Evaluating the Technological Proficiency of Iranian EFL Teachers in Alignment with TESOL Technology Standards

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the technological proficiency of Iranian EFL teachers in alignment with the TESOL Technology Standards, addressing both their familiarity and application of these standards in the unique Iranian context. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, 122 teachers completed a questionnaire to assess their knowledge of the TESOL standards, while 15 participants engaged in semi-structured interviews to discuss the applicability of these standards in Iran. Results show that while most teachers are proficient in basic technology use, they demonstrate moderate familiarity with advanced pedagogical applications such as professional collaboration and assessment using technology. The study also identifies challenges unique to Iran, including internet censorship, restricted access to online platforms, and inadequate infrastructure. These factors limit the full implementation of TESOL standards. Moreover, the study suggests that TESOL standards should be updated to reflect the growing importance of online teaching and AI integration. Recommendations are made to modify the standards to better suit local constraints, while emphasizing the need for institutional support and ongoing professional development. The findings contribute to improving technology integration in language teaching, particularly in contexts facing technological barriers.

KEYWORDS: TESOL technology standards; Technological proficiency; EFL teachers; Technology Inegration

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, technology has wrought profound changes across every facet of our lives, and second language education is no exception (Park & Son, 2020). The ubiquitous presence of technological devices in language learning environments has prompted educators to acknowledge that teaching and learning a second language without integrating technology is, at best, impractical and, at worst, impossible. As Nushi and Eqbali (2018) suggest, technology has catalyzed a transformation of traditional language classroom practices, ushering in new possibilities for both learners and instructors.

Key to the effective integration of technology in language classrooms is the proficiency of language teachers, who occupy pivotal roles as both primary users and facilitators of technological tools. These instructors must not only possess a deep understanding of their subject matter but also the capability to harness technology to its fullest potential. This entails

proficiency in both the technical intricacies of these tools and the pedagogical strategies necessary to effectively utilize them in an educational setting, a concept commonly referred to as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) (Tafazoli & Meihami, 2023).Successful implementation hinges on the ability of language instructors to select the most suitable tools and applications for specific learning objectives, adapt and create digital resources that align with the curriculum, and engage students effectively (Güneş & Adnan, 2023). Additionally, they must skillfully address the diverse learning needs and preferences of their students while staying attuned to the ever-evolving technological landscape (Fütterer et al., 2023). Empowering language educators requires a holistic approach that combines technological proficiency, pedagogical expertise, adaptability to evolving tools, and a commitment to enhancing language learning through strategic technology integration. This approach equips instructors to create dynamic and effective learning experiences for students in the digital age (Li et al., 2022).

The TESOL Technology Standards, initially formulated by Healey et al. (2011), were designed explicitly to equip language teachers, among other stakeholders, with the knowledge and competencies needed for effective technology integration in their teaching environments. These standards offer a comprehensive framework of 14 standards, each supported by performance indicators, serving as evidence of their acquisition. The standards provide clear guidance for teachers on employing technology in a pedagogically effective manner, thereby enhancing the quality of instruction within their classrooms. This study focuses on the standards customized for teachers.

This research aims to evaluate the qualifications of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in private language institutes in Iran against the TESOL Technology Standards. Specifically, it seeks to gauge their familiarity with and adherence to these standards, considering the acknowledged benefits of technology in language education (Sun, 2022). The investigation intends to identify any gaps between the educational prerequisites for technology-integrated language instruction and the actual competencies of teachers. By scrutinizing instructors' qualifications, including their capacity to develop technology-adapted resources and proficiency in utilizing the latest technological advancements, the study also seeks to determine the adequacy of these qualifications for effective technology integration in classrooms.

Furthermore, the study explores the feasibility of implementing existing standards in Iranian language classes and assesses the need for potential adjustments or additions. Acknowledging the influence of local contextual factors on standards' adoption and effectiveness, the unique Iranian perspective is essential for evaluating the applicability and suggesting modifications where needed. Ultimately, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the current state of English language teaching in Iran, guiding future initiatives to enhance the qualifications of EFL instructors and elevate the overall quality of language education in the country.

2. Literature review

2.1. Harmonizing Language Education with Technology: A Symphony of Learning in the Digital Age

In today's digital age, the integration of technology in language classrooms has transformed the landscape of language education. The marriage of technology and language learning has ushered in a new era, one where traditional language classrooms without technology seem almost unimaginable. Technology has become an indispensable tool for both language learners and educators, revolutionizing the effectiveness and engagement of language instruction (Iberahim et al., 2023).

The digital revolution in language education offers learners an extensive array of resources and unparalleled exposure to the English language. Through technology, learners can seamlessly interact with native speakers on social media platforms, access a diverse range of instructional content on platforms like YouTube, and even immerse themselves in language experiences through video games. In summary, technology has become a catalyst for modern language education, providing learners and teachers alike with unparalleled flexibility, resources, and real-world connections that facilitate the language learning process (Gulmirakhon & Nozimakhon, 2023).

However, the success of technology in the classroom hinges on how it is leveraged by educators. Teachers, as primary users, play a pivotal role in harnessing technology to enhance learning and make it meaningful for their students. Proficient use of technology by teachers is of paramount significance. Effective training, provided by educational authorities, is the differentiating factor that empowers teachers to harness the full potential of technology (ElSayary, 2023).

Training programs are crucial in shaping the quality of future language educators. A proficient language teacher must excel not only in pre-service training but also undergo continuous guidance and evaluation from institute supervisors. Participation in ongoing educational workshops aimed at improving their English teaching skills is essential. In today's educational landscape, the integration of technology into the classroom is a critical facet of language instruction. Training programs must equip teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively employ various technological tools in their teaching practices, offering periodic workshops on contemporary strategies and methods for leveraging technology within the classroom (Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al., 2022).

The preparation of professional language teachers has long been a paramount concern for educational institutions. In response to this imperative, standards and frameworks have been meticulously devised to equip future educators with the necessary competencies. These standards encompass a spectrum of crucial topics, ranging from effective classroom management to the development of instructional materials, and, to some extent, the integration of technology in the learning environment.

Numerous frameworks serve as guiding beacons in the field of language teacher education, including the European Profile for Language Teacher Education (Kelly et al., 2004), the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Foreign Languages European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Foreign Languages short for EPOSTL (Newby et al., 2007), and ACTFL's Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2013).

Despite the recognized significance of technology in teacher training, it is concerning that many programs have overlooked this crucial dimension. This gap poses a challenge to fully realizing the potential of technology in language education and underscores the need for a concerted effort to address this oversight (Arnold & Ducate, 2015). Key frameworks and organizations play a pivotal role in shaping language teacher education and incorporating technology into language instruction. The European Profile for Language Teacher Education (EPLTE) and the standards set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) are foundational in this regard. Specific attention is also given to technology standards, such as the Technology Standards for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), a relatively recent addition to language education methodologies (Hubbard, 2008).

These standards, often articulated as goals, delineate the educational potential of computer use in language teaching and outline the necessary technical skills for educators (Lomicka & Lord, 2011). International organizations focused on teacher education, such as The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), have identified specific criteria and performance indicators related to educational technology for teachers. These criteria serve as essential guidelines to be implemented in the educational process, reflecting the evolving landscape of language education (Healey et al., 2011).

2.2. TESOL technology standards

Healey et al, (2011) introduced the TESOL Technology Standards, a significant milestone in offering comprehensive guidance to teachers on the effective integration of technology into language teaching and learning. These standards were meticulously designed to serve as a valuable resource for teachers, learners, teacher-educators, and administrators, equipping them with the essential skills and competencies required to seamlessly incorporate technology into language classrooms. The TESOL Technology Standards not only provide a clear roadmap but also function as a structured framework for shaping professional development endeavors and pedagogical strategies aimed at enhancing technology integration in language education.

One of the key goals of the TESOL Technology Standards is to equip language teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use digital tools and resources in their instruction. This includes utilizing technology to differentiate instruction, foster critical thinking and creativity, promote learner autonomy, and encourage collaboration among learners and with experts and native speakers. Additionally, the TESOL Technology Standards highlight the importance of creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments, promoting the responsible and ethical use of technology, and engaging in ongoing professional development related to technology-enhanced language teaching. In order to effectively integrate technology into language classrooms, Sun (2022) suggests that language teachers must possess certain necessary standards and be able to perform specific activities with technology. A total of 14 standards, organized under four main goals for language teachers, have been identified and are outlined below.

Standard 1: language teachers demonstrate knowledge and skills in basic technological concepts and operational competence, meeting or exceeding TESOL Technology Standards for students in whatever situation they teach.

Standard 2: language teachers demonstrate an understanding of a wide range of technology supports for language learning and options for using them in a given setting.

Standard 3: language teachers actively strive to expand their skill and knowledge base to evaluate, adopt, and adapt emerging technologies throughout their careers.

Standard 4: language teachers use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal, and ethical ways.

Standard 5: language teachers identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.

Standard 6: language teachers coherently integrate technology into their pedagogical approaches.

Standard 7: language teachers design and manage language learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives.

Standard 8: language teachers use relevant research findings to inform the planning of language learning activities and tasks that involve technology.

Standard 9: language teachers evaluate and implement relevant technology to aid in effective learner assessment.

Standard 10: language teachers use technological resources to collect and analyze information in order to enhance language instruction and learning.

Standard 11: language teachers evaluate the effectiveness of specific student uses of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

Standard 12: language teachers use communication technologies to maintain effective contact and collaboration with peers, students, administration, and other stakeholders.

Standard 13: language teachers regularly reflect on the intersection of professional practice and technological developments so that they can make informed decisions regarding the use of technology to support language learning and communication.

Standard 14: language teachers apply technology to improve efficiency in preparing for class, grading, and maintaining records.

2.3. Research questions:

This study is centered around three primary research questions, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into the alignment of TESOL Technology Standards within the practices of Iranian EFL teachers and to assess their perceived sufficiency in Iranian English language classes.

1. To what extent do Iranian EFL teachers implement the TESOL Technology Standards proposed by Healey et al. (2011) in their instructional practices?

2. What is the prevailing attitude among Iranian EFL teachers regarding the applicability of TESOL Technology Standards in the context of English language classes in Iran?

3. Do EFL teachers in Iran consider the existing TESOL Technology Standards adequate, or do they perceive a need for the addition or elimination of specific standards to better align with the unique characteristics of Iranian English language education?

These research questions serve as the foundation for exploring the current state of technology integration among EFL teachers in Iran, shedding light on both their practices and perspectives concerning the TESOL Technology Standards.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

To evaluate the knowledge and competencies of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Iran in alignment with the TESOL Technology Standards, and to delve into EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the utilization of these standards in Iranian English language classes—evaluating their sufficiency or the need for additions or eliminations—a mixed-method research design was implemented. This methodological approach was chosen to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. Emphasizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, this design aims to yield nuanced insights, enriching our understanding of the research questions at the core of this study.

3.2. Participants

In this study, the selection of EFL teachers was carried out through a convenience, non-probability sampling technique, which is based on the availability and accessibility of participants (Pace, 2021). The study's sample consisted of 122 EFL teachers, all of whom possessed a minimum of two years of experience in teaching General English courses at various levels, spanning from beginners to advanced, in private language institutes throughout Iran. While it is acknowledged that convenience sampling may not offer a comprehensive representation of all EFL teachers in Iran, it was a deliberate choice that allowed for a focused and in-depth examination of the knowledge and competencies of those teachers who were readily available and willing to participate in the study.

The second group had 15 English teachers who taught general English classes at different levels, from beginner to advanced. Each of these teachers had gathered 4 to 8 years of teaching experience at different institutes. Their inclusion in the study was based on a convenience sampling approach, a non-probability sampling technique where participants voluntarily

agreed to take part. Subsequently, each teacher was provided with the TESOL Technology Standards and familiarized themselves with the content. They were then interviewed regarding the practicality of these standards in Iranian language classes, specifically exploring potential additions or eliminations.

3.3. Instruments

Ary et al. (2002) highlight the usefulness of questionnaires as a valuable tool for gathering quantitative data in research. In line with their recommendation, a questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection method for the first group of participants in this study. The questionnaire used in this research was thoughtfully designed to provide a structured approach to gathering information.

The questionnaire was carefully designed, based on the 14 TESOL Technology Standards performance indicators introduced by Healey et al. (2011). These indicators are widely recognized as a thorough guide for effectively using technology in language education. The questionnaire, adapted from Hubbard's (2011) work, aimed to fully explore EFL teachers' knowledge and understanding of the TESOL Technology Standards. It assessed not only the teachers' theoretical understanding of these standards but also how they applied them in their daily teaching. The goal was to find out how much technology EFL teachers used in their teaching methods, what specific technologies they used, and how they perceived the impact of these technologies on their students' learning outcomes.

The questionnaire consists of 65 questions divided into four goals based on the TESOL Technology Standards for English teachers who integrate technology into their classrooms. Each goal comprises several performance indicators, and participants are required to select one option from "Well," "Okay," "Somewhat", and "Not at all" to indicate their proficiency in relation to each statement. Additionally, participants have the opportunity to provide comments for each sentence (The questionnaire is provided in Appendix A for further details). To enhance the reliability and validity of the data collected through the questionnaires, careful pre-testing and piloting were conducted before administering them to the study's participants. This ensured that the questions were clear, relevant, and effectively captured the necessary information.

The second group of participants in this study underwent interviews using a semi-structured approach. Specifically, 15 teachers who willingly participated in the research were introduced to the TESOL Technology Standards before the interview, with a specific focus on assessing their attitudes toward the use of these standards in English language classes and determining whether they perceived them to be sufficient.

The primary objective of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the appropriateness of these standards in the Iranian context and to explore whether there is a perceived necessity to add or eliminate any standards based on the specific needs of the Iranian educational environment.

3.4. Data analysis

In this investigation, we utilized a questionnaire grounded in Hubbard's TESOL Technology standards and performance indicators developed in 2011. The primary objective was to evaluate the integration and performance of these standards within the context of Iran among a group of 122 participants. This analysis aims to provide valuable insights into the participants' perceptions and practices concerning the utilization of technology in TESOL.

The study involved 122 participants and used a questionnaire to explore technology use in EFL classrooms, following Hubbard's technology standards. Before analyzing the data, we cleaned it to fix missing values and dealt with any outliers to ensure reliable results. The findings were presented using various charts to make the data easier to understand and highlight clear patterns in the participants' responses.

In order to gather data from the second group of participants in this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted online via email and social networking sites. Participants' responses were recorded and saved for subsequent analysis. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach involving the categorization of codes and the generation of themes.

The coding process involved identifying patterns within the data by systematically organizing the interview responses into categories based on their frequencies and occurrences. This analytical technique enabled the researchers to identify emerging themes and recognize patterns within the data that were relevant to the research questions. Manual coding was employed to create themes, and the analysis was guided by the 14 TESOL Technology Standards indicators.

Thematic analysis was chosen as the most suitable method for this study due to its ability to capture detailed patterns and nuances within the data while also allowing for flexibility in the interpretation of findings. This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the data and helped to ensure that the findings were grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, it allowed for a detailed examination of the research questions and the identification of key themes that could be used to inform future research and practice in the field of teacher training courses.

4. Results

In order to answer research question 1, we divided the analysis into four goals. Each goal has its own standards or indicators that show how well technology is used in teaching English. We will review each goal and analyze the teachers' responses.

The first goal focuses on the basic ability to use technology in teaching English and includes standards related to simple technology tasks. Based on the responses, we can conclude that Iranian teachers have a good level of familiarity with basic technology use in their English classes. The results are shown in Figure 2.
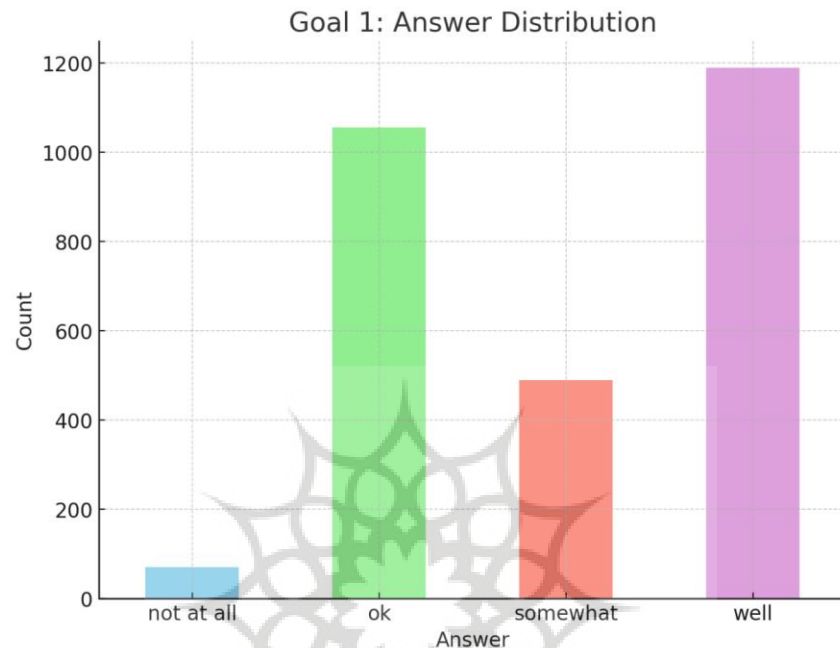

Figure 2. Presentation of responses for goal 1

The second goal focused on how teachers use technology to improve their instructional methods. The results, shown in Figure 2, indicate that teachers have an "OK" level of knowledge regarding the use of technology in teaching, meaning they have a moderate understanding but may not be fully proficient in integrating technology into their teaching methods.
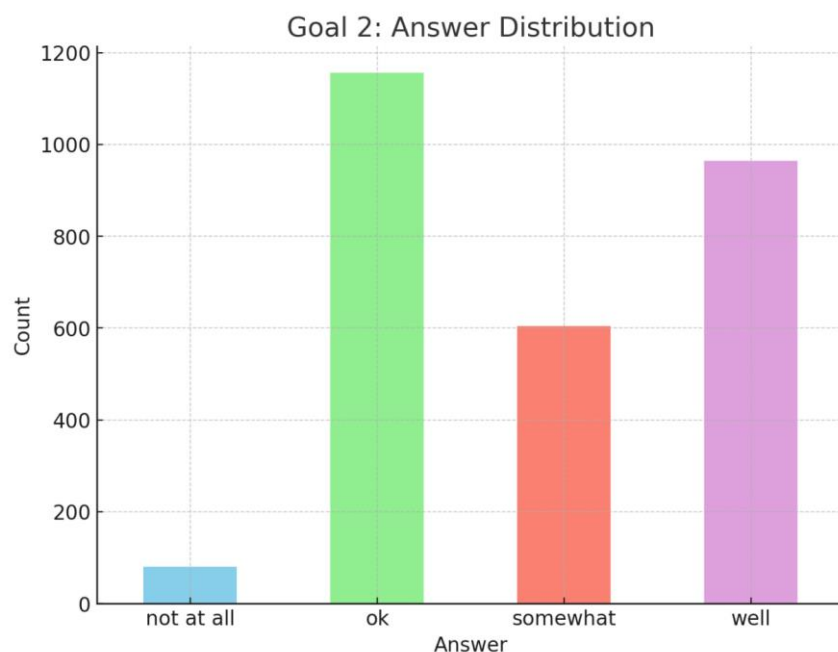
Goal 2: Answer Distribution

Figure 3. Presentation of responses for goal 2

Goal 3 focused on the professional use of technology, enhancing collaboration and interaction, and self-training to improve knowledge. As shown in Figure 4, participants have an "OK" level of knowledge, with the second most common response being "somewhat." This indicates that teachers' familiarity with using technology for professional purposes is at a mid-level, suggesting room for improvement in these areas.

Goal 3: Answer Distribution
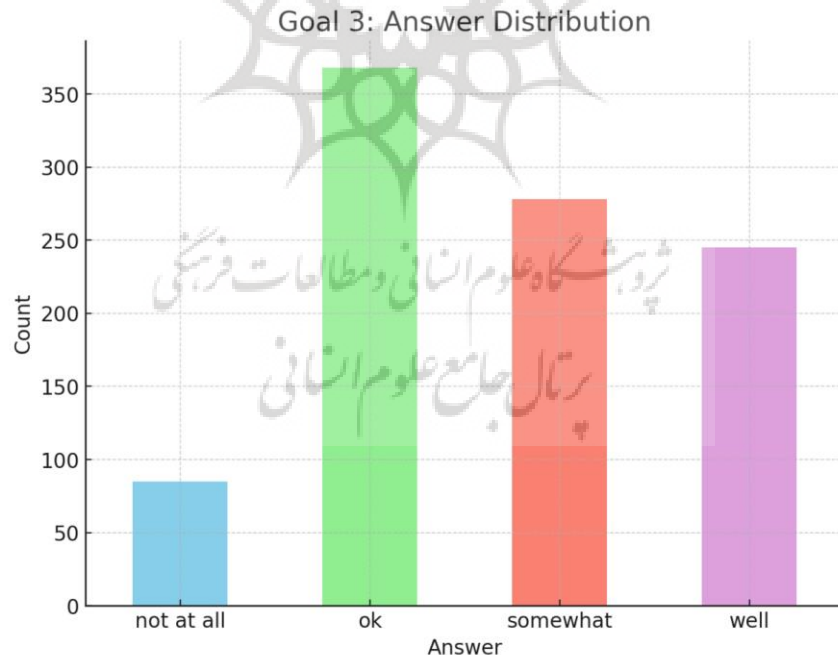
Figure 4. Presentation of responses for goal 3

Goal 4 mainly focused on the integration of technology in the evaluation process and providing feedback to students. According to the results presented in Figure 5, most participants have an "OK" level of knowledge regarding this issue, with the second most frequent response being "Well." This suggests that teachers have a generally good understanding of using technology for evaluation and feedback, with many demonstrating a solid level of competence in this area.

Figure 5. Presentation of responses for Goal 4
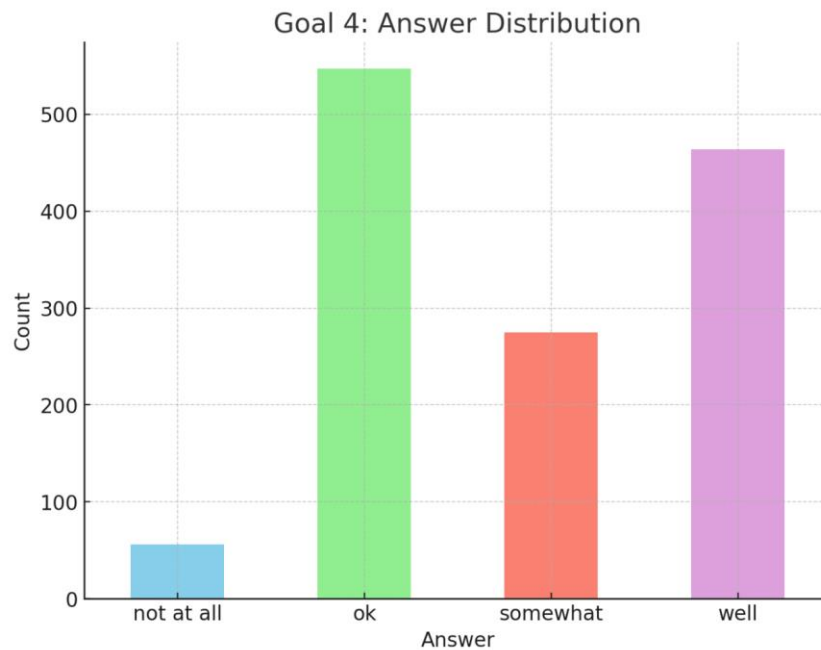
In exploring research question 2, we found that English teachers in Iran agree that educational technology standards are useful for teachers everywhere, Iran included. Teacher A points out that these standards are comprehensive, covering how technology can be used in language teaching. However, Iran presents unique challenges. There is significant variation across the country in terms of access to technology, support from authorities, and other factors, making each area distinct. Teacher B shares personal experiences of working in different settings, adapting to the resources available. This adaptability underscores a key finding: while the standards are solid, their application must be flexible to fit the varied Iranian contexts. Teacher C mentioned that when I want to share something with my students on international social media platforms like Telegram or WhatsApp, I need a good VPN or proxy for sharing files. Teacher D also said that if I use Instagram to teach idioms and vocabulary, I need a good VPN and internet connection to share content with my students.

The necessity for teachers to stay updated with technological advancements in education is another theme. Teacher E stresses the importance of keeping up with the latest trends, even if not all can be applied directly. Being informed allows teachers to integrate whatever technology they can, maximizing their resources. Teacher F mentioned that with the rapid development of technology, as a good teacher, I need to participate in the latest workshops and study new books to effectively integrate technology into my classes.

The conclusion drawn from the data is clear. Despite facing issues like internet censorship and limited resources, a dedicated language teacher in Iran is expected to be proactive. By continually updating their technological knowledge and being prepared to work within constraints, they can use technology effectively in their teaching, no matter the situation.

4.1. Adding or removing TESOL technology standards for English teachers in Iran

To address Question 3, we began by examining the standards identified for potential removal, based on the current situation and available resources in Iran. The findings are presented in Table 1, with a detailed explanation to follow. The codes gathered from data collection from teachers are represented in the chart and pertain to standards that are either recommended for removal or considered not applicable in the Iranian context.

Table 1. Standards for Potential Removal Based on the Situation in Iran

Standard 4: language teachers use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal, and ethical ways.	- Because of censorship and filtering, it is impossible to legally access some data in our country, leading us to sometimes use resources in ways that might be illegal.
	- In Iran, restrictions and sanctions prevent us from legally accessing websites and paying for downloads, so we often have to get materials through unofficial means.
Standard 5: language teachers identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.	- These standards cannot be applied because many social networking sites are blocked, making them difficult to use.
	- Using mobile phones is challenging in our country due to the filtering and restrictions on many websites and social networking sites.
	- Using mobile phones and social networking sites in class requires a fast and reliable internet connection, but in some areas or at certain times, the internet connection can be very poor.

Based on feedback from the participants, two standards are identified as least applicable in the Iranian context due to constraints faced by teachers in the country. Thirteen out of fifteen participants stated they encounter challenges such as internet filtering, restricted access to websites and social networking platforms, and difficulties in purchasing educational resources like books and CDs from reputable international websites. Consequently, teachers strive to continue their work despite these obstacles. Adhering to copyright and ethical guidelines in using international websites for educational purposes often equates to forgoing technology use altogether. Furthermore, utilizing cellphones and social networking sites for educational purposes requires overcoming filtering issues, which is a significant challenge for all teachers.

For research question 3, we will also address the inclusion of standards and performance indicators based on the perspectives of Iranian teachers. The standards derived from the most frequently mentioned codes by teachers will be presented in Table 2. Subsequently, these standards will be elaborated upon in detail:

Table 2. Standards Recommended for Inclusion Based on Iranian Context

Goal 1 standard 3: A proficient language teacher aiming to integrate technology in the classroom must possess the ability to conduct classes online and ensure these online sessions are of high quality.	• Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become essential for us to familiarize ourselves with online teaching methods.
	• I believe a new set of standards is necessary for online teaching.
	• Online teaching has become more prevalent than face-to-face instruction recently, necessitating my preparation as a modern teacher.
Goal 1 standard 3: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching must be knowledgeable about AI, particularly ChatGPT or other chatbots, and understand how to effectively utilize them in the classroom.	• The emergence of AI is a significant development that we must become familiar with and learn to use effectively in teaching.
	• Every teacher must explore how to employ AI to enhance their teaching, tailoring their approach to the specific context in which they work.
	• I am tasked with instructing my students on how to utilize AI to enhance their proficiency.

Goal 2 standard 1: A proficient language teacher must navigate challenges such as sanctions, internet filtering, restricted access to websites, and other limitations on resources.	• As an Iranian teacher, I face many challenges. At first, I felt discouraged, but later, I started looking for solutions. • I spend a lot of time trying to solve our tech problems. • I do my best to find and share online materials with my students and colleagues.
Goal 2 standard 3: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching must be able to motivate all students, including those who are not interested in technology or prefer not to use it in class.	• I teach many adult students who are resistant to using technology. As their teacher, it is my duty to encourage them to use technology to enhance their English proficiency. • In my view, it falls upon the teacher to not only motivate students to use technology but also to assist them in utilizing it as a tool for learning, beyond just entertainment.
Standard 17: A proficient language teacher looking to incorporate technology into their teaching should manage the extent to which technology is used. A good teacher does not rely solely on technology for instruction. Overdependence on technology can lead to a lack of effort from teachers, who must regulate their use of it.	• As a teacher who often uses technology, I sometimes feel it's taking over too much. I need to make sure it doesn't lower my teaching quality when it's not around. • Relying too much on anything is not good. A good language teacher should use just the right amount of technology and not let it control their teaching skills.

Table 2 highlights that Iranian teachers proposed two additional performance indicators for the first goal's third standard, which concentrates on developing skills and knowledge to evaluate, adopt, and adapt emerging technologies throughout their careers. The teaching profession encountered two significant shifts; the first and most crucial was triggered by the appearance of COVID-19, which significantly increased the demand for online classes and compelled all teachers to transition to online teaching. Consequently, we can deduce the importance of incorporating a performance indicator emphasizing that an effective teacher integrating technology into education must possess a fundamental understanding of online teaching methods and platforms. It is even proposed that online teaching might necessitate distinct standards specifically for online educators. Moreover, the rising popularity of AI, including the emergence of ChatGPT and chatbots in education, has required teachers to update their knowledge on using this new technological advancement. Teachers must understand how to address its challenges and teach students how to use it ethically and responsibly to enhance learning, rather than for dishonest purposes.

The subsequent performance indicator relates to the second goal's first standard, which is aimed at enhancing teachers' skills in identifying and evaluating the appropriateness of technological resources and environments for their specific teaching contexts. In Iran, teachers are confronted with challenges such as internet filtering, restrictions, limited access to international websites, and difficulties in purchasing materials or books from abroad. Consequently, they are required to adjust to these conditions and devise strategies to incorporate technology into their classrooms effectively. This new indicator emphasizes the necessity for teachers to be prepared for any technological limitations or unexpected malfunctions, and to develop backup plans for their classes. It advocates for maintaining the use of technology in teaching, despite facing challenges in accessing suitable technological resources.

The next additional performance indicator is related to the second goal's third standard, which focuses on the design and management of learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives. This indicator addresses situations where teachers encounter students who are indifferent or resistant to the use of technology in their learning. It becomes the responsibility of the teacher to support and encourage these students to engage with technology, highlighting the numerous advantages that technology can offer in their educational pursuits. Teachers are tasked with showing how technology can significantly enhance the learning experience and contribute to their academic achievements.

Ultimately, a new standard has been introduced to the list. The new standard emphasizes that teachers should use technology wisely in their teaching. It is important for a good teacher to be able to use technology in a way that does not interfere with their teaching abilities. This means that whether there are not enough technological tools or too many advanced ones, the quality of their teaching should not be affected. Teachers should see technology as something that helps them teach better, not something they rely on too much. Depending too heavily on technology can lead to teachers becoming less active

and more like helpers instead of being the main leaders in the classroom. The idea is for teachers to manage technology well in their teaching and to understand its role as a support, making sure it does not take over their primary role.

5. Discussion

The findings from this study are divided into two main components: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative results indicate that EFL teachers in Iran possess a moderate familiarity with the TESOL Technology Standards, as reflected in the majority of average responses. This aligns with previous research, such as the studies by Mansouri Qadikolaei et al. (2024), which suggest that Iranian teachers have a generally acceptable level of technological awareness. However, our results, consistent with the findings of Momenanzadeh et al. (2023), reveal that a small portion of teachers remain unfamiliar with key technological standards, particularly in terms of integrating technology into pedagogical practices.

The survey responses confirm that Iranian EFL teachers demonstrate a solid understanding of the basic use of technology in their classrooms. This finding is in agreement with Kashanizadeh et al. (2023), who also reported a basic understanding of technology use among teachers in Iran. However, the results highlight a gap when it comes to applying technology for designing learning activities, assessing students, and developing professional technological knowledge. Studies like Taherkhani and Ghaleei (2024) also point out that Iranian EFL teachers are not fully proficient in using technology at a professional level in their classrooms.

5.1. Challenges specific to the Iranian context

The qualitative data revealed key challenges that affect the adoption and implementation of TESOL Technology Standards in Iran. Teachers pointed out that issues such as weak internet connectivity, internet filtering, and the need for reliable VPNs create significant barriers to the practical application of these standards. In many areas, stable internet access is limited, which hinders teachers from effectively using digital tools. This finding matches the study by Ghourchian (2024), which identified similar challenges related to sanctions and internet restrictions in Iran.

Given these challenges, teachers emphasized the need for adjustments to the TESOL Technology Standards. They suggested that while the standards themselves are relevant and useful, they must be adapted to the unique conditions in Iran. For example, the current standards assume unrestricted access to the internet and social media platforms, which is not possible in many Iranian regions. As a result, standards such as Standard 4 (ethical use of technology) and Standard 5 (identifying and evaluating technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context) may need to be modified to reflect these limitations. The authorities should also provide better infrastructure and support to enable teachers to use technology effectively (Stumbrienė et al., 2024).

5.2. Recommendations for updating TESOL technology standards

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of online teaching, which has not yet been fully addressed by the TESOL Technology Standards. As many educators have shifted to online instruction, it is crucial to introduce standards that encompass the ability to conduct high-quality online classes and develop online resources. The need for this shift is also supported by Al-Rashaida and Massouti (2024), who argue that modern language teachers must excel in both face-to-face and virtual learning environments.

Additionally, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, particularly tools like ChatGPT, presents a new dimension for language teaching. As Solak (2024) suggests, AI has the potential to support language instruction significantly, but it also requires careful integration to avoid misuse. Teachers must be equipped with the skills to utilize AI tools effectively, and TESOL Technology Standards should be updated to reflect the growing importance of AI in education. Even if a teacher chooses not to use these tools in their classroom, they must still be familiar with AI as their students are increasingly relying on these technologies in their learning (Novawan et al., 2024).

Another important consideration raised by the data is the need for teachers to motivate students, particularly those who are less familiar or comfortable with technology. In line with the findings of David and Weinstein (2024), teachers must play an active role in encouraging students to adopt technology for learning. This is especially important for older students or those resistant to using digital tools in their education. Teachers need to highlight the advantages of technology in enhancing their language learning experience and guide them on how to use these tools effectively.

A final point raised by this study is the need for teachers to balance the use of technology in their classrooms. Technology should be viewed as a tool that enhances teaching, rather than something that replaces essential teaching skills. Al Shuraiaan et al. (2024) emphasize that teachers must learn to manage technology effectively, ensuring that it supports rather than dominates their instructional approach. This balance is critical for maintaining the quality of education, especially in situations where access to technology is limited.

In summary, while the TESOL Technology Standards are broadly applicable to the Iranian context, certain modifications are necessary to address the unique challenges faced by teachers in Iran. These challenges include limited internet access, website filtering, and restricted availability of international resources. It is essential that these standards be updated to incorporate recent technological advancements, such as online teaching and AI integration, to meet the evolving needs of modern educators.

6. Conclusion

The TESOL Technology standards, developed by Healey et al. (2011), were designed to assess English language teachers' knowledge and integration of technology in the classroom. These standards include various goals and performance indicators to evaluate teachers' technological expertise in specific areas of teaching. When analyzed in the Iranian context, it was found that these standards are applicable but require some adjustments due to the unique challenges faced in Iran. Factors such as weak internet connections, website filtering, and the need for reliable VPNs for teachers necessitate specific conditions for the effective implementation of these standards.

On the other hand, it is essential to update these standards to reflect the latest technological advancements and to reconsider some standards based on the unique challenges in Iran. For instance, standards that emphasize the legal and ethical use of online materials or require registration on specific websites can be difficult to follow in Iran. Teachers often prioritize access to materials and websites over following rules or ethical guidelines due to the need to find alternative ways to access these resources. Additionally, standards focusing on teachers' knowledge of using social networking sites and mobile applications may not be practical in Iran because of filtering issues. Some apps are not easily accessible, forcing teachers to find alternative methods for their use.

Additionally, it is necessary to re-evaluate these standards and introduce new ones to address emerging needs. For example, standards should include teachers' knowledge of online classes and platforms, given their increased popularity following the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, standards should cover how to use AI effectively in teaching English as a foreign language. It is also important to focus on motivating all types of learners, including those who are older or less comfortable with technology, to use technology properly in their learning. Ultimately, a good teacher must manage the use of technology in the classroom effectively and not rely on it too heavily. Teachers should maintain control over the classroom and ensure that technology supports, rather than dictates, their teaching choices.

This study focused only on teachers from private language institutes. Future research could expand to include teachers from public schools and universities to provide a broader perspective. Additionally, it is recommended to include learners in future studies to assess their satisfaction with how technology is used by teachers in the classroom. Understanding learners' experiences and perceptions could offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of technology integration in education.

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8. Appendix

A: Questionnaire

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G1S1 I know how to perform basic functions (composing, printing, editing, playing, recording, transferring, etc.) with available digital devices in order to accomplish instructional and organizational goals					
G1S1 I know how to prepare instructional materials for students using basic technology tools.					
G1S1 I exercise appropriate caution when using online sources and when engaging in electronic communication.					
G1S2 I can identify appropriate technologies to support a range of instructional objectives.					
G1S2 I know how to use evaluation tools to analyze the appropriateness of specific technology options.					
G1S2 I know how to share information about available technology with colleagues.					
G1S2 I know how to use online technology as available to deliver instructional or support material.					
G1S2 I can locate and adapt a variety of digital resources.					
G1S3 I can utilize technology tools to expand upon a conventional activity.					
G1S3 I know how to keep up with information through a variety of sources (e.g., books, journals, mailing lists, conventions).					

G1S3 I participate in a relevant community of practice or know how to find one.

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G1S3 I am able to explore the possibilities inherent in emerging technologies with a critical eye.					
G1S4 I am sensitive to the similarities and differences in communication conventions across cultures, communities, and contexts.					
G1S4 I am aware of my role as a model and demonstrate respect for others in my use of public and private information.					
G1S4 I know how to show awareness and understanding when approaching culturally sensitive topics and am able to offer students alternatives.					
G1S4 I understand and intend to conform to local legal requirements regarding the privacy of students' personal information.					
G1S4 I understand and intend to conform to local legal requirements regarding accessibility.					
G1S4 I respect legal requirements regarding fair use and copyright.					
G1S4 I am aware of local guidelines regarding the use of human subjects for research.					
G1S4 I am aware that electronic communication is not secure and private, and that in some localities, email may be subject to "open records" laws.					
G1S4 I know where and how to seek help in identifying and implementing solutions related to legal requirements.					
G1S4 I fully understand how to protect student privacy.					
G1S4 I recognize and respect student ownership of their work.					
G2S1 I know how to identify technological resources that conform to the limitations of my teaching environments.					
G2S1 I can identify appropriate technology environments (e.g., lab, one computer class, online, independent use) to meet specific learning/teaching goals.					
G2S1 I am able to evaluate technology environments for alignment with the goals of the class.					

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G2S1 I am able to evaluate technological resources for alignment with the needs and abilities of the students.					
G2S2 I understand my own teaching styles.					
G2S2 I know how to review my personal pedagogical approaches to use technology to support current teaching styles.					
G2S2 I have a general understanding of the potential and limitations in technology.					
G2S2 I know how to embed technology into teaching rather than making it an add-on.					
G2S2 I am aware of ways to engage regularly in professional development related to technology use and plan to do so.					
G2S2 I can evaluate my use of technology in teaching.					
G2S3 I am familiar with a variety of technology-based options.					
G2S3 I am able to choose a technology environment that is aligned with the goals of the class.					

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference
G2S3 I am able to choose technology that is aligned with needs and abilities of the students (e.g., language learning–focused software, productivity tools, content tools/resources).
G2S3 I am able to evaluate students' level of digital competence.
G2S3 I am able to help students understand how to use the technology to meet instructional goals.
G2S3 I am able to encourage students to think critically about their use of technology in an age-appropriate manner.
G2S4 I am familiar with suggestions from research for classroom practice using technology.
G2S4 I can effectively employ a variety of avenues for getting information about research related to technology use (e.g., communities of practice, conferences).
G2S4 I understand the temporal nature of research findings related to technology use (i.e., that technology changes over time, so older research may not be applicable to current settings).

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G2S4 I am aware of multiple research sources and perspectives that inform technology use.					
G2S4 I am able to discern which findings about technology use are most appropriate for my situation.					
G2S4 I share relevant research findings about technology use with others.					
G2S4 I am able to identify the context and limitations of research about technology use so as not to apply findings inappropriately.					
G3S1 I am familiar with a variety of forms of assessment that employ technology.					
G3S1 I know how to employ appropriate digital record-keeping tools and techniques.					
G3S2 I am familiar with research-based principles regarding technology-enhanced assessment.					
G3S2 I know how to use technology-enhanced assessment results to plan instruction.					
G3S2 I know how to interpret computer-based test scores for stakeholders (e.g., TOEFL iBT and other standardized tests).					
G3S2 I know how to elicit student feedback to improve my use of technology.					
G3S3 I know appropriate procedures for evaluating student use of technology (rubrics, checklists, etc.)					
G3S3 I know how to elicit student feedback to improve their use of technology.					
G4S1 I know how to find and draw on resources (lesson plans and teaching ideas) that are posted online.					
G4S1 I know how to implement lesson plans obtained from other teachers via the Internet.					
G4S1 I am aware of online communities of language teachers and belong or plan to belong to one or more.					
G4S1 I share online contact information with students and peers.					
G4S2 I know how to select technology resources that promote appropriate language use.					

Goal (G) and Standard (S) Reference	Well	OK	Some-what	Not at all	Comments (as needed)
G4S2. I understand my options for professional development related to technology integration (e.g., conferences, journals, mailing lists, communities of practice)					
G4S2 I am aware of multiple sources and perspectives that inform technology use.					
G4S2 I am able to discern which technology uses are appropriate for my situation.					
G4S3 I use electronic resources effectively to locate additional materials for lesson planning and classroom use.					
G4S3 I understand various methods of providing electronic feedback on student work (e.g., email, insert comments).					
G4S3 I know how to use technology to collect, organize, and retrieve material and student data.					