



Research Paper

The Relationships between Gender Identity and Teacher Success in Iranian EFL Context

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ABSTRACT

The current study sought to investigate, from the perspectives of male and female English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, the relationships between gender identity and the success of EFL teachers. In order to achieve this goal, 420 EFL teachers—200 men and 220 women—participated in the study. The teachers were delivering English instruction at several language schools located in Alborz and Tehran. Convenience sampling method was used to choose the participants. The design used in this study was correlational. The participants were given the Masculinity/Femininity Scale and the Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale to gather data. The participants completed the scales over the course of a month. Following data collection, the data were analyzed using the Pearson product-moment correlation technique. The results demonstrated a significant relationship between gender identity and the success of male and female teachers. The study concludes with a discussion of the implications for syllabus designers, policy makers, administrators, EFL instructors, and EFL pre-service teachers.

Keywords: EFL Context, EFL Teachers, Gender Identity, Teacher Success

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are regarded as the most important component of every educational establishment. Put differently, the effectiveness of any educational institution is determined by the quality of its teachers (Pishghadam et al., 2011). In a similar vein, successful teachers are essential to students' success (Amini, 2019). Particularly when students who are having learning difficulties are taken into consideration, the qualities of teachers stand out. However, given the wide range of meanings attached to the term "good," providing an appropriate definition for good instructors can be challenging (Kalay, 2017). According to several researchers (Elizabeth et al., 2008; Hiebert et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2021; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009), the meaning varies depending on the circumstances. In addition, while considering a correct definition, the question "good in terms of what?" comes to mind (Kalay, 2017, p. 25). The characteristics of a successful EFL instructor have been highlighted since the 1920s. In the EFL field, the majority of research in the relevant literature has examined the perspectives of instructors or learners. From the perspective of the students, successful teachers are usually those who stand out in terms of the subject matter, instructional resources, understanding of the syllabus, use of unique techniques, and teacher-student interactions (Kalay, 2017). It is a challenge to illustrate a teacher's favorable characteristics. Everybody defines a successful instructor differently. Students observe, perceive, and/or experience successful teachers in a variety of ways (Moreno Rubio, 2009). A successful teacher ought to be a perfectionist who is also affable, kind, sympathetic, passionate, humorous, intelligent, sensitive, open, and have a kind teaching style. Intelligence is just one factor, though (Moreno Rubio, 2009). As to Gibbs (2002), teachers need to possess the resilience to face the challenges, issues, and impediments that accompany diverse instructional scenarios. He believed that inventive, adaptive, flexible, and prepared for failure were essential qualities of a successful teacher. Stronge et al. (2004) state that an excellent instructor could have a psychological effect on learners which could have a big impact on their academic performance. The qualities of an effective teacher have been the subject of several research (e.g., Amini et al., 2019; Hiebert et al., 2007; Jiang et al., 2021); however, the teacher success could have significant relationships with the other variables, such as teacher's gender identity.

Noorbakhsh et al. (2018) suggest that teacher preparation may be improved by considering the potential impact of gender roles on student instruction. Gender identity is an alternative term for it. Gender roles can vary among cultures and ethnic groups, but the concept of gender is one of the central and basic elements of personality, according to Bem (1974, as cited in Pishghadam et al., 2016). It is defined as an individual's internalized knowledge of what it means to be a male or female in a particular situation (Stets & Burke, 2000). It is commonly believed that men are more severe, authoritative, and competitive, whereas women are more helpful, humble, and caring (Hofstede, 1980, as cited in Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). In academic contexts, male teachers are regarded to be more critical, focused on student quality, and competitive, whereas female teachers are considered to be more forgiving, promote teamwork and social skills, and give special emphasis to building connection with students. Evaluating these aspects of instructors in relation to the material they teach might have insightful educational consequences (Pishghadam et al., 2016).

Exploring gender identity in the educational setting is adequately covered in empirical literature (Pishghadam et al., 2016). Nevertheless, some scholars (Aberg, 2008; Braun, 2011) have criticized teacher education for failing to address gender identity of language teachers. In other words, researchers and



scholars have scarcely ever examined the notions of masculinity and femininity as they relate to language teachers, and several scholars have criticized teacher education for not yet filling the gap in the literature (e.g., Aberg, 2008; Braun, 2011; Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). The literature has given little attention to the perceived perspectives and implications of masculinity and femininity associated with EFL teachers in the Iranian context (e.g. Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has examined the connections between English teachers' gender identity and success as teachers from the perspectives of male and female teachers. This study aims to bridge this gap in the body of literature. Effective educational procedures are difficult to anticipate unless the instructor possesses the necessary credentials and accomplishments (Sahan, 2009). Since a lack of competent instructors may seriously impede education, it appears that knowing the characteristics that might contribute to teacher success, such as teachers' gender identity, is vital for Iranian educators (Noorbakhsh et al., 2018). However, the results would be valuable for the present body of research on teacher education. The findings may also be included into EFL teacher pre- and in-service training programs that emphasize their practical needs. Increasing students' knowledge of prevalent gender identities, their manifestations, and their impacts in language learning programs may be beneficial. Therefore, the present study aimed at answering the following questions:

RQ1: Is there any statistically significant relationship between female teachers' success and gender identity?

RQ2: Is there any statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and gender identity?

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of scholars have investigated many traits that might contribute to teacher success while taking into account the personal characteristics of teachers. Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), for instance, identified effective EFL teachers and found that (in the opinion of the learners), the personality of their instructors is the most important indicator of their performance. Similar to this, Kim et al. (2019) examined, through a meta-analysis, if there was a significant positive association between the personalities of teachers and work-related results. Their findings demonstrated that teacher performance was positively correlated with the Big Five categories (with the exception of agreeableness), particularly for teaching evaluations. Additionally, burnout was inversely correlated with teachers' emotional stability, extroversion, and conscientiousness. Compared to self-reports, other reports of teacher personality had a stronger correlation with outcomes. In addition, Toussi et al. (2011) investigated the connection between the success of 76 EFL teachers and their ability to self-regulate. The participants were given the scale to evaluate EFL teachers' self-regulation. Students were given the Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ) to assess their performance. They investigated the relationship between EFL instructors' success and their capacity for self-regulate. Likewise, Khodabakhshzadeh et al. (2018) conducted similar research on the effect of instructors' originality on their efficacy and 325 EFL teachers were randomly chosen as the sample. After conducting data analysis, they looked at any connections between the teacher success variable and the five creative components. The findings show a significant connection between five creativity subscales and effective teaching. Additionally, the findings revealed a strong correlation between teachers' creativity and their gender.



In the study of Pishghadam et al. (2016), two goals were pursued: first, to identify and compare the prevalent gender identity of English, Arabic, and Persian instructors; and second, to design and validate a masculinity/femininity questionnaire. Using data obtained from 300 junior high school students, SEM was utilized to confirm the construct validity of a 30-item gender identification scale that was developed to accomplish the first goal. 623 additional students rated their 130 teachers in relation to the second goal. According to the findings, teachers of Arabic, Persian, and English were more likely to be masculine than English teachers. Furthermore, it was found that English teachers tended to be more feminine and less masculine than their counterparts in Arabic and Persian. In addition, Asanti (2016) investigated the gender identity formation of some Indonesian women EFL teachers as they had experiences in advancing their study abroad. The study adopted a qualitative methodology within a feminist framework. Through self-completion questionnaires and focus group interviews, the participants shared their lived-experiences and their adjustments as they were exposed to different cultural movements transnationally, between Indonesia and another country. The findings reveal how the processes of gender identity construction were formed through governmental policy and sociocultural values in the society. The findings also show how for these women EFL teachers their professional milieu was a site of contestation for women to promote their status in the society and gender equality. Moreover, Maleknia et al. (2022) investigated language teacher gendered identity formation, focusing on three dimensions of gender-based constraints, gender-based discrimination, and gender-based attitudes toward the teaching profession. To analyze the data, content analysis was conducted on the narratives of a male and a female EFL teacher. The results indicated that the participants experienced a completely opposite professional status based on their gender and the impact of the dominant gender-based ideologies and patriarchal structure in their society. Whereas the female teacher suffered from the existing constraints and discrimination resulting from her gender, the male teacher was more concerned about his economic status as men are breadwinners based on their social norms.

METHOD

Participants

Four hundreds twenty EFL teachers, 200 men and 220 women, participated in the current study who were providing English instruction in several language centers located in Alborz and Tehran provinces. Convenience sampling, a sort of non-probability sampling, was the technique used to choose the sample (Ary et al., 2018). They had more than two years teaching experience, and 282 teachers were English B.A. holders, 111 teachers were English M.A. holder, 20 teachers were Ph.D. candidates, and seven teachers were Ph.D. holders. All of the teachers passed the teacher training course (TTC) of the institutes.

Instruments

The Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Scale (TSS), developed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009), was used to assess the efficacy and success of language instructors. This measure, which was created in Persian, consists of 47 items with the choices "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" on a 5-point Likert scale. Upon reliability analysis, it was found to be within the permitted range ($r=.919$). The content validity of the scale was confirmed by three TEFL Ph.D. holders.

The Masculinity/Femininity Scale (MFS), developed by Pishghadam et al. (2016), was used to measure the gender identity of the teachers. It was developed in Persian and contained thirty adjectives.



Adjectives like kind, smart, and friendly are used to describe masculinity; open-minded, affluent, and well-dressed are used to describe androgyny; and knowledgeable, educated, and consultable are used to describe femininity. Its reliability was measured, and it was in an acceptable range ($r=.92$). The content validity of the scale was confirmed by three TEFL Ph.D. holders.

Procedures

Data Collection Procedures

This research was in the form of a correlational design. The participants were selected from different language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces, Iran. The teachers have been teaching different English courses. Convenience sampling was the technique used to choose the samples. Therefore, the accessibility and availability of the participants was the main criterion of sample selection in the present study. The researchers explained the aim of the research to the managers of the English language institutes and after getting their permission to gather the data from their teachers, he explained the study's purpose to the instructors, completely. Upon their agreement to take part in the study, they were considered as the participants of the study.

The data were gathered at different language institutes in Tehran and Alborz provinces with the participation of 420 English language teachers who willingly helped the researcher. The researcher's intention of selecting these numbers of the participants (420 EFL teachers) was having a true representative sample.

Two questionnaires were employed in the current study that were mentioned in instrumentation section, and the participants completed each questionnaire during 15-20 minutes. The data were collected during four months. The data was gathered at the teachers' rooms of the institutes where teachers could rest and study there. Before administrating the questionnaires, the researchers explained the procedure of answering questionnaires. They explained that the results of the questionnaires were confidential and do not have any effects on their careers in the institutes to minimize the participants' bias in their responses.

Data Analysis Procedures

Following data collection, the relationships between the targeted variables were examined using the Pearson product-moment correlation method. R stands for the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which expresses the degree of a linear relationship between two variables. The data analysis was done using SPSS (version 24). Moreover, Cronbach alpha was used to measure the scales' degree of reliability.

RESULTS

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

This section provides information about the respondents' demographics, including their gender, age, level of education, and work experience.

Gender Distribution of Respondents

In this section, the descriptive statistics of participants responding to the questionnaires is described. The following table shows the descriptive data related to the gender of the participants.



Table 1*Frequency Distribution of Participants' Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Frequency Percentage
Male	200	47.62%
Female	220	52.38%
Total	420	100

As shown in Table 1, 47.62% of the participants are male and 52.38% of them are female, i.e. 200 respondents are male and 220 of them are female. Graph 1 also shows the gender composition of the respondents.

Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Years of Experience

The following table shows the descriptive data related to the respondents' years of experience.

Table 2*Distribution of Respondents in Terms of Years of Experience*

Years of service	Frequency	Frequency Percentage
Less than a year	71	16.9%
5- 10 years	103	24.52%
10-15 years	112	26.66%
15-20 years	65	15.48%
20 years and over	69	16.43%
Total	420	100

Table 2 indicates that 16.9% of participants had less than a year's experience, followed by 24.52% with 5 to 10 years, 26.66% with 10 to 15 years, 15.48% with 15 to 20 years, and 16.43% with more than 20 years.

Distribution of Participants in Terms of Education Level

The following table shows the descriptive data related to the level of education.

Table 3*Frequency Distribution of Participants' Education Levels*

Education level	Frequency	Frequency Percentage
Bachelor	282	67.14%
Master	111	26.43%
Ph.D. student	20	4.76%
Ph.D.	7	1.66%
Total	420	100

As can be seen in Table 3, 67.14% have a bachelor's degree, 26.43% have a master's degree, 4.76% are Ph.D. students and 1.66% have a Ph.D. degree.

Distribution of Participants in Terms of Age

The following table shows descriptive data related to age.

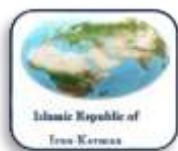


Table 4*Frequency Distribution of Participants' Age*

Age	Frequency	Frequency Percentage
20 to 25 years	83	19.76%
25 to 30 years	148	35.24%
30 to 35 years	95	22.62%
35 to 40 years	63	15.00%
Over 40 years	31	7.38%
Total	420	100

Table 4 illustrates that 19.76% of the participants are between the ages of 20 and 25, 35.24% are between the ages of 25 and 30, 22.62% are between the ages of 30 and 35, 15% are between the ages of 35 and 40, and 7.38% are older than 40.

Statistical Description of Research Variables and its Dimensions

The descriptive statistics of research variables are given in Table 5.

Table 5*Descriptive Indicators of Research Variables*

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Statistic	Standard error	Statistic	Standard error
Gender identity	420	3.79	0.71	-0.818	0.119	1.167	0.238
Success	420	3.83	0.55	-0.975	0.119	1.164	0.238

Based on Table 5, which investigates the descriptive statistics of the variables derived from the indicators within the sample, the mean of the variables in the sample is greater than the value or cut-off point of 3, i.e., in the sample of respondents, their amount of gender identity and success is higher than the mean value, and there is relative agreement in the sample. On the other hand, the dispersion in the responses of individuals in the sample must be greater than the cut-off point of 0.5 for a variable. All values of the standard deviation of each variable in the sample for the present study is greater than the cut-off point of 0.5.

Testing the Normality of Data

The normality of the distribution of data should be checked in the description of observations through two indicators of skewness and kurtosis. The necessary condition is that the indicators (items) must have a skewness value between -3 and 3 and their kurtosis value must be between -5 and 5. In the normality of data distribution of variables, the researcher must act according to Klein's opinion with two necessary and sufficient conditions to examine the indicators and variables. Since the data have been obtained through a questionnaire and spectrum, the only method for investigation is the skewness and kurtosis indicators and



place the observations in certain intervals. As shown in Table 5, two necessary and sufficient conditions were examined, and it was found that the data distribution of the research variables has a bell-shaped and normal pattern.

Inferential Statistics

Addressing the First Research Question

"Is there any statistically significant relationship between female teachers' success and gender identity?"

To determine the significance of the relationship between female teachers' success and gender identity, first, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.

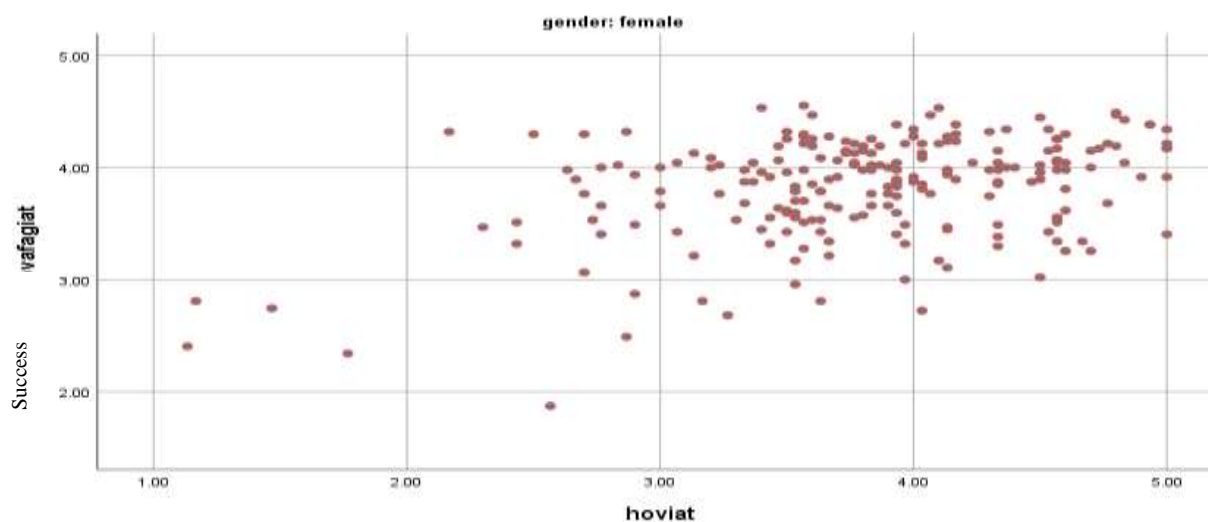
Table 6

Correlation Coefficient between Female Teachers' Success and Gender Identity

	Pearson correlation	Female teachers' success
Gender identity	Number (n)	220
	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.390
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to Table 6, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This means that at the 99% probability level, the H01 is rejected, and the H1, which is the research hypothesis, becomes significant.

Therefore, there is a significant relationship between female teachers' success and gender identity. Based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between female teachers' success and gender identity is moderate. Graph 1 shows the scatter graph for the correlation between female teachers' success and gender identity.



Graph 1. Scatter graph for correlation between female teachers' success and gender identity

Addressing the Second Research Question

"Is there any statistically significant relationship between male teachers' success and gender identity?"



To determine the significance of the relationship between male teachers' success and gender identity, first, Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables are calculated and investigated.

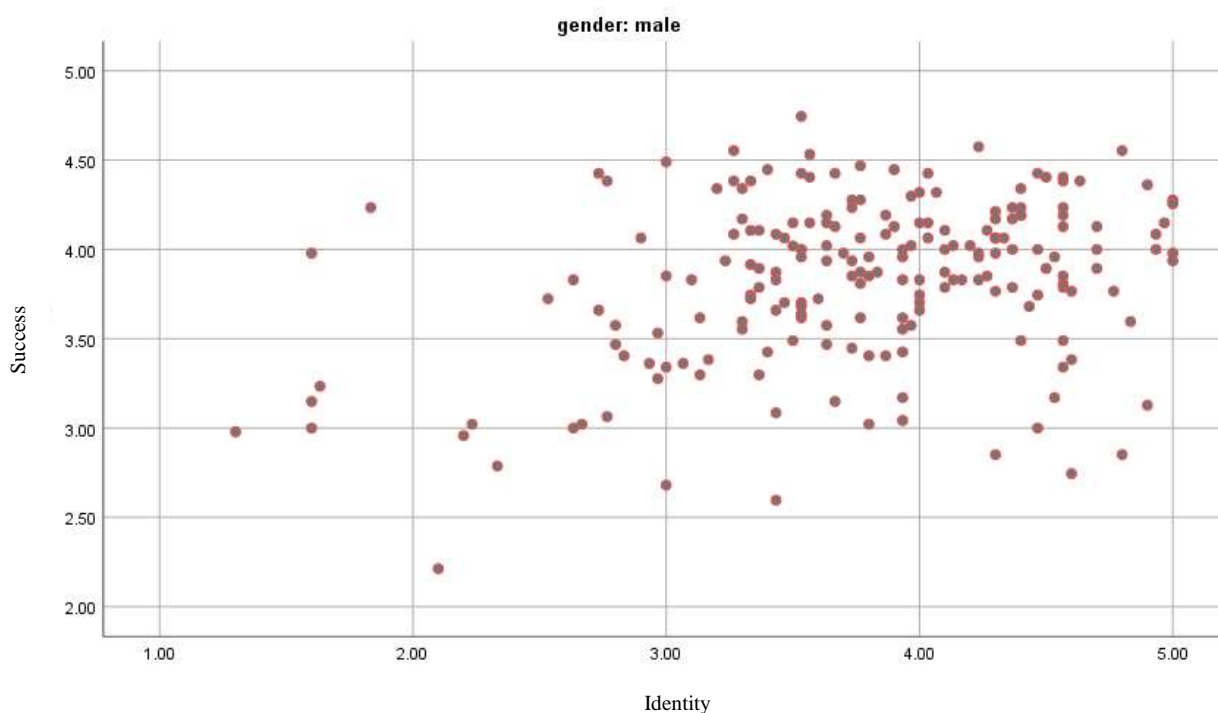
Table 7

Correlation Coefficient between Male Teachers' Success and Gender Identity

	Pearson correlation	Male teachers' success
	Number (n)	200
Gender identity	Correlation coefficient (r)	0.321
	Significance level (sig)	0.001

According to Table 7, it can be seen that based on the level of significance, this value is less than the error of the first type, the value of which is 0.01. This means that at the 99% probability level, the H02 is rejected, and the H2, which is the research hypothesis, becomes significant.

Therefore, there is a significant relationship between male teachers' success and gender identity. Based on correlation coefficient, it is determined that the intensity of the relationship between male teachers' success and gender identity is moderate. Graph 2 shows the scatter graph for the correlation between male teachers' success and gender identity.



Graph 2. Scatter graph for correlation between male teachers' success and gender identity

DISCUSSION

The results demonstrated a significant relationship between gender identity and the success of male and female teachers. The results are consistent with Pishghadam et al. (2016), who looked at and compared



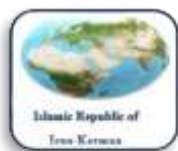
the common gender identities of English, Arabic, and Persian instructors. Their results indicated that English instructors tended to be more feminine, while Arabic and Persian instructors tended to be more masculine. This is not surprising given the significant correlation between teacher success and gender identity. Furthermore, the results align with the research conducted by Norbakhsh et al. (2018), who examined the connections between teachers' gender identities and their professional successes, discovering that both androgyny and stroke were significant determinants of teacher success. As a result, the concepts of femininity and masculinity might have an effect on how well students are taught and so contribute to more successful teacher preparation. Regarding the significance of masculinity, it is argued that EFL teachers who exhibit more masculine traits pay more attention to their students, feel more at ease making equal amounts of eye contact, and care more about their students because Iranian culture is predominantly collective, hierarchical, and masculine-based (Hofstede, 1983). From a psychological perspective, gender has not received much attention from researchers (Yazdanpour, 2015). It is discovered that receiving negative conditional verbal strokes, abstaining from receiving strokes, and receiving positive nonverbal strokes all significantly alter the moods of male and female teachers (Almutairi & Shraid, 2021). Notwithstanding, in spite of this difference, at older ages gender differences decrease and the L2 performance become the same for men and women (Mashhadlou & Izadpanah, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to investigate, from the perspectives of male and female Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors, the relationships between teacher success and gender identity. There are implications for syllabus designers, policy makers, administrators, EFL instructors, and EFL pre-service teachers from this study. The study's findings contribute to the corpus of knowledge on the success of EFL teachers in a variety of ways. A deeper understanding of the factors associated with and predictive of EFL instructor success helps direct efforts to enhance teaching abilities. Effective attitudes and behaviors used by instructors can eventually have a good impact on their students' lives based on Gourneau (2005). Therefore, the most important finding is to change teachers' behaviors and attitudes so that they can improve student learning outcomes. In order to meet the practical needs of EFL instructors, these findings ought to be included into pre- and in-service teacher training programs, considering the importance of pre-service training in maintaining or changing belief systems (Koc, 2013). Knowing the elements that may lead to teacher success could be essential to teacher trainers as a lack of successful teachers may seriously hinder student achievements. Effective educational processes are difficult to expect in the absence of a teacher who possesses the necessary qualifications (Sahan, 2009). Teachers who are well-prepared may effectively impart to their learners the information, awareness, creativity, self-efficacy, and other abilities that they demand. Finally, policy-makers, instructional planners, and administrators could apply the findings to improve Iranian EFL teacher education. Based on Darling-Hammond (2010), policy-makers believed that the enhancement of teacher quality is a crucial method for developing educational achievements. Educational systems might make use of these findings to raise the standard of instruction in general and of language instruction in particular.

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