feelings of instability and professional uncertainty in similar contexts. Zhang and Hwang (2023) similarly observed dynamic identity reconstruction shaped by technological and pedagogical challenges. Building on these findings, Fallah et al. (2021a) applied the

Achievement Orientation Theory to examine Iranian EFL instructors' professional identity reflection within e-teaching contexts. Their study emphasized how teachers' attitudes toward achieving professional goals influenced their adaptation and identity formation in digital environments. Furthermore, Fallah et al. (2022) explored how novice EFL teachers use Online Image Management (OIM) strategies to actively promote and construct their professional identity in online teaching settings. This research highlighted the strategic role teachers play in shaping their online presence and professional persona to foster credibility and engagement.

Recent studies continue to emphasize this trend: Following an explanatory sequential design, Fallah et al. (2024) explored the possible association between the Professional Identity (PI) of Iranian female EFL university teachers in the Habitual Burnout (HB) phase and their Emotional Quotient (EQ). Yuan (2024) showed that instructors actively reconstruct their identities as they navigate online teaching challenges. In addition, Groenewald (2025) in his study revealed that novice teachers exercise agency in reshaping their identities, and Luo (2025) indicated how integrating technology into teaching practices can change teachers' professional identities.

Fallah et al.'s (2021a, 2021b, 2022, 2023, 2024) contributions deepen the understanding of professional identity as an interactive and strategic process, influenced by internal motivations like achievement goals and external factors such as online social dynamics. Their work underscores that online teaching environments offer both challenges and opportunities for teachers to reflect upon, negotiate, and present their identities professionally in evolving educational landscapes.

Despite growing attention to this field, there remains a need for context-specific empirical studies investigating how university-level Iranian EFL instructors perceive and experience changes in their professional identity during online teaching. This study tried to fill this gap by examining teachers' perceptions across key identity domains by applying the questionnaire developed by Zimmer et al. (2021). By doing this, the study attempted to help teachers better understand how teachers' professional identity changes when they move to online teaching.

Method

This study aimed to explore English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors' perceptions regarding the transformation of their professional identity while teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The following sections provide a concise overview of the research design, setting, participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis. Each section highlights how data were gathered and analyzed to address the main research question.

Design

This study adopted a quantitative survey design to investigate the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding their professional identity transformation during online teaching. While quantitative designs are traditionally structured and rely on collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or

answer specific research questions (Ary et al., 2019), recent approaches, such as those by Amini Farsani et al. (2021), show that quantitative methods can also capture complex constructs like professional identity, especially when supported by robust survey instruments. The survey method was applied because it enables the systematic collection of standardized data from a large group, allowing statistical analysis to examine patterns and relationships among variables (Dörnyei, 2007). Surveys are one of the most common ways of data collection in educational research, particularly for gathering perceptions and attitudes.

Regarding the notion of identity, while qualitative research designs are indeed well-suited for exploring the depth and nuances of identity, especially after the pandemic, the quantitative approach in this study was selected to provide generalizable insights into the broader experiences of EFL teachers across different contexts. This design allows for the identification of trends and patterns that might not be evident in smaller qualitative samples. However, the findings are interpreted with attention to the limitations of quantitative methods in capturing the full complexity of identity, and future research could combine both approaches for a more comprehensive understanding

Participants

The sample size of 35 Iranian EFL university teachers was justified according to the principles of quantitative research, where the aim is to achieve a sample that is representative and large enough for statistical analysis. According to Cohen (1988), generally a sample of 30 or more participants is regarded as adequate for finding significant effects in survey-based studies, especially at the time when the population is relatively homogeneous (such as university teachers in a specific country). In addition, the sample size allowed for diversity in gender, educational background, and teaching experience, which enhances the generalizability of findings within the Iranian EFL context.

The study included 35 Iranian EFL university teachers (18 females, 18 males) whose native language was Persian (Farsi). The participants' ages ranged from 28 to 55 years ($M = 36.5$, $SD = 7.8$). All participants were actively engaged in teaching English at the university level across various Iranian universities during the academic years 2021 to 2023. Regarding educational background, the sample included teachers holding MA degrees, Ph.D. degrees, and those currently enrolled as Ph.D. candidates in fields related to English language teaching or linguistics.

The participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) being a university-level EFL instructor, (2) having at least two years of teaching experience, (3) actively involved in online teaching during the study period, and (4) willingness to participate in the research. The sample was purposively and conveniently selected to reflect a diverse group in terms of gender, educational background, and teaching experience to provide a comprehensive view of professional identity in the online teaching environment. The 35 instructors were invited via professional contacts, university networks, and online teaching communities. The final sample size was related to the decision on how many eligible and willing teachers could

be reached. This method helped in balancing the practical needs with the goal of including diverse perspectives, making the findings relevant to the Iranian EFL context (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016).

Table 1.

Demographic Background of the Participants

No. of Participants	35 University teachers
Gender	Both females and males
First Language	Persian
Qualification	MA, Ph.D., and Ph.D. candidate
Experience	2- 28
Academic years	2021 -2023

Instruments

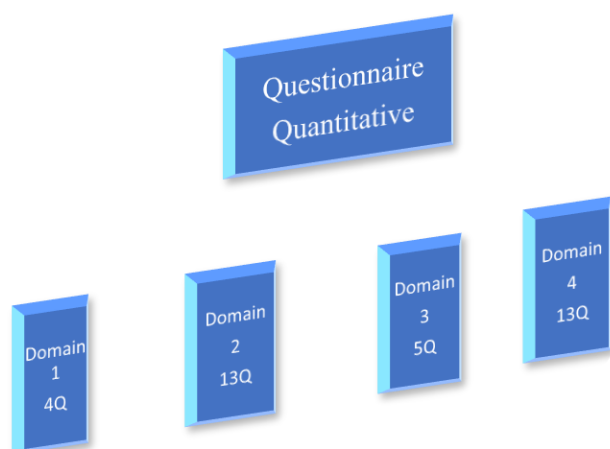
This study used Zimmer et al. (2021) questionnaire, original with minor modifications only in wording to make it more comprehensible for participants, a 35-item questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree). The reason for selecting this questionnaire was that its four domains perfectly matched this research's focus: Responses were interpreted as: 1-<2 (low agreement), 2-<3 (moderate), and 3-4 (high agreement).

The questionnaire contained the following four domains:

- (a) The impact of online teaching on social relations with colleagues and learners.
- (b) The effectiveness of online teaching
- (c) The impact of online teaching on professional self-awareness and self-esteem
- (d) Personal satisfaction toward professional and technical skills during online teaching

Figure 1

A Schematic Representation of the Questionnaire



Zimmer et al.'s (2021) questionnaire had options for response ranging from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The questionnaire entailed four primary domains that were pertinent to university teachers' experiences instructing students online. Initially, it assessed the individual's contentment with the professional and technical skills they acquired during the transition to online learning. Second, the tool evaluated how well online teaching strategies were thought to support learning objectives. Third, it examined how online teaching impacted teachers' professional self-awareness, particularly how this mode of instruction affected their sense of self and confidence in their careers. Using the following rubric, ranges of agreement with the questionnaire item were examined based on means: from 1 to less than 2, this indicated a lower level of agreement, from 2 to less than 3, this indicated a medium level of agreement, and from 3 to 5 indicated a high degree of agreement .

The questionnaire was piloted with five EFL instructors who were not included in the main study. The pilot study was conducted to check the clarity, relevance, and reliability of the items, and to ensure that the scoring ranges for agreement (1 to less than 2 = lower agreement, 2 to less than 3 = medium agreement, 3 to 5 = high agreement) were easily understood and consistently interpreted by participants. Feedback received from the pilot was used to modify the wording of items and to confirm the appropriateness of the rating scale for measuring agreement with professional identity statements (Creswell, 2014).

Procedure

The quantitative data were collected through a 35-item Digital Learning Identity Survey, originally created by Zimmer et al. (2021). Participants were asked to rate each item using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The survey was distributed online via Google Forms, and participants were given two days to complete it. The survey items were designed to measure four primary domains: satisfaction with online teaching skills, perceived effectiveness of online teaching, the impact on teachers' confidence and professional identity, and changes in relationships with students and colleagues..

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS software (version 27), which enabled statistical analysis to identify patterns and trends related to the study questions. After the responses were analyzed, the results were grouped into three levels: low agreement (scores below 2), medium agreement (scores 2-3), and high agreement (scores 3-4). Specifically, mean scores, standard deviations, and levels of agreement were calculated to assess and compare the participants' responses to the questionnaire items. The data were examined to assess and compare participants' perceptions across the questionnaire items.

Findings

In terms of face validity, the researchers, who are specialists in linguistics and educational research or applied linguistics, evaluated the questionnaire for its readability, clarity, layout,

and style. To determine content validity, the Average Congruency Percentage (ACP) was calculated based on feedback from various Iranian experts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and educational technology, achieving a score of 94% or higher. Construct validity was examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which will be detailed in the following sections. In this study, EFA was chosen according to the aim, which is to explore the factor structure of the questionnaire items related to professional identity in the online teaching context (Field, 2018). The reliability, or internal consistency, of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, based on responses from 50 Iranian EFL teachers. The results related to this assessment are presented in Table 2.

Table 2*Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire*

Domain	N	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Impact on Social Relations	35	.893	4
Effectiveness of Online Teaching		.986	13
Impact on Professional Self-Awareness		.868	5
Personal Satisfaction Toward Skills		.936	13
The overall Cronbach's alpha for all domains	-	.986	35

According to Table 2, the results for the first domain ($\alpha = .893$), second domain ($\alpha = .986$), third domain ($\alpha = .868$), fourth construct ($\alpha = .936$), and all items in the questionnaire ($\alpha = .986$) confirmed the high reliability of the instrument. According to Jasrai (2020), an APC value above 90% and a Cronbach's Alpha value of ($0.93 \leq \alpha$) shows excellent validity and reliability for the generated instrument in focus.

Indices of normality assumption, including values of skewness, and kurtosis, were checked. Besides, complementary approaches such as using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were considered.

Table 3*Values of Skewness and Kurtosis*

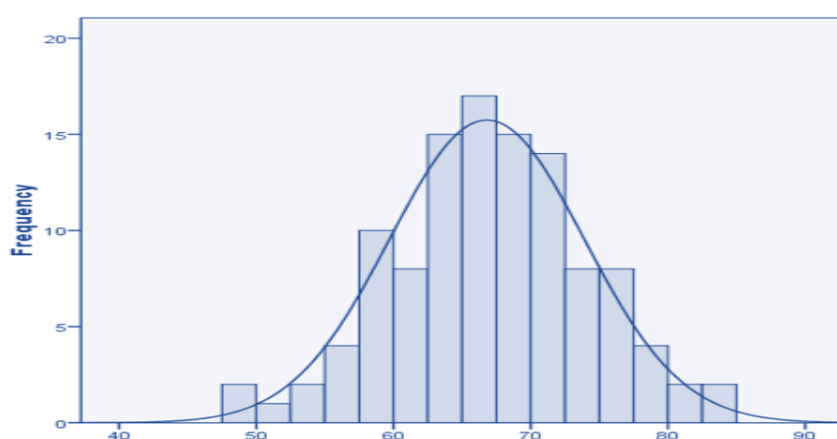
Domain	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	.015	-1.50	0.50
2	.020	0.80	1.20
3	.010	-0.50	-0.75
4	.025	1.00	0.25

Based on the information presented in Table 3, the skewness and kurtosis values fell within the range of -1.96 to +1.96. Additionally, no variance values exceeded ten times that of any other variance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of the values was normal (Jasrai, 2020).

To assess the normality of the distribution, a Normal Probability Plot was created. This process involved first sorting the data and then calculating evenly spaced percentiles based on a normal distribution.

Figure 1

Normality of the Data Distribution



This research question investigated the perceptions of EFL instructors regarding identity change during online instruction. To address this issue, the means, standard deviations, rankings, and levels of consensus regarding EFL instructors' perceptions of their identity reconstruction during online instruction were computed. The findings of this study were organized into four distinct domains, each reflecting different aspects of instructors' experiences with online teaching. As mentioned before there were four domains:

Domain One: Impact on Social Relations, which focused on the effects of online teaching on social relationships with peers and students.

Domain Two: Effectiveness of Online Teaching, which examined the perceived effectiveness of virtual teaching. Professional

Domain Three: Professional Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem, which addressed the effect of online teaching on instructors' professional self-awareness and self-esteem.

Domain Four: Personal Satisfaction with Skills pertained to instructors' personal satisfaction with their professional and technical skills during virtual teaching.

Table 4.

Domain: The Influence of Online Teaching on Interpersonal Relationships with Colleagues and Students.

No.	Item	Mean	Std	Rank	Agreement Level
35	I tried to actively engage myself with the technology I was using for online teaching	3.45	.51	1	Strong
33	I used technology to communicate with my colleagues better	3.15	.55	2	Strong
32	I used technology to understand my students better	3.05	.53	3	Strong
34	I used technology to help me better understand other people	2.90	.74	4	Average
	Overall	3.15	.41		Strong

Item	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
35	3.45	.51	Strong	72%	24%	4%
33	3.15	.55	Strong	68%	28%	4%
32	3.05	.53	Strong	64%	32%	4%
34	2.90	.74	Average	52%	44%	4%
Total	3.15	.41	Strong	64%	32%	4%

Table 4 displays the average scores representing teachers' perceptions regarding. The influence of online teaching on interpersonal relationships with colleagues and students, with values ranging from 2.90 to 3.45, suggesting a moderate to Strong level of consensus. Notably, teachers expressed the strongest agreement (Mean = 3.45) with the statement, *I tried to actively engage myself with the technology I was using for online teaching*. Conversely, the item *"I used technology to help me better understand my colleagues"* received the lowest mean score of 2.90. Additionally, participants demonstrated a strong level of agreement with items numbered 32, 33, and 35, while item 34 was met with a Moderate level of agreement.

Table 5.

Effectiveness of Online Teaching

No.	Item	Mean	Std	Rank	Agreement Level
-----	------	------	-----	------	-----------------

21	I used technology to gain new knowledge for online teaching	3.35	.47	1	Strong
22	Teaching online transformed my teaching practices	3.30	.54	2	Strong
16	Teaching online often caused me to be personally reflective	3.27	.53	3	Strong
15	Some of my character was shaped by the ways I started to follow in online teaching	3.19	.38	4	Strong
17	Teaching online made me carefully consider changes I had to make in my teaching practices	3.13	.33	5	Strong
14	Using technology to teach online was stimulating	3.09	.50	6	Strong
25	Technology often made me want to make personal changes in the way I used to teach	3.06	.50	6	Strong
19	I used technology for valuable reasons	3.05	.54	8	Strong
20	I had a Strong interest in using technology to teach online	2.92	.71	9	Medium
24	I felt that teaching online with technology was exciting	2.99	.89	10	Medium
26	Now, teaching online with technology has become an important part of my life	2.89	.74	10	Medium
18	Teaching online transformed my teaching values	2.89	.58	10	Medium
23	I used technology to improve my understanding of life	2.69	.66	13	Medium
	Overall	3.04	.35		Strong

Item	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
21	3.35	.47	Strong	70%	26%	4%
22	3.30	.54	Strong	68%	28%	4%
16	3.27	.53	Strong	66%	30%	4%

Item	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
15	3.19	.38	Strong	64%	32%	4%
17	3.13	.33	Strong	62%	34%	4%
14	3.09	.50	Strong	60%	36%	4%
25	3.06	.50	Strong	58%	38%	4%
19	3.05	.54	Strong	56%	40%	4%
20	2.92	.71	Average	50%	46%	4%
24	2.99	.89	Average	48%	48%	4%
26	2.89	.74	Average	46%	50%	4%
18	2.89	.58	Average	44%	52%	4%
23	2.69	.66	Average	40%	56%	4%
Overall	3.04	.35	Strong	58%	38%	4%

Table 5. illustrates that the average scores of teachers' perceptions regarding the *Effectiveness of Online Teaching* varied from 2.69 to 3.35, indicating a Moderate to Strong level of agreement. Instructors expressed their strongest agreement with the statement, *I used technology to gain new knowledge for online teaching*, which received a mean score of 3.35. Conversely, the lowest level of agreement was reported for the statement, *I used technology to improve my understanding of life*, which had a mean score of 2.69. Additionally, participants showed a Strong level of agreement on items numbered 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, and 25. In contrast, they demonstrated a Moderate level of agreement on items numbered 18, 20, 23, 24, and 26, as depicted in Figure 3.

Table 6

The Impact of Online Teaching on Professional Self-awareness and Self-esteem

No.	Item	Mean	Std	Rank	Agreement
					Level

31	Technology often helped me change my perspective about things	3.19	.48	1	Strong
27	Teaching online transformed the way I used to perceive myself as a teacher	3.12	.55	2	Strong
29	I can recall instances in which I have been personally transformed from things I taught online using technology	3.00	.49	3	Strong
30	Teaching online made me carefully consider changes I should make in my life	3.05	.49	3	Strong
28	Teaching online with technology transformed my thinking	2.98	.40	5	Moderate
	Overall	3.00	.42		Strong

Items	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
31	3.19	.48	Strong	66%	30%	4%
27	3.12	.55	Strong	64%	32%	4%
29	3.00	.49	Strong	62%	34%	4%
30	3.05	.49	Strong	60%	36%	4%
28	2.98	.40	Average	58%	38%	4%
Total	3.00	.42	Strong	62%	34%	4%

Table 6 indicates that the average scores reflecting instructors' perceptions regarding. *The impact of online teaching on professional self-awareness and self-esteem* ranged from 2.98 to 3.19, suggesting a moderate to Strong level of agreement. Instructors expressed the strongest agreement with the statement, *Technology often helped me change my perspective about things,* which received a mean score of 3.19. Conversely, the statement. *Teaching online with technology transformed my thinking* received the lowest mean score of 2.98, indicating less

agreement. Participants showed a Strong level of agreement on items numbered 27, 29, 30, and 31, while they demonstrated a moderate level of agreement on item 28, as depicted in Figure 4.

Table 7

Personal Satisfaction Toward Professional and Technical Skills During Online Teaching

No.	Item	Mean	Std	Rank	Agreement Level
13	Now, I frequently use technology to teach online when it is needed	3.35	.48	1	Strong
12	Now, I am interested in many aspects of using technology for teaching online	3.33	.49	2	Strong
11	Now, I use technology extensively to teach about different skills in English	3.13	.57	3	Strong
7	I didn't mind demonstrating technology I used in online teaching for others	3.07	.68	4	Strong
6	If my technological abilities were assessed, I would show good basic technological ability	2.99	.65	5	Moderate
4	I used many different types of technology for online teaching	2.99	.64	5	Moderate
10	I enjoyed using technology to teach online	2.99	.81	7	Moderate
2	At first, I faced many technical problems	2.92	.78	8	Moderate
9	I used technology proficiently while teaching online	2.81	.55	9	Moderate
5	I was comfortable with my technological ability in teaching online	2.69	.58	10	Moderate
8	I felt like I used technology efficiently when I started to teach online	2.69	.65	10	Moderate
3	I was fluent in using technology for online teaching purposes	2.57	.67	12	Moderate
1	At first, I was ready for the switch to online teaching	2.43	.67	13	Moderate
	Overall	2.94	.39		Moderate

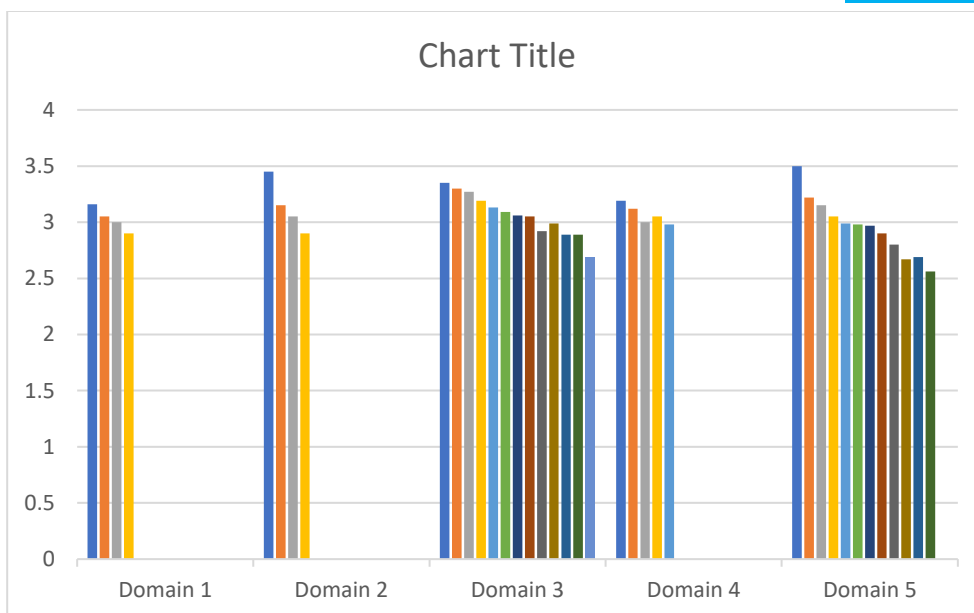
Items	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
13	3.35	.48	Strong	70%	26%	4%

Items	Mean	Std	Descriptor	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
12	3.33	.49	Strong	68%	28%	4%
11	3.13	.57	Strong	64%	32%	4%
7	3.07	.68	Strong	62%	34%	4%
6	2.99	.65	Average	60%	36%	4%
4	2.99	.64	Average	58%	38%	4%
10	2.99	.81	Average	56%	40%	4%
2	2.92	.78	Average	54%	42%	4%
9	2.81	.55	Average	52%	44%	4%
5	2.69	.58	Average	50%	46%	4%
8	2.69	.65	Average	48%	48%	4%
3	2.57	.67	Average	46%	50%	4%
1	2.43	.67	Average	44%	52%	4%
Overall	2.94	.39	Average	52%	44%	4%

Table 7 indicates that the average ranks reflecting teachers' perceptive regarding *Personal satisfaction with professional and technical skills during online teaching*, ranked from 2.43 to 3.35, suggesting a Moderate to Strong level of agreement. Teachers expressed the Strongest level of agreement with the statement, *Now, I frequently use technology to teach online when it is needed*, which received a mean score of 3.35. In contrast, the statement *At first, I was ready for the switch to online teaching* received the lowest mean score of 2.43, indicating less agreement among participants. Additionally, instructors showed a Strong level of agreement on items numbered 7, 11, 12, and 13, while they demonstrated a Moderate level of agreement on items numbered 1 through 10 and item 8, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 2

All Domains of Teachers' Identity Transformation

**Table 8**

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Perspectives on the Influence of Online Teaching on Professional Identity Transformation

Domain	Mean	Std	Rank	Level of Agreement
The impact of online teaching on social relations with colleagues and learners.	3.16	.41	1	Strong
Effectiveness of online teaching.	3.04	.34	2	Strong
The impact of online teaching on professional self-awareness and self-esteem.	3.00	.42	3	Strong
Personal satisfaction toward professional and technical skills during online teaching.	2.94	.38	4	Moderate
Overall	3.10	.30		Strong

Domain	Mean	Std	Rank	Level of Agreement	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
The impact of online teaching on social relations with	3.16	.41	1	Strong	64%	32%	4%

Domain	Mean	Std	Rank	Level of Agreement	% in Strong	% in Average	% in Low
colleagues and learners							
Effectiveness of online teaching	3.04	.34	2	Strong	58%	38%	4%
The impact of online teaching on professional self-awareness and self-esteem	3.00	.42	3	Strong	62%	34%	4%
Personal satisfaction toward professional and technical skills during online teaching	2.94	.38	4	Moderate	52%	44%	4%
Overall	3.10	.30		Strong	59%	37%	4%

The findings of this study were organized into four distinct domains, each reflecting different aspects of instructors' experiences with online teaching.

Domain One: Impact on Social Relations

The first domain focused on the effects of online teaching on social relationships with peers and students, which received the highest average score among the four domains. This indicated that instructors felt positively about how online teaching influenced their interactions and relationships within the educational environment. The ability to maintain or even enhance social connections through digital platforms suggested that instructors found value in the collaborative aspects of online education.

Domain Two: Effectiveness of Online Teaching

The second domain examined the perceived effectiveness of online teaching. Instructors reported a generally favorable view of how effective their online teaching methods were in

facilitating learning. This domain reflected their confidence in utilizing technology to deliver content and engage students, highlighting a shift in teaching practices that adapted to new learning environments.

Domain Three: Professional Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem

The third domain addressed the impact of online teaching on instructors' professional self-awareness and self-esteem. While there was a positive perception in this area, it ranked lower than the previous two domains. This suggested that while instructors recognized some benefits to their self-awareness as educators, there were still challenges in fully embracing their identities within the online teaching context.

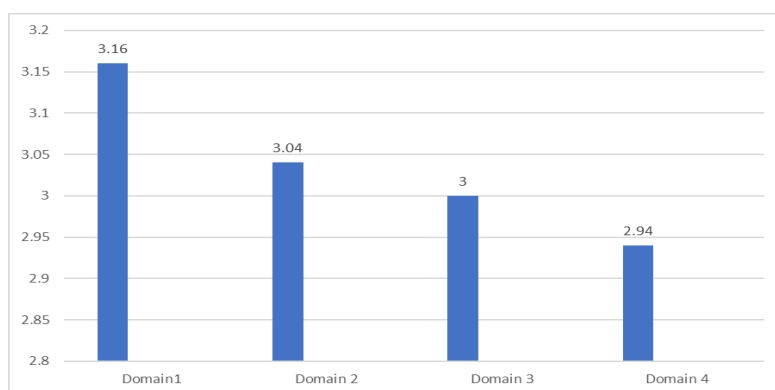
Domain Four: Personal Satisfaction with Skills

Lastly, the fourth domain, which received the lowest score, pertained to instructors' personal satisfaction with their professional and technical skills during virtual teaching. This indicated that despite some positive experiences, instructors may have felt less confident or satisfied with their skill sets in adapting to online environments. This domain highlighted a potential area for improvement, suggesting that further professional development and training could enhance instructors' confidence in their technical abilities.

Table 8 above illustrates the perceptions of instructors regarding the transformation of EFL educators' identities during online teaching across four domains, with mean scores ranging from 2.91 to 3.16, indicating Moderate to Strong levels of agreement (see Figure below). The domain concerning the effects of virtual teaching on social relationships with colleagues and students received the highest ranking, achieving a mean score of 3.16 and a strong level of consensus. In contrast, the domain related to personal satisfaction regarding professional and technical skills in the virtual teaching context stood fourth, with a mean score of 2.92 and a moderate level of consensus. Overall, the moderate score reflecting teachers' perceptions was 3.10, which corresponds to a Strong level of consensus, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Results of the Four Domains



As mentioned before there were four domains. Here domain one is connected to the influence of virtual teaching on social connections with peers and students, the second domain is the effectiveness of online teaching, the third domain is the influence of online teaching on professional self-awareness and self-esteem, and the last domain is the personal satisfaction toward professional and technical skills during virtual teaching. The findings are summarized in above Table. These findings illustrated a complex picture of EFL instructors' experiences with online teaching. While there were notable strengths in social relations and perceived effectiveness, there were also areas where instructors sought greater satisfaction and confidence in their professional identities. Addressing these challenges through targeted support and resources could have helped enhance both instructor satisfaction and student outcomes.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate Iranian university EFL instructors' perceptions of professional identity transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic when they mood of teaching was shifted to online teaching. The findings helped to figure out how online education has influenced multiple dimensions of teachers' professional roles and self-perceptions in the context of Iran.

Concerning the impact on social relations, teachers reported a strong level of agreement (Mean 3.16) regarding the transformation of their interpersonal relationships with colleagues and learners. Most instructors felt that online teaching helped them actively engage with technology and communicate more effectively, although understanding others was rated slightly low. The social relations domain got the highest agreement levels. This showed that teachers thought online teaching helped their interactions with colleagues and students in a good way. These results align with Fallah et al.'s (2021a, 2021b, 2022, 2023, 2024) studies, which suggested Iranian EFL teachers used digital platforms well to keep and even improve their social and work connections, even though they were far apart. These findings are also aligning with other studies which indicated that technology can help teachers work together and communicate better (Smith & Doe, 2020; Lee, 2021).

The effectiveness of online teaching was perceived positively (Mean = 3.04), with instructors indicating that technology enhanced their teaching practices and knowledge. However, personal excitement and changes in teaching values were rated moderately, suggesting some challenges in adapting to new teaching roles.

About the effectiveness of online teaching, the teachers felt confident that technology changed their teaching and helped them reach learning objectives. This result matches Fallah et al. (2022) study results, which showed that teachers' professional growth is related to how well they apply technology in their teaching. However, some answers showed only moderate agreement about feeling excited or understanding things better. This means teachers still had mixed feelings and found it hard to adjust. This matches what Brown et al. (2022) and Zimmer et al. (2021) suggested about the challenges of shifting to online teaching.

This means that teachers experienced mixed feelings and faced challenges in adjusting to online teaching. Many reported both positive and negative emotions, such as excitement about new technologies, but also stress, uncertainty, and a sense of isolation due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Some teachers struggled with technical issues, adapting their teaching methods, and maintaining engagement with students, which made the transition challenging. This aligns with findings from Brown et al. (2022) and Zimmer et al. (2021), who highlighted that the shift to online teaching often leads to emotional and professional challenges, including feelings of being overwhelmed, difficulties in building rapport, and the need for ongoing support to adapt successfully.

Teachers experienced strong transformation in their self-awareness and self-esteem (Mean = 3.00). Many reported that online teaching helped them reflect on their professional identity and change their perspective about themselves as educators. For professional self-awareness and self-esteem, the teachers noticed changes in how they saw themselves because of online teaching, but there was less agreement about this than for social relations or effectiveness. This is like what Fallah et al. (2021a) found they said that thinking about themselves and changing their identity was important, but also difficult, when teaching online. The results are also aligning with the results of other studies, like Johnson and Taylor (2021), who showed that teachers grew and changed their identities, but sometimes felt unsure or found it hard. Instructors showed moderate satisfaction (Mean = 2.94) with their technical skills and professional growth. While most felt comfortable using technology, some still faced initial challenges and required time to become proficient.

The area of personal satisfaction with professional and technical skills was the biggest concern, because teachers only showed a moderate level of agreement. This means many teachers were not fully happy or confident with their skills. This matches Fallah et al.'s (2022) research, which said teachers need special training in technology and teaching methods to feel more confident when teaching online. Other studies, like Harris and Wang (2020), also found that knowing how to use technology is a big challenge when moving to online classes. The fact that teachers were not fully ready or confident shows that schools and universities need to give more help and training so teachers can do well with online teaching.

Overall, the results showed how Iranian EFL teachers changed their professional identity. The teachers were able to adapt and stay strong, and they had good views about the social and teaching parts of online learning. However, they still faced problems with technology and confidence. These findings showed that it is very important to have strong support, including regular training with technology, chances to think about their work, and ways to connect with others. This will help teachers develop their professional identity in a complete and balanced way. For practical help, universities and policy makers should give teachers ongoing training about using technology and new teaching methods online. Creating supportive groups where teachers can share ideas and help each other can make social connections stronger and help teachers shape their professional identity, both during and after the pandemic.

Conclusion

This study attempted to find out how online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic changed how Iranian EFL university teachers saw themselves as teachers. The researchers did a survey with 35 teachers. They asked about four important domains: social relations, teaching effectiveness, self-awareness and self-esteem, and satisfaction with professional and technical skills. The most important result was that online teaching helped teachers make better social connections with their students and colleges. It also made their teaching experience richer and helped them feel more confident as professionals. These results show that digital education can be hard but also gives teachers more power, helping them to adapt and stay strong during big changes. This study agrees with and adds to other research from Iran and around the world that says digital skills and thinking about their own identity are becoming more important for language teachers. These findings are significant because they show that online education can change how teachers see themselves and their work in a good way, but only if teachers get the support they need. Giving teachers regular training and helping them join groups where they can share ideas and help each other are very important for keeping their professional identity strong. These ideas are not just useful for language teachers they can also help teachers in other university subjects as they move to teaching online.

As all the studies this study had some limitations. There were only a small number of teachers, and they were all Iranian university English teachers. This means the results might not work for teachers in other places or subjects. The answers also came from self-report surveys, so teachers might not have shared everything, or there might be some bias. Also, the study only looked at teachers' ideas at one time and did not see how their feelings changed over time. To get better results in the future, researchers should study more teachers from different subjects and places, not just Iranian EFL teachers. They should also use different ways to collect data, like doing interviews or watching teachers in their classes. Studying teachers over a longer period would show how their thoughts and identities change as they teach online longer. The small, convenience-based sample, the reliance on self-report data, and the very short data-collection window are all meaningful constraints which could be taken care in future studies.

It is recommended that universities and policymakers invest in continuous digital training and encourage supportive teacher groups. These will give way for instructors overcome technical challenges, increase confidence in online teaching. Policy changes that value teacher well-being and professional development are necessary for success in today's digital education environment. In summary, this study highlighted that while online teaching brings challenges, it can also create new opportunities for growth and connection among university teachers. By acknowledging both the benefits and barriers, and by actively supporting educators, institutions can ensure a brighter future for teaching and learning in the digital world .

Bio-data

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Funding: This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Declaration of Competing Interest: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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