Original Article

Early Career vs. Long Career Iranian EFL Teacher's Identity Perception

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Abstract

Language Teachers' awareness of their identity can affect their professional development and efficiency. Research proves that such awareness is subject to change over time due to the institutional and dynamic educational contexts. This study aimed at investigating the perception of identity by the early career vs. long career Iranian EFL teachers. A Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 30 items was developed and administered to 120 novice and experienced teachers to inquire about teacher identity. Factor analysis was employed to obtain six factors of interpretable structure including career identity, interactional identity, institutional identity, professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity. The most significant factor perceived by both novice teachers and experienced teachers was situated identity and the least significant was recognized to be the institutional identity. The results showed that there is a medium relationship between years of teaching experience and identity. A small relationship was also found between teachers' gender and identity.

Keywords: EFL, Experienced Teacher, Gender, Iran, Novice Teacher, Teacher identity

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1. Introduction

Teachers in the first years of their career require high-quality and structured support to become experienced. Early career teachers must be able to develop the knowledge and practice that set them up for a successful and long career in teaching. They struggle to gain real-life experiences in teaching to make their selves. As Berliner (2004) explains "novice teachers are inflexible, rational, and follow the programs and rules given to them, and they just focus on problems in the classroom" (p. 206). They then become proficient to make decisions and turn out to be flexible (Berliner, 2004). Experienced teachers can react quickly to situations in the classroom (Ruppar et al., 2014; Wolff et al., 2016).

Teachers' beliefs about students, their teaching foci, and their roles and responsibilities at various stages of their careers (pre-service, beginning, or experienced) have great impacts on their teaching practices. Teachers, consciously or unconsciously, play a crucial role in the classroom. It is the duty of every good teacher to help the students. When students feel that they are being cared for, appreciated, and loved they are motivated and enjoy learning. Then teachers should focus on changing their behaviors, competencies, and beliefs, namely, they ought to develop their own identities as teachers (Korthagen, 2004). A teacher's identity affects his/her sense of purpose, self-efficacy, motivation, commitment, job satisfaction, and effectiveness (Day et al., 2006). The importance of teacher identity is that teachers' values, beliefs, and tendencies guide their thinking.

A teacher's professional identity is rebuilt over time along with the changes in the environment and expansion of his/her role in the workplace (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The development of the professional identity can help the teacher show more effective and appropriate teaching practices and build better communication with the students (Day, 2002).

Teacher professional identity has been highly in focus in research on teacher education over the last few years. Several studies have confirmed that teachers' professional identity is influenced by factors such as decision making, the teacher's classroom performance, their withdrawal from teaching, and the way they deal with learning-related problems and anxieties (Berliner, 2001, 2004; Bousfield, 2017). However, the role of experience has not yet been probed empirically. The influence of experience on teacher identity can only be determined by comparing experienced with novice teachers.

This study aims to meet the need for an examination of teacher identity and its components in novice and experienced English teachers more precisely.

2. Literature Review

Identity, by definition, refers to the qualities, beliefs, personality, and expression that make a person. It is the behavior that an individual experience during a whole lifetime (Beijaard et al., 2004). People have many different identities and roles based on the situation and relationships in which they are engaged (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Identity, by nature, is a dynamic process that involves continuous interpretation of one's experiences throughout their life (Kerby, 1991). Beijaard (1995) believes that identity includes the different images that a person has of him/herself or others about him/her, which determines who or what the person is. It refers to the different roles an individual plays in society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). As it is influenced by personal experiences, as well as environmental, institutional, social, and cultural factors, identity is a dynamic process that is constantly being created and recreated (Bloome et al., 2005).

Pennington and Richards (2016) view identity as a set of special and unique personal characteristics seen by others, the understanding of which depends on (a) individuals' physical characteristics, capacities, and aptitudes; (b) their social status; and (c) their relationship and associates with various groups. It is also noted that the activities and contexts in which a person is situated should not be ignored in understanding the identity of the person (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Teachers' awareness of their identity can affect their professional development and efficiency, making them more eager to deal with the educational change and implement creativity and innovation in their practical teaching (Beijaard et al., 2000). A language teacher should also be provided with an awareness of the teaching/learning context specifics to develop a proper professional identity (Eslammdoost, et al., 2020) Gholamshahi et al. (2021) also studied the EFL teachers' imposed identity through a self-developed inventory. They suggested that an awareness of the imposed identity can help language teachers assess their identity for more teaching effectiveness and improvement. The relationships a teacher has in the class, school, and community can change their identity. Identity is, thus, recognized as an analytic lens through which different aspects of teachers' instructional performance are investigated. For Xu (2013), identity is a social

cognitive structure and emphasizes the innate features of identity, so more effort is needed to investigate this issue. A review of the relevant literature reveals that teacher identity has been examined from different perspectives. Varghese et al. (2005) explored three theoretical frameworks (social identity theory, situated identity theory, and image-text concept) for theorizing language teacher identity, while Farrell (2011) perused the professional role identities of three ESL teachers. A teacher's professional identity helps them have more effective and appropriate practice and shape their beliefs and relationships with students (Wilson, 2001, as cited in Day, 2006).

The professional identity of a language teacher may be related to their mastery of the language and their years of teaching experience (Kelchtermans, 1993; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Abdinia (2012) reported on the participation of a critical EFL teacher training course in rebuilding the professional identity of Iranian teachers, point out three shifts in teacher professional identities. Xu (2013) observed the formation and change of the EFL teachers' professional identity for four years and concluded that imaginary identities can change because of the institutional and the dynamic educational contexts. Karimi and Mofidi (2019) tried to discover L2 teacher identity development and concluded that initiatives of teacher education should create a clear focus on the teacher identity. Richter et al. (2021) believe that it is necessary to explore the components of teacher professional identity to develop more effective teacher education programs with the ultimate aim of better teacher training and subsequent more efficient student achievement.

There have recently been studies focusing on certain dimensions of language teacher identity; however, this study has specifically paid attention to the interplay between EFL teacher identity, experience (novice and expert), and the possible role of gender (male and female) in the context of Iran. The research attempted to answer the following questions.

1. How do Iranian EFL teachers perceive teacher identity?
2. Does experience have a role in Iranian EFL teachers' perception of teacher identity?
3. Does gender have a role in Iranian EFL teachers' perception of teacher identity?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

A quantitative method design was utilized in this research. The advantage of quantitative **research** is in collecting computational data from a particular group. The

rationale for using this descriptive survey was because the present research intended to study if the experience of teachers can influence the teacher's identity perception. One additional aim was to find out if gender as a moderating variable can play a role in forming the teacher's perceived identity. In an attempt to identify the components, it was decided to use a questionnaire for collecting data. This questionnaire was also piloted, and its reliability and related validity were assessed. In this study, the quantitative variable was the length of the teachers' careers which was inspected by a questionnaire.

The method used in this study was based on the descriptive research method. The first phase was an attempt to design the research pattern using descriptive methods, reviewing previous research, and analyzing the obtained results through related software. The reliable and valid questionnaire was distributed to a large sample of Iranian EFL teachers in institutes/schools. In the subsequent sections, the phase will be elaborated on thoroughly.

3.2. Participants

English is a mandatory subject taught in secondary education in Iran. The majority of English language teachers are non-native speakers, and most of them are practicing in secondary education (junior high school and high school) or foreign language institutes. The participants included 120 English language teachers in 1-12 districts of 22 municipal districts in Tehran. There were 60 novice teachers with a work career of 1 to 4 years of teaching and 60 expert teachers with a work career of more than 6 years of teaching (Richards & Farrell. 2005). Gender was also an important category in this study, th 60 female teachers and 60 male teachers participated in this study (See Table 1).

Non-random data collection method was used, as it aimed to bring together experienced and inexperienced teachers. All teachers participating in this research were made aware of the purpose of filling in the questionnaire.

Table 1.

Demographic Background of the Participants

No. of Teachers	120
Gender	60 Females & 60 Males
Districts	1-12 Districts of 22 Municipal Districts in Tehran

3.3. Instrument

The data were collected through a modified version of the identity questionnaire developed originally by Xiong and Xiong (2017). It was altered into a Likert scale format to allow the participants to choose their opinions according to five items (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree). Certain changes were also made to comply with the Iranian context.

The questionnaire was examined for content and face validity by an expert in EFL teacher education. A factor analysis was also run to provide evidence of the construct validity for the measurement instrument.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was used as a data collecting instrument, concerning the variables and the relationship between the research components. In order to prepare the items of the questionnaire, some prominent university professors were consulted. Then the final questionnaire was prepared and distributed among the participants. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were determined before doing the study and then distributed among the teachers. It should be noted that the participants of this study were selected non-randomly because the researcher needed to be aware of their history and background. Finally, based on the responses received from the teachers, the data were calculated via SPSS program.

3.5. Data analysis Procedure

The data analysis focused on numerical/quantitative data. Before the analysis, data coding was applied for the participants' responses. To easily analyze the data, they were encoded as data obtained from questionnaires in SPSS software. Cronbach's coefficient alpha, item-total correlation, and inter-item correlation were used to evaluate the degree of reliability of the questionnaire. To validate the instrument and to detect the factors affecting teacher professional identity early factor analysis was run. Six main dependent variables including career identity, interactional identity, institutional identity, professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity were determined. This analysis involved examining the relationship between variables and comparing groups and how they affect each other. These variables were then examined through MANOVA, Box's test, Levene's

test, Multivariate tests, and Tests of between-subjects effects. The stability and consistency of the data were thus checked.

4. Results

4.1. Result for Research Question One

To investigate Iranian EFL teachers' perceived identity, 30 items of EFL teacher's identity questionnaire, in a 5-point Likert scale, were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with the factor extraction method of principal axis factoring (PAF), in conjunction with a Promax rotation method. It should be mentioned that PAF is a more versatile and precise extraction method in EFA, in comparison with other commonly used methods, given that it would yield a factor structure in which common variance was accounted for, and that unique variance and error variance were removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), with the goal of representing the maximum amount of obtained variance.

Before performing EFA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was checked. First, the normality was examined by observing the skewness and kurtosis measures of the items, and all of them were between -2 and +2 (Table 2). Therefore, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), the data met the assumption of normality. Secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was exploited to evaluate the sampling adequacy for EFA. As it was represented in Table 3, KMO was 0.81, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (Field, 2009; Kaiser, 1970, 1974). Thirdly, as can be seen in Table 3, Bartlett's test of sphericity was X^2 (435) =1633.84, p = .00, signifying that the magnitude of correlations between items was adequately large for running EFA.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of Items in EFL Teachers' Perceived Identity Questionnaire (N =120)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Value	*Std.* Error	Value	Std. Error
Q1	2	5	3.98	0.79	-0.78	0.22	0.63	0.44
Q2	1	5	3.89	1.04	-1.07	0.22	0.89	0.44
Q3	2	5	4.22	0.88	-0.89	0.22	-0.06	0.44
Q4	1	5	4.33	0.78	-1.18	0.22	1.88	0.44
Q5	1	5	3.73	0.93	-0.52	0.22	-0.24	0.44
Q6	2	5	4.33	0.83	-1.12	0.22	0.61	0.44

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					Value	*Std.* Error	Value	Std. Error
Q7	1	5	3.88	0.91	-0.83	0.22	0.68	0.44
Q8	1	5	3.74	0.98	-0.70	0.22	-0.05	0.44
Q9	1	5	4.05	0.84	-0.96	0.22	1.64	0.44
Q10	2	5	4.20	0.77	-0.70	0.22	0.01	0.44
Q11	1	5	4.42	0.72	-1.37	0.22	3.12	0.44
Q12	1	5	4.41	0.72	-1.35	0.22	3.09	0.44
Q13	1	5	3.81	0.98	-1.23	0.22	1.85	0.44
Q14	1	5	3.87	1.02	-0.60	0.22	-0.52	0.44
Q15	2	5	3.98	0.87	-0.80	0.22	0.20	0.44
Q16	1	5	4.10	1.01	-1.36	0.22	1.65	0.44
Q17	1	5	3.91	0.88	-1.25	0.22	2.48	0.44
Q18	1	5	3.93	0.86	-0.60	0.22	0.29	0.44
Q19	1	5	4.23	0.86	-1.09	0.22	1.07	0.44
Q20	2	5	4.28	0.77	-0.97	0.22	0.79	0.44
Q21	2	5	4.28	0.77	-0.87	0.22	0.31	0.44
Q22	1	5	3.38	0.98	-0.46	0.22	-0.11	0.44
Q23	1	5	3.14	1.03	-0.24	0.22	-0.65	0.44
Q24	1	5	3.65	1.06	-0.68	0.22	0.13	0.44
Q25	1	5	3.15	1.05	-0.48	0.22	-0.38	0.44
Q26	1	5	4.04	0.80	-0.87	0.22	1.27	0.44
Q27	1	5	3.78	1.11	-0.66	0.22	-0.50	0.44
Q28	1	5	3.66	0.93	-1.11	0.22	1.27	0.44
Q29	1	5	3.63	0.95	-0.75	0.22	0.24	0.44
Q30	1	5	3.68	1.08	-0.79	0.22	0.08	0.44

Note: Nominal categories were inverted to the parametric categories in order to be quantifiable.

Table 3.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.81
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1633.84
	Df	435
	Sig.	0.000

After implementing EFA utilizing PAF extraction technique, we found a seven-factor solution by utilizing Kaiser Criterion (Table 4). Having examined the structure matrix (see Table 5), we identified that one factor had only one item (Q1). As recommended by Meyers et al. (2013) and Kline (2016), there should be at least three items per factor for it

to be considered as a strong factor (i.e., a meaningful and well-represented construct). Consequently, this factor was removed from our analysis, as it was not sufficiently represented by the items. This resulted in a six-factor solution which explained a total of 49.99% of the common variance (Table 4), with those six factors representing 26.32%, 8.09%, 6.02%, 3.98%, 2.93, and 2.65% of that common variance, respectively. It should be emphasized here that items 18, 14, 16, and 8 were removed from the factor structure (see Table 5) because of their low coefficients (lower than the cuff-off value of 0.47) and also not fully represented by it.

Table 4.

Total Variance Explained by the six-factor Solution

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	8.33	27.77	27.77	7.90	26.32	26.32	5.88
2	2.81	9.38	37.15	2.43	8.09	34.41	5.91
3	2.24	7.46	44.60	1.81	6.02	40.43	3.18
4	1.66	5.54	50.14	1.19	3.98	44.41	4.69
5	1.36	4.53	54.67	0.88	2.93	47.34	3.43
6	1.18	3.94	58.61	0.79	2.65	49.99	3.61
7	1.12	3.72	62.33	0.72	2.39	52.37	1.34

The items that loaded on the same factors in the structure matrix (Table 5) illustrated that factor 1 (with the loading items of 29, 28, 13, 30, 5, and 21; Cronbach Alpha of 0.83) represented career identity, factor 2 (with the loading items of 11, 17, 9, 2, and 6; Cronbach Alpha of 0.79) represented interactional identity, factor 3 (with the loading items of 23, 25, 22, and 24; Cronbach Alpha of 0.83) implied institutional identity, factor 4 (with the loading items of 12, 7, 15, and 10; Cronbach Alpha of 0.76) can be said to be professional identity, factor 5 (with the loading items of 19, 3, and 4; Cronbach Alpha of 0.72) can be said to be situated identity, and factor 6 (with the loading items of 20, 26, and 27; Cronbach Alpha of 0.73) can be said to be personal identity.

It should be noted that the internal consistency of the scale as a whole (Cronbach Alpha was 0.91) and each construct specifically, as presented above, were higher than the benchmark value of 0.7.

Table 5.

Structure Matrix of Factors and their Loading Items

| | Factor | | | | | | |
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Q29	0.828						
Q28	0.756						
Q13	0.689						
Q30	0.680						
Q5	0.662						
Q21	0.541						
Q18							
Q11		0.816					
Q17		0.746					
Q9		0.624					
Q2		0.591					
Q6		0.525					
Q14							
Q16							
Q23			0.911				
Q25			0.784				
Q22			0.620				
Q24			0.618				
Q12				0.769			
Q7				0.658			
Q15				0.602			
Q10				0.587			
Q19					0.632		
Q3					0.558		
Q4					0.533		
Q20						0.731	
Q26						0.652	
Q27						0.587	
Q1							0.841
Q8							

4.2. Result for Research Question Two

To answer the second research question, a two-group multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used. More specifically, this MANOVA was conducted to investigate the effects of length of teaching experience on six extracted factors of the teacher identity questionnaire (career identity, interactional identity, institutional identity, professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity). It should be mentioned that all of these factors were considered as latent composites; therefore, the means of participants' responses to items of each factor were estimated and used in MANOVA. Having measured the six factors, the two groups of novice and experienced teachers (the independent variable with two levels) were compared to explore whether they were different concerning constructs of teacher identity (e.g, career identity, interactional identity, institutional identity, professional identity, situated identity, and personal identity). Table 6 illustrates the result.

Table 6.

Descriptive Statistics of Experience Levels in Different DVs

Factor	Experience	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*N*
Career Identity	Novice	3.60	0.73	60
	Experienced	4.00	0.61	60
	Total	3.80	0.70	120
Interactional Identity	Novice	3.89	0.63	60
	Experienced	4.35	0.56	60
	Total	4.12	0.64	120
Institutional Identity	Novice	3.34	0.78	60
	Experienced	3.32	0.89	60
	Total	3.33	0.83	120
Professional Identity	Novice	3.99	0.69	60
	Experienced	4.24	0.51	60
	Total	4.11	0.61	120
Situated Identity	Novice	4.27	0.61	60
	Experienced	4.24	0.64	60
	Total	4.26	0.62	120
Personal Identity	Novice	4.03	0.71	60
	Experienced	4.03	0.68	60
	Total	4.03	0.70	120

Note: N = Number of Participants

Prior to the analysis, the assumption of univariate normality of MANOVA was checked, and it was observed that all the skewness measures were between -2 and +2. Furthermore, the multivariate normality was investigated by inspecting the scatterplots, without finding any violations in so doing. Additionally, Box's test of equality of covariance matrices did not return a significant value, so this assumption was satisfied as well (Table 7). Ultimately, Leven's test of equality of error variances did not yield any significant results on any factors of teacher identity; as a result, this assumption was tenable (Table 8).

Table 7.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	35.64
F	1.60
df1	21.00
df2	51212.49
Sig.	0.30

Table 8.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for each Construct

	F	*df*1	*df*2	*Sig.*
Career Identity	1.73	1	118	0.19
Interactional Identity	1.76	1	118	0.19
Institutional Identity	1.95	1	118	0.16
Professional Identity	2.12	1	118	0.15
Situated Identity	0.14	1	118	0.71
Personal Identity	0.76	1	118	0.38

The results of two-group MANOVA revealed that the overall multivariate null hypothesis of no significant difference between two experience levels (i.e., novice and

experienced teachers) on the six constructs of teacher identity, as six main dependent variables, was rejected, F Wilk's Lambda (6, 113) = .81, p = .001, partial eta squared of .18, was considered as a medium-sized effect (Table 9). Accordingly, it can be said that the amount of experience did have a statistically significant medium-sized holistic effect on perceived teacher identity, given that these two cohorts of teachers had different perceptions in this regard.

Table 9.

Multivariate Tests for Investigating the Holistic Effect of Experience on the Teacher Identity

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.99	1567.53	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Wilks' Lambda	0.01	1567.53	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Hotelling's Trace	83.23	1567.53	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Roy's Largest Root	83.23	1567.53	6	113	0.00	0.99
Experience	Pillai's Trace	0.185	4.28	6	113	0.001	0.185
	Wilks' Lambda	0.815	4.28	6	113	0.001	0.185
	Hotelling's Trace	0.227	4.28	6	113	0.001	0.185
	Roy's Largest Root	0.227	4.28	6	113	0.001	0.185

To have a more analytic perspective on novice and experienced teachers' differences regarding their perceived identity, six univariate F tests (embedded in the two-group MANOVA) were conducted, examining the potential effect of experience on six DVs (six factors of teacher identity) separately. As Table 10 and Table 6 show, Univariate F tests for those six factors revealed that there were group differences on *Factor 1* (career identity), F (1, 118) = 10.51, p = .00, partial eta squared of .08 (considered as a small effect), *Factor 2* (interactional identity), F (1, 118) = 18.20, p = .00, partial eta squared of .13 (considered as a medium-sized effect), *Factor 4* (professional identity), F (1, 118) = 5.33, p = .02, partial eta squared of .04 (considered as a small effect). Hence, it can be concluded that the amount of experience had a small to medium-sized significant effect on three factors of teacher identity.

Table 10.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Experience	F	4.80	1	4.80	10.51	0.00	0.08
	F2	6.44	1	6.44	18.20	0.00	0.13
	F3	0.01	1	0.01	0.02	0.89	0.00
	F4	1.94	1	1.94	5.33	0.02	0.04
	F5	0.01	1	0.01	0.04	0.85	0.00
	F6	0.00	1	0.00	0.00	0.97	0.00
Error		53.90	118	0.46			
		41.76	118	0.35			
		82.51	118	0.70			
		42.92	118	0.36			
		46.15	118	0.39			
		57.78	118	0.49			
Total		1791.50	120				
		2083.48	120				
		1414.19	120				
		2076.44	120				
		2219.33	120				
		2007.22	120				

Note: F1 = Career Identity, F2 = Interactional Identity, F3 = Institutional Identity, F4 = Professional Identity, F5 = Situated Identity, F6 = Personal Identity, N = Number of Participants

4.3. Result for Research Question Three

To answer the third research question, a two-group multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized this time again. More specifically, this MANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of gender on six extracted factors of teacher identity questionnaire.

All of the six factors were considered as latent composites, hence, the means of participants' responses to items of each factor were estimated and used in MANOVA. Having measured the six DVs (factors), the two groups of male and female teachers (the independent variable with two levels) were compared to see whether they were different with regard to the six constructs of teacher identity (Table 11).

Table 11.

Descriptive Statistics of Gender Groups in Different DVs

Factor	Gender	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*N*
	Male	3.63	0.75	60
Career Identity	Female	3.97	0.62	60
	Total	3.80	0.70	120
	Male	3.93	0.69	60
Interactional Identity	Female	4.31	0.52	60
	Total	4.12	0.64	120
	Male	3.29	0.83	60
Institutional Identity	Female	3.38	0.84	60
	Total	3.33	0.83	120
	Male	4.05	0.67	60
Professional Identity	Female	4.18	0.55	60
	Total	4.11	0.61	120
	Male	4.23	0.58	60
Situated Identity	Female	4.28	0.67	60
	Total	4.26	0.62	120
	Male	4.02	0.78	60
Personal Identity	Female	4.04	0.61	60
	Total	4.03	0.70	120

Note: N = Number of Participants

Prior to the analysis, this time again, the assumption of univariate normality of MANOVA was checked, and it was found that all the skewness measures were between -2 and +2, so this assumption was tenable. Likewise, the multivariate normality was examined through inspecting the scatterplots, without finding any violations in so doing. Additionally, Box's test of equality of covariance matrices did not return a significant value, so this assumption was satisfied as well (Table 12). Finally, Levene's test of equality of error variances did not return any significant results on any factors of teacher identity; as a result, this assumption was satisfied (Table 13).

Table 12.

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

Box's M	31.711
F	1.42
df1	21.00
df2	51212.46
Sig.	0.09

Table 13.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances for each Construct

	F	*df1*	*df2*	*Sig.*
Career Identity	1.96	1	118	0.16
Interactional Identity	1.46	1	118	0.23
Institutional Identity	0.00	1	118	0.96
Professional Identity	0.61	1	118	0.43
Situated Identity	0.30	1	118	0.59
Personal Identity	1.59	1	118	0.21

The results of the two-group MANOVA revealed that the overall multivariate null hypothesis of no significant difference between two gender groups on the six constructs of teacher identity as the main dependent variables was rejected, (*F* Wilk's Lambda (6, 113) = 0.88, *p* = 0.02). The Partial Eta Squared of 0.12, was considered as a small effect (see Table 14). Accordingly, it can be said that gender did have a statistically significant small holistic effect on perceived teacher identity, given that these two groups of teachers had different perceptions in this regard.

Table 14.

Multivariate Tests for Investigating the Holistic Effect of Gender on the Teacher Identity

Effect		Value	*F*	Hypothesis *df*	Error *df*	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.99	1554.25	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Wilks' Lambda	0.01	1554.25	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Hotelling's Trace	82.53	1554.25	6	113	0.00	0.99
	Roy's Largest Root	82.53	1554.25	6	113	0.00	0.99
Gender	Pillai's Trace	0.12	2.56	6	113	0.02	0.12
	Wilks' Lambda	0.88	2.56	6	113	0.02	0.12
	Hotelling's Trace	0.14	2.56	6	113	0.02	0.12
	Roy's Largest Root	0.14	2.56	6	113	0.02	0.12

To have a more analytic perspective on male and female teachers' differences regarding their perceived identity, six univariate *F* tests (embedded in the two-group

MANOVA) were conducted, examining the potential effect of gender on six DVs (six factors of teacher identity) separately. Univariate F tests (Table 15) for the six factors revealed that there were group differences on just Factor 1 (career identity), $F(1, 118) = 7.36$, $p = .01$, Partial Eta Squared of .06 (considered as a small effect), and *Factor 2* (interactional identity), $F(1, 118) = 11.43$, $p = .00$, Partial Eta Squared of .09 (considered as a small effect) (see Tables 11 and 15). Therefore, it can be concluded that gender had a small effect on just two factors of teacher identity (i.e., career identity and interactional identity).

Table 15.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	F1	3.45	1	3.45	7.36	.01	.06
	F2	4.26	1	4.26	11.43	.00	.09
Gender	F3	0.23	1	0.23	0.33	.57	.00
	F4	0.57	1	0.57	1.51	.22	.01
	F5	0.06	1	0.06	0.15	.70	.00
	F6	0.02	1	0.02	0.05	.83	.00
		55.25	118	0.47			
		43.94	118	0.37			
Error		82.29	118	0.70			
		44.29	118	0.38			
		46.10	118	0.39			
		57.75	118	0.49			
		1791.50	120				
		2083.48	120				
Total		1414.19	120				
		2076.44	120				
		2219.33	120				
		2007.22	120				

Note: F1 = Career Identity, F2 = Interactional Identity, F3 = Institutional Identity, F4 = Professional Identity, F5 = Situated Identity, F6 = Personal Identity, N = Number of Participants

5. Discussion

Teacher identity is a multiplex issue that reflects the image and viewpoint of teachers about themselves. As stated in Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), research on teacher identity is an essential issue to develop for the future teaching profession and promote effective teacher training programs. An attempt was made to examine how EFL teachers perceive teacher identity. A teacher identity questionnaire was then developed with six core components: (a) career identity; (b) interactional identity; (c) institutional identity; (d) professional identity; (e) situated identity; and (f) personal identity. Career identity examines how much EFL teachers care about their work and try to do it well. Interactional identity focuses on the teacher-student and teacher-colleague relationship. Institutional identity measures the degree of satisfaction and support of the institute/school for English language teachers. Professional identity emphasizes the importance of the English language teachers in students' learning, increasing students' knowledge and their personal growth. Situated identity measures teachers' satisfaction and enthusiasm for their careers. And personal identity analyzes teachers' personal views about language and their work. To classify the factors based on the answers, the mean for each identity type was calculated. It was found that situated identity is stronger than the other identities, and the others in order were interactional identity, professional identity, personal identity, career identity, and the weaker ones were institutional identity.

The role of experience (low experience and high experience) on each of the six factors was also examined separately. It was found that the experience of EFL teachers is effective in three factors (i.e. career identity, interactional identity, and professional identity), however, it did not affect the other three factors (i.e., institutional identity, situated identity, personal identity). Hence, it could be said that both novice and experienced teachers, despite their differences about the term, have a significant medium-sized holistic difference in perception of teacher identity.

This study measured the importance of teachers' teaching experience on the subset identities of the teacher identity concept. The findings are in line with those obtained by Xu (2013) as it shows that novice teachers need more effort to fully recognize their identity to play a more successful role. Teacher educators need to be able to create more opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn more about their profession and to provide a platform for them to recognize their identities (Xu). As it was noted in our study, novice

teachers were able to improve their careers by recognizing the three components of identity. The results of the study are also in line with those obtained by Mostafaei Alaei and Najjarbaghseyah (2016), who claimed that experience has a little positive effect on past identity, yet it has a direct relationship with present identity, and it has no significant relationship with aspirational identity. They also measured the effect of experience on the three past, present and aspirational identities. The English language teaching community needs to promote its collective identity to develop professionalism in teachers (Coombe as cited in Mostafaei Alaei et al. 2016). If novice teachers, like experienced teachers, progress in identifying their teacher identity, the education process in the country will improve.

Furthermore, the possible role of teachers' gender on the perception of teacher identity was examined. The exploratory analysis showed that female participants obtained higher scores than male participants in career identity and interactional identity denoting that gender had some effect on these two factors; but not on other factors (institutional identity, professional identity, situated identity, personal identity). It could be said that the gender of teachers has a small holistic effect on the perception of teacher identity. However, their understandings of teacher identity concepts were different. Dillabough (1999) stated that female teachers do not have the same opportunity as male teachers. Most female teachers are hired part-time, performing, however, more tasks than a full-time position. She maintained that if female teachers are not serving others, they are considered worthless, which has serious consequences for women teachers and indicates gender inequality in higher education. Our findings confirm her view that more value should be given to female teachers. It is also shown that in two factors of teacher identity, females were slightly stronger than males while in the other factors, they were equal to male teachers.

Babanoglu and Agcam (2019) argued that due to different masculine and feminine natures, teachers have different functions concerning the components of identity. However, our findings indicate that women have a higher opinion about their profession than men. Vélez-Rendón (2010) discovered that gender does not have a significant effect on teacher identity, except to a very small extent.

It seems the knowledge and information of EFL teachers about the language and effective methods they use while teaching, make the difference between teachers and their identity. This can be achieved through modeling the best practices which can be an

instructional dialogue approach that allows for the construction and dedication of new meanings, and the integration of reflective and participatory training (Burns & Richards, 2009).

6. Conclusion

The major aim of this study was to examine EFL teacher identity. The relationships between experience and gender were explored by analyzing the data of 120 teachers, working in institutes/schools in Iran. The analysis of the dataset identified six distinct identity factors: (a) career identity, (b) interactional identity, (c) institutional identity, (d) professional identity, (e) situated identity, and (f) personal identity. Differences between these factors were observed regarding teachers' answers in the questionnaire. The highest average was for situated identity and the lowest average was for institutional identity. These factors were then correlated with two experience and gender variables. In general, there were the medium effects of experience and low effect of gender on teacher identity. The experience was an effective variable in three factors: career identity, interactional identity, and professional identity. Regarding teachers' amount of experience, no difference was observed among the institutional identity, situated identity, and personal identity factors. Moreover, the gender of English language teachers affected only two factors: career identity and interactional identity. However, the gender of teachers does not show a significant difference between the other four factors of teacher identity. The findings have important implications for the continued growth and development of teacher training programs identifying key areas for teacher professional development.   The findings presented here can be used to introduce changes in the curricula of language teacher training programs. It may be suggested that more opportunities should be given to novice teachers to develop their professional identities and become the future experienced teachers. Haghighi Irani et al. (2021) believe that the development of professional teacher identity should occur in "a systematic and circular mode" (p. 71). Eslamdoost et al. (2020) suggest that Language teacher education programs should impart awareness of the context specifics to prepare teachers to better off possible context conflicts.

Due to the current situation and the corona virus (COVID-19), future researchers can assess changes in teacher identity from the traditional classroom teaching method to the online teaching method.

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