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EFL Teachers' Professional Competencies in Online Environment: Their Creativity, and Readiness for Online Teaching

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Abstract

This study explored the association betweeOrmninn EF aaachsss' ffff ssinnll competencies in digital teaching contexts, their level of creativity, and their preparedness for online instruction. A correlational research design was adopted ddsssssshhhssuudy'sbbbjeciivss Aoobl fff 000 Enll is language teachers from Iranian high schools were selected through convenience sampling to participate in the investigation. The research utilized standardized and validated instruments to measure teachers' online professional competencies, creativity, and online teaching readiness. Findings from the Pearson correlation analysis indicated sttt isiicallydsinnificnn reltt innsii ss mmnn hh suudy's c vaaabalss. oo revv the dimensions of online professional competencies were found to be important predictors ff aaaceers' raaii nsss eggaee in viraaal issrrcciinn. Tee fidd.ggs underscore the importance of adopting a holistic and cohesive approach to professional training, curriculum planning, and instructional design tailored to the needs of Iranian EFL educators operating in online learning environments such as the need to enhance the technological proficiency of EFL teachers.

Key Words: EFL Teachers, Online Learning Environment, Online Teaching Readiness, Professional Competencies, Teacher Creativity

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1. Introduction

Online learning has had a profound impact on various fields in the twenty-first century, particularly on the educational environment (Gluchmanova, 2015; Moore et al., 2011). Online learning refers to any learning activity that is supplied by the use of technology outside of official teaching or assisted as a complement to traditional education. Li et al (2013) asserted that the advent of e-learning education has increased students' exposure to language and their time spent learning languages outside of the classroom. Teachers are crucial in creating and facilitating e-learning settings. In order to verify student achievement, the online instructor should possess a wider range of skills and competencies since teaching in a technologically advanced setting is challenging (Li et al., 2013).

The transition from a face-to-face setting to a completely online environment is not easy, and teachers and teacher educators need to adopt new creative practices to promote engaging classrooms (Bigatel et al., 2012). Thus, the online instructor should acquire a broader set of skills and competencies in order to promise learner success**.** Teachers' professional competencies are one of the major aspects of the educational system, which leads to the success of that, so teachers need to develop skills and knowledge to be more competent in the teaching process (Bigatel et al, 2012). According to Diamond and Lee (2012), instructors need to expand their profession and update their knowledge and retain professional skills such as digital competence to enhance students' learning quality and corresponding to the new educational environment.

Another important factor to be considered in the online learning environment is teacher readiness for online teaching (Young, 2006). According to Cutri et al. (2020), the education system asks teachers to make the transition to teach online even if they are not properly ready for online teaching. In order to promote and enforce online teaching, teachers' preparation can be operationally assessed as a pre-assessment of their mental and physical preparedness (Andrea, 2020). Cutri et al. (2020) have critiqued these assessments of teacher preparedness for online learning since the majority of them lack criticality of power and fairness.

Meanwhile, the role of creativity in online teaching is increasingly recognized as a vital component of effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Yang, 2025). When teachers actively employ strategies that foster creativity and acknowledge their influence in shaping the educational experience, they are more likely to reach their professional potential (Han & Abdrahim, 2023). This, in turn, enables them to guide students in cultivating creative thinking skills—an essential competency for navigating an unpredictable and evolving future. Moreover, integrating creativity into teaching practice can simplify the process of identifying and training

effective educators by incorporating practical, experience-based learning modules (Khodabakhshzadeh et al., 2018). In line with 21st-century educational demands, Andree (2020) emphasized that creative teachers should increasingly design and implement classroom activities taat uurtur innvvoooo nn gggiaal toougtt . Aooorii gg t((9 7aaaii CCICd(222dddMtddnnd' Keedds(and interests should be assessed by teachers to offer various types of tasks which can help students achieve their objectives.

Therefore, the present study sought to find out the relationship between Iranian EFL 0aaeeer'' profssii nnll tttttt tt ii i tee nnliee environment, their creativity, and readiness for online teaching by focusing on the three research questions:

RQ1. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL taaeeer'' oocfiiii nnll competencies in an online environment and their readiness for online teaching?

RQ2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL taaeeer'' professional competencies in an online environment and their creativity in online teaching?

RQ3. Which subcomponent of Iranian EFL taaceer'' professional competencies in an online environment can best predict their readiness for online teaching?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

This study is grounded on a combination of theoretical frameworks that collectively provide a comprehensive lens to investig wLLk,aaBB feiii nnll (99999 97)) rr ddtivityCnnd readiness for online teaching. These frameworks—namely the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, and Amabile's (1983) Componential Theory of Creativity—offer robust foundations for understanding the complex dynamics involved in effective online English language instruction.

2.2. Online Environment

An online learning environment refers to a setting where teaching and learning occur without a shared physical space, with instructors and students interacting across distances (Moore, 2016). According to Means et al. (2013), online learning can take place either entirely through digital platforms—referred to as fully online learning—or in a hybrid format known as blended learning, which combines both online and in-person components. With the rapid

expansion of digital education, a wide array of terms has emerged to describe these learning modes. Commonly used expressions include e-learning, virtual learning, cyber learning, internet-based learning, distributed learning, web-facilitated learning, web-based instruction, distance education, computer-based learning, resource-based learning, and technology-enhanced learning (Ally, 2008; Moore et al., 2011; Moore & Kearsley, 2011; Rudestam & Schoenholtz-Read, 2010).

Online learning environments offer several advantages for students. These include increased flexibility in learning schedules, opportunities for both real-time (synchronous) and delayed (asynchronous) collaboration, enhanced interaction with peers, access to diverse educational resources, and support for authentic, context-rich learning experiences (Ally, 2008; Davies, 2014; Fuller & Yu, 2014). However, it is essential to recognize that online education should not be viewed as a complete replacement for traditional face-to-face learning (Palloff & Pratt, 2013). Furthermore, educators must remain mindful that no single online learning model can universally meet the needs of all students and instructors (Palloff & Pratt, 2013).

2.3. Teacher Professional Competency in Online Environment

A competency is generally understood as the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable individuals to perform specific professional tasks effectively and in alignment with industry standards (Richey et al., 2001). Guerrero and De los Ríos (2012) further explained that professional competencies are closely tied to a person's capacity to collaborate, solve problems, and uucceed in yynamic wrr evvirnnmnnts. Thss oomeetnnii es ll oo reflect nn'' s bbility to ddapt to evolving professional contexts.

Pacevicius and Kekyte (2008) defined competence as an integration of professional expertise, practical abilities, and personal aptitudes, along with the capability to apply them meaningfully in real-world work settings. In the realm of online education, this becomes especially critical. Teaching in digital environments presents unique challenges that often place additional demands on educators, sometimes leading to discomfort or uncertainty (Johnson et al., 2016). This underscores the importance of defining and developing the competencies required for effective online instruction (Albrahim, 2020).

Seyf (2008) emphasized that successful teachers are those who can sustain student engagement, manage classrooms efficiently, provide appropriate support, and implement suitable teaching strategies. Moreover, great educators are those who inspire a sense of fulfillment and enjoyment in learning. Accordingly, Koehler et al. (2013) argued that effective teaching in

technology-rich environments depends largely on the extent to which instructors possess well-developed professional competencies.

2.4. Teacher Readiness for Online Teaching

Teacher readiness for online learning refers to their willingness, their preparation for basic technical and communication skills, and training in new teaching methodology for learning (Phan & Dang, 2017)**.** According to Penna and Stara (2008), readiness for online teaching is considered one of the most outstanding aspects for the success of performing e-learning programs in higher education . E-readiness is defined by Parasuraman (2000) as a person's mental motivators and hurdles to utilizing new technologies (Parasuraman, 2000).

E-readiness is the extent to which a community is willing to engage in a technologically improved environment, as evaluated by monitoring the community's expected development in key areas for technology adoption (Dorathy & Mahalakshmi, 2014, as cited in Parasuraman & Colby, 2015). The notion of online readiness has developed through time, particularly with the increasing adoption of Internet-based technologies and e-learning in education, into technical readiness, a larger term that incorporates many elements of e-learning and associated technology-based training. Machado (2007) defined technological-readiness in education as educational institutions' and institutional stakeholders' ability to develop e-learning possibilities by supporting computer-based technologies; in other words, how e-ready an academic environment is to advance with educational technology.

As a consequence, teachers' e-readiness and competence are highly related to their motivation to employ educational technology in their instructional situations (Stumbriene et al., 2023). According to Meadows and Leask (2002), technology integration is contingent on well-informed and passionate instructors who are motivated and prepared to put technology to work on behalf of their students. A considerable corpus of research exists on the relationship between teachers' use of technology and their degree of teaching skill. Singh and Chan (2014) observed, for example, that teachers' attitudes toward educational technology use vary based on their years of experience and level of technological expertise.

2.5. Teacher Creativity

Creativity is often defined as the ability to generate novel, valuable, and contextually appropriate solutions to problems or produce original and meaningful ideas across various fields (Zhou & George, 2001). As technological advancements continue to reshape the world, creativity has gained significant prominence, particularly for its influence on teaching, learning, and its

eeeeeee imll iooooo for laaree ’’ futeee trajectories (Chien & Hui, 2010; Wang et al., 2009). In tii nnntxxt, ddaaat ttttttt tnn of craativ taaiii gg eeoom ennnntill , teey ii ryyyyyaaape instructional practices and educational philosophies (Pishghadam et al., 2012).

Given these developments, teacher education should evolve to move beyond traditional, lecture-based methods—often characterized by one-way communication and reliance on rote learning—and instead embrace creative pedagogical approaches (Sawyer, 2012). Preparing teachers for this shift means equipping them to navigate uncertainty and rethink their roles, not simply as transmitters of knowledge but as facilitators who encourage exploration and independent thought (Forrester & Hui, 2007, as cited in Jindal, 2020).

Fostering creativity and critical thinking is increasingly recognized as a core objective of 21st-century education (Terry et al., 2018). Creative teaching has the potential to transform the classroom into an interactive and dynamic learning environment, enabling meaningful change in how students engage with content (Terry et al., 2018). To be truly effective, teachers themselves should be creative professionals, as their innovation and adaptability are closely linked to student motivation and academic achievement (Terry et al., 2018).

2.6. Related Studies

Barbour et al. (2024) presented evidence and suggestions for improving teacher preparation for online teaching. They underscored the critical need to revise teacher education curricula and policies to include online teaching competencies. Tafazoli (2021) also explored teachers' experiences of online teaching and concluded that several layers of micro, meso and macrosystems are needed for teachers' development. Furthermore, Gunes and Adnan (2023) investigated online EFL teachers' competencies and found five roles and 28 competencies for teachers as being crucial. Nevertheless, instructors asserted that they cannot perform most of these roles and competencies in their online classes because of some challenges.

Apak et al. (2021) xxll w taaeeer’’ rr evvvity rll teeir prppeeeeeeeefrr managing 21st-nnntury ll sssssss sin nnliee eetting.. Teeir fiddiggs revaaldd taat taaeeer’’ creativity-promoting behaviors significantly differed depending on their years of teaching experience. Moreover, it was indicated that such creativity-fostering behavior positively influenced ddaaat’’’’ raaii eess for mddnnn ll sssroom mnnggemnnt i virtaal evvirnnmnnts. Likewise, Dashtestani and Karami (2020) examined the self-perceived preparedness and skills of Iranian EFL teachers in online instruction. The results showed that many of these teachers lacked adequate technological, pedagogical, and assessment-related competencies required for

effective online language teaching within the Iranian EFL context.

Albrahim (2020) identified six essential categories of competencies for teaching online courses in higher education: (a) pedagogical abilities, (b) subject matter expertise, (c) instructional design skills, (d) technological proficiency, (e) institutional and managerial capabilities, and (f) interpersonal and communication skills. Similarly, Mohalic (2020) conducted a study during the COVID-99 aaddcccc to ivvgggggggggstddnnt taaceer’’ e-readiness and attitudes toward online education. While most participants viewed online learning as a practical alternative during the crisis, they did not consider it a replacement for traditional face-to-face instruction.

In another study, Aslami et al. (2017) examined the professional competencies of teachers in e-learning environments, focusing on six core dimensions: social, ethical, organizational, personal, technical, pedagogical, and evaluative competencies. They recognized that competencies could be useful to design the career development plans and determination of the training needs for education courses with high quality. This leads to the development of the irrrr cctooooooceetnnii nnnnneeeer to eerfrr m teeir rigtt rll nnoooomeeteiii nnnnnee e-learning environment. Despite these valuable insights, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature, particularly in the Iranian context, regarding the interconnectedness of professional competency, creativity, and readiness of Iranian EFL teachers for online teaching. This highlights the need for further research that integrates these critical dimensions to better support educators in digital learning environments.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

The current paper investigated the relationship between EFL teachers' professional competencies, their creativity, and readiness in the online environment; therefore, a correlational design was followed, and a quantitative method was used to conduct the study.

3.2. Participants and Setting

A group of 306 EFL teachers was selected randomly as the participants of the study, who took part in the process of data collection. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Mgggnn’ tbbl (9900) o of 5500 taaeeers (nnnfieeeee lvvll ,,,,, ,mrr gi of rr rrr 555) . hhyy were both males and females with BA, MA, and PhD degrees, having various teaching experiences in teaching at high schools. They were from different age ranges, with Persian as

their first language, and had experience of teaching in online classes at schools.

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling method. The researchers distributed the survey link through professional teacher networks, high school administrators, and social media groups commonly used by Iranian EFL teachers, such as Telegram and WhatsApp channels. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no incentives were offered. To reduce sampling bias, the invitation message encouraged teachers from different cities, school types, and experience levels to participate. Table 1 below shows detailed information about these participants.

Table 1.

Demographic information for teachers in the validation process

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	145	47.3%
	Female	161	52.6%
	Total	306	100%
Age	30- 35	52	17%
	36- 40	82	26.7%
	41- 45	73	23.8%
	46- 50	51	16.6%
	51- 55	48	15.6%
	Total	306	100%
City	Mashhad	69	22.5%
	Torbat	23	7.5%
	Birjand	31	10.1%
	Sabsevar	29	9.4%
	Tehran	61	19.9%
	Shiraz	57	18.6%
	Neyshaboor	36	11.7%
	Total	306	100%
Teaching experience	5- 10	49	16%
	10- 15	95	31%
	15- 20	97	31.6%
	20- 25	65	21.2%
	Total	306	100%

3.3. Instruments

Three different instruments were employed in the present study to collect the required data to achieve the purposes.

3.3.1 Teacher Readiness for Online Teaching Scale

To eeeess Irnninn ELL taaeeer’’ raaii eess for oll iee irrrr cctinn at th ii gh oooool level, the Teacher Readiness for Online Teaching (TRTO) Scale developed by Hosny et al. (2021) was employed (See Appendix A). This instrument comprises 30 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale and is structured around five key factors. The first factor, online teaching and course design skills, includes 12 items. The second factor, digital communication, contains 6 items, while basic computer skills and advanced computer skills are represented by 5 and 3 items, respectively. The fifth factor, use of a learning management system (LMS), consists of 4 items. . It needs to be mentioned that it took about 15 minutes to complete the scale. The internal consistency of the llll ,, ss iddiddddddyy Crnnaa’’’ Alhh,, w rpptttt dd to ee 4444, eemnntt ratigg a ii gh level of reliability

3.3.2. Teacher Creativity in Online Teaching scale

To investigate the Iranian EFL teachers' creativity in online teaching, the "EFL Teachers' Creativity in Online Classes" questionnaire developed by Pishghadam et al. (2012) and modified by the researcher was used (See Appendix B). The questionnaire contained 61 items in the form of 5-point Likert scale. Furthermore, this questionnaire has 7 components namely originality and elaboration with 9 items, fluency and flexibility with 11 items, person (teacher) with 10 items, press (environment) and materials with 7 items, motivation with 10 items, independent learning (autonomy) with 8 items and brainstorming with 6 items. To be used in the present study, this questionnaire was modified by the researcher, and the items were changed in the way that teachers can be the respondents. For instance, item 1, which was 'interrupts the learners while expressing their ideas', was changed into ' I interrupt my learners while expressing their ideas'. It needs to be mentioned that it took about 25 minutes to complete questionnaire. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked by Cronbach's Alpha, and the reliability was reported to be 0.96.

3.3.3. Iranian EFL Teachers' competency for online environment scale

To eeeess Irnninn ELL taaeeer’’ oodfiiii nnll cttttt tt ii ss in nnliee irrrr cctinn, tee researchers used a researcher-made scale consisting of 47 items across five dimensions (pedagogical, technological, professional, communicative, and psychological competence). It was designed in the form of 5-point Likert scale. The instrument was previously subjected to a rigorous development and validation process, including expert review, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and internal consistency estimation (See Appendix C).

The full validation study, which includes detailed evidence of construct validity, reliability, and standardization procedures, has been submitted for a publication and is currently under review in another peer-reviewed journal (Shalchi et al., forthcoming). Therefore, only a brief eerrr iooon i prvviee eer.. Tee Crnnaa''' s Alpaa for tee uurrnnt aamll w 6666 iddinnnnnn excellent internal consistency. Although the complete psychometric validation cannot be reproduced in this manuscript due to the journal's policy on duplicate publication, the scale underwent a systematic validation process and met accepted standards for use in empirical educational research. It needs to be mentioned that it took about 20 minutes complete this questionnaire.

3.4. Procedure

To meet the objective of the study, which was Iranian EFL teachers' professional competency in the online environment, their creativity, and their readiness in online teaching, the following steps were taken. First, a group of 306 EFL teachers teaching at different high schools in various cities in Iran was selected based on a convenience sampling method and according to Krjj ii nnd Mgggnn' tbbl (9900). Tee,, three qeett innaair w ooonnn t lll lttt tee reqii red data. The firs questionnaire was the teacher readiness for online teaching scale (TRTO) by Hosny et al. (2021), the second one was the "EFL Teachers' Creativity in Online Classes" questionnaire developed by Pishghadam et al. (2012) and modified by the researcher and the last one was the Iranian EFL teachers' competency for online environment scale developed and validated by the authors. After that, these three questionnaires were changed into a Google Docs form, and the electronic links were sent to the participants via social media such as Telegram and WhatsApp. Finally, SPSS software version 26 was used to analyze the collected data to come up with sound results and answer the research questions through conducting various data analysis methods.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary Analysis

To evaluate the normality of the data collected through the competency questionnaire, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed. The outcomes of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Results of the Test of Normality for the Questionnaires

	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Competency Questionnaire	.02	306	.20
Creativity Questionnaire	.01	306	.20
Readiness Questionnaire	.02	306	.20

As shown in Table 2, the significance values for all three instruments exceeded the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the data derived from the competency, creativity, and readiness questionnaires followed a normal distribution.

T uummzzzz tee aartiii aa pppnnee,, eesrr ivvvv tt sssssssssnamely, the sum, mean, and standard deviation—were calculated using SPSS (Version 26). These results are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3.

Results of Descriptive Statistics for the Competency, Creativity, and Readiness for Online Teaching Questionnaires

		N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Competency	306	57034.34	186.38	26.71	
Creativity	306	67547.89	220.74	35.40	
Readiness	306	22011.49	71.93	22.26	

According to Table 3, the competency questionnaire yielded a total score of 57034.34, with a mean of 186.38 and a standard deviation of 26.71. For the creativity questionnaire, the total score was 67547.89, the mean was 220.74, and the standard deviation was 35.40. Finally, the readiness questionnaire scores totaled 22011.49, with a mean of 71.93 and a standard deviation of 22.26.

4.2. Addressing RQ1

The first objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Iranian EFL taaeeer'' profeiii nnll oomeetnnii ss illlll lee taaiii gg nnd teeir raaii ees for virtaal irrrr ooooo The corresponding rese eett inn w "I th nny ii gii finnnt rll ooobhhi eetwee Irnninn ELL taaeeer'' profeiii nnll ttttttt tt ii i nn nnliee nnii rnnmnnt nnd teeir raaii ee frr nnliee taaiii gg?" To ddeee tii ,, Paarnnn's rrr rll oooo eeeffiii nnt w lll lll ,,,,, , prssented in Table 4.

Table 4.

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		Competency	readiness
Competency	Pearson Correlation	1	.13
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.02
	N	306	306
Readiness	Pearson Correlation	.13	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	
	N	306	306

As indicated in Table 4, the correlation between professional competency and readiness was statistically significant ($p < .05$), with a Pearson correlation coefficient of .13. This suggests a weak but significant positive relationship between the two variables.

4.3. Addressing RQ2

Tee oooodd ii m wtttt o ivvgggggggtee rll ooobhhi eetweeIII rnninn ELL taaeeer'' nnliee professional competencies and their creativity in online instruction. The corresponding research qeestinn w "Is teere ii nnifinnnt rll ooobhhip eetwee Irnninn ELL taaeeer'' profssii nnll ttttt tt ii i nn nnliee nnvirnnmnnt nn thii r rr aativity i nnliee taaiii gg"" Paarnnn's correlation analysis was again used, with the results displayed in Table 5.

Table 5.

hh Ruuult Paarnnn Crrr ll oooo for eehhhrr s' Cttttt tt ii nn hhii r Craatiii t for Oll iee Teaching

		Competency	Creativity
Competency	Pearson Correlation	1	.73
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	306	306
Creativity	Pearson Correlation	.73	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	306	306

Table 5 reveals a statistically significant and strong positive correlation ($r = 0.73$, $p < .001$) between professional competency and creativity. This indicates that higher levels of professional competency in online contexts are strongly associated with increased creativity among Iranian EFL teachers.

4.4. Addressing RQ3

The final objective of the study was to determine the extent to which various components of Irnninn ELL taaeeers' oodfiiii nnll oomeetnnii i nn nnline setting could predict their raaii eess for nnliee irrrr cctinn. Tee rrr reooodigg reaaarhh quooooo w::: "Wii hh bbbeeeeeee et of Irnninn ELL taaeeer'' profssii nnll eeeee ennii ss i nnliee nnvirnnmnnts eest iiiii ii teeir raaii ee f nnliee taaiii ng"" Taaaddress this, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The summary of the regression model is presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

The Results of Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.20	.04	.02	21.99

As indicated in Table 6, the model yielded an R value of .20 and an adjusted R square of .02, suggesting that the collective components of professional competency accounted for approximately 2% of the variance in teachers' readiness for online instruction. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results is shown in Table 7.

Table 7.

Results of ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6128.42	5	1225.68	2.53	.02
	Residual	145109.09	300	483.69		
	Total	151237.51	305			

As shown in Table 7, the model reached statistical significance ($p = .02$), indicating that the combination of competency components significantly predicts teachers' readiness for online instruction. Table 8 presents the coefficients for each subcomponent of professional competencies.

Table 8.

Results of Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	64.26	9.60		6.69	.000
	Pedagogical	.72	.24	.22	2.96	.003
	Technological	1.23	.91	.16	1.34	.18
	Professional	-.12	.49	-.03	-.25	.79
	Communicative	.04	.28	.01	.16	.86
	Psychological	.36	.46	.11	.78	.43

According to the data in Table 8, among the five subcomponents, only the pedagogical competency emerged as a statistically significant predictor of readiness for online teaching ($p = .003$). The standardized Beta coefficient (0.22) suggests that pedagogical competence accounts for 22% of the explained variance in online teaching readiness. In contrast, the other components; that is, technological, professional, communicative, and psychological did not significantly contribute to the prediction model.

5. Discussion

Tee ruuults ooowdd taat teer w ii gii finnnt rll ooobhhi eetwee Irnnia ELL taaeeer'' professional competencies in an online environment and their readiness for online teaching, and ll teere w ii nnifinnnt rll ooobhhi eetwee Irnninn ELL tehhh rofeiii nnll competencies in an online environment and their creativity in online teaching. The results of multiple regression showed that the subcompnnnnts of Irnninn ELL taaeeer'' oodiiii nnll competencies in the online environment could best predict their readiness for online teaching.

The results of the study are in line with the study conducted by Aslami et al. (2017), who demonstrated teachers' professional abilities in an e-learning environment. Aslami et al. (2017) suggested that the identified competences might be effective in designing career development plans and determining training needs for high-quality education courses. This resulted in the teachers' competencies being developed in order for them to fulfill their proper responsibilities and competencies in the e-learning environment. The results of the study are in line with the study conducted by Albrahim (2020) who discussed the abilities and competences needed to teach online courses in higher education. He suggested that the abilities and competences are divided into six categories: (a) educational abilities, (b) content abilities, (c) design abilities, (d) technology

abilities, (e) management and institutional abilities, and (f) social and communication abilities. Likewise, the findings of the study are in line with the study conducted by Apak et al. (2021), who investigated the relationship between teachers' creativity and their readiness for the 21st-century classroom management in online classes. The results demonstrated that instructors' creativity-nurturing behavior varies considerably by teaching experience.

The findings of the study suggest that while many teachers have achieved a basic level of technological competence, there is a notable disparity in advanced skills necessary for creating a fully immersive and interactive learning experience. Teachers who have prior exposure to digital tools and online resources have higher levels of competency, underscoring the importance of continuous professional development in technology integration. The model indicates that competency is foundational; without it, efforts in creativity and readiness are significantly hindered.

The research revealed that Iranian EFL teachers exhibit varying degrees of creativity, often constrained by limited access to resources and insufficient training in creative pedagogical strategies. However, teachers who employ a mix of multimedia content, interactive activities, and gamified learning experiences are more successful in maintaining student engagement and enhancing learning outcomes. The findings suggest that creativity is not just an added value but a crucial element that amplifies the effectiveness of online teaching. Encouraging a culture of experimentation and sharing best practices among teachers can foster greater creativity in the online environment.

Readiness for online teaching encompasses both the psychological and practical preparedness of teachers to transition from traditional classrooms to virtual ones. The study found that while many Iranian EFL teachers were initially apprehensive about online teaching, their readiness improved with experience and support. Factors such as institutional support, access to reliable technology, and ongoing professional development play significant roles in enhancing readiness. The findings of the study illustrated that readiness is an evolving trait, heavily influenced by external support and personal resilience. Providing structured training programs and robust technical support can significantly boost teachers' confidence and preparedness for online teaching.

The integrative model used in this study highlights the interplay between competency, creativity, and readiness, suggesting that these elements are interdependent and collectively contribute to the overall effectiveness of online teaching. Enhancing teacher competency in digital tools and pedagogies can lead to more creative teaching practices, which in turn foster a greater

sense of readiness and confidence in the online environment. In conclusion, the transition to online education presents both challenges and opportunities for Iranian EFL teachers. By addressing the interconnected elements of competency, creativity, and readiness, educators can be better prepared to deliver effective and engaging online instruction. The results of this study serve as a framework for understanding and improving the capabilities of EFL teachers in the online environment, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of enhancing educational outcomes in the digital age.

An interesting contradiction emerged in the regression model. While professional competency strongly correlated with creativity (r = 0.73), only the pedagogical competency subscale significantly predicted readiness. This finding suggests that being technologically or communicatively competent does not necessarily make teachers feel ready to teach online. Such results challenge the assumption that readiness is purely skill-based and imply that psychological and contextual factors such as confidence, institutional support, and workload may have stronger predictive power.

Although the study identified significant relationships among professional competency, creativity, and online teaching readiness, the effect sizes, particularly the weak correlation between competency and readiness (r = .13), indicate that additional variables may play a more substantial role in shaping readiness. This unexpected weak association suggests that external factors such as institutional policies, access to digital infrastructure, prior online teaching experiences, and teacher beliefs could influence readiness more strongly than competency alone. These findings contradict assumptions from earlier studies (e.g., Dashtestani & Karami, 2020) that competencies directly translate into readiness, pointing to the need for more nuanced models incorporating contextual and affective variables.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this tt ddy w t xxnnnn tee rll ooobhhi eetwee Irnninn ELL taaeeer'' professional competencies in online environments, their creativity in online teaching, and their readiness for online instruction. The findings showed a weak but statistically significant correlation between professional competencies and readiness for online teaching (r = .13, p = .02). This suggests that while competence contributes to readiness, the effect is relatively small and likely influenced by other factors not measured in this study. This aligns with previous work (e.g., Aslami et al., 2017), which emphasizes that competency is one of several elements shaping teacher

performance in digital contexts. A second major finding was the strong positive correlation between professional competencies and creativity (r = .73, $p < .001$). This indicates that teachers who report stronger pedagogical, technological, communicative, professional, and psychological competencies are also more likely to implement creative online teaching practices. This result is consistent with Apak et al. (2021), who reported that teachers with higher professional capability tend to demonstrate greater creativity in their instructional approaches. Regarding prediction, the regression analysis showed that only pedagogicll tttttt tt ii gii finnntly iiiii ii dd taaeeer’’ raaii ee for nnliee taacii gg (.22, ===.00)) . Oteer oomooeesss (thhhoolggilll , oocfiiii nnll , communicative, and psychological competencies) did not make significant contributions. This finding highlights the central role of pedagogical expertise—specifically the ability to structure, facilitate, and manage online learningii aaaii gg taaeeer’’ raaii ee... hh lwwvvllll l R^2 (.22), however, indicates that readiness is influenced by multiple variables that fall outside the scope of this study, such as institutional support, access to technology, and prior experience with online platforms.

One of the key pedagogical implications is the need to enhance the technological proficiency of EFL teachers. Some studies have revealed that many Iranian EFL teachers possess basic digital skills but lack the advanced technological competencies required to create engaging and interactive online lessons (Dashtestani & Karami, 2019). To address this, teacher training programs should include comprehensive modules on the use of digital tools, online teaching platforms, and multimedia resources. By improving their technological proficiency, teachers can more effectively utilize digital tools to facilitate language learning, create dynamic lesson plans, and provide real-time feedback to students.

Creativity in online teaching is essential for maintaining student engagement and fostering a stimulating learning environment. The research indicates that Iranian EFL teachers need support in developing creative pedagogical strategies. Educational institutions should encourage teachers to experiment with various digital formats, such as interactive videos, virtual reality, and gamification, to make learning more engaging. Workshops and collaborative projects can provide platforms for teachers to share creative ideas and innovative practices. Additionally, incorporating creative assignments and activities into the curriculum can help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Active learning is a crucial component of effective online education. Techniques such as collaborative projects, peer reviews, and discussion forums can create an interactive online classroom environment. Teachers should be trained in designing activities that require students

to apply their language skills in practical contexts, thereby enhancing their learning experience. By focusing on active learning strategies, teachers can help students become more autonomous learners and improve their language proficiency. The readiness and confidence of teachers to transition to online teaching are critical for successful implementation. Institutions should provide ongoing professional development and emotional support to help teachers adapt to the online teaching landscape. Mentoring programs and peer support networks can be instrumental in uuilii gg taaeeer'' nnnfidnn Mvvvvvvvvrr aatigg pppoortiv mmmmnity weer taaeeer nnn discuss challenges and share solutions can enhance their readiness for online teaching.

Teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with their peers, share successful online taaiii gg preeeeeee, nn laar from aahh eeee' exeerinn tt all iiii gg oodfiiii nnll laarii n communities (PLCs) can foster a culture of experimentation and innovation, leading to more creative and effective teaching methods. Educators should engage in reflective practice to assess their teaching methods, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their strategies to better meet the needs of their students. Reflective practice can help teachers become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in the online environment, leading to continuous improvement. Educational institutions must ensure that teachers have access to reliable technology and digital resources. Investing in robust technological infrastructure and providing necessary tools and software can alleviate the challenges faced by teachers in the online environment. Institutions should also ensure that all teachers have equitable access to these resources.

Overall, the study contributes to understanding how professional competency, creativity, and readiness interact in online EFL teaching; however, the findings also reveal the complexity of this relationship. Future work should employ mixed-methods approaches, longitudinal tracking, and classroom observations to gain deeper insights into how these constructs evolve over time. looooroornnnttt aaeeer'' livdd xxeerinnttttt t ruugh irrrr viww nnrrr eflvvvvvvvuuraals myy nnvvvrr additional psychological and contextual factors shaping readiness.

To operationalize this research, a mixed-methods approach can be particularly effective. Quantitative data collected through surveys can map the prevalence of various competencies, while qualitative data from interviews and observations can provide deeper insights into the experiences and perceptions of teachers. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track changes in competencies over time, particularly in response to targeted interventions or ongoing professional development programs. Further research on Iranian EFL teachers' competencies in online environments should adopt a multifaceted model that includes technological proficiency, pedagogical adaptability, and psychological readiness. This approach will not only illuminate the

current state of teachers' preparedness but also guide future efforts to enhance their effectiveness in online teaching. By addressing these dimensions comprehensively, the research can contribute significantly to the broader field of online education and the professional development of EFL teachers in Iran.

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Appendix A

Iranian EFL Teachers' Readiness for Online Environment Scale

Dear respondents:
The purpose of the present questionnaire is to collect data on the Iranian EFL teacher's readiness in online environment.

Demographic Information:
Gender: male female Years of Teaching Experience:……
Academic Degree: BA MA Ph.D. Years of online teaching Experience:……
Place of teaching ……. Age:……

Instruction:
Please choose one of the choices given to state to what extent you agree with the following statements about your job as a teacher:
Not really / To a minor extent / To a moderate extent / To a great extent / To a very great extent
1 2 3 4 5

		Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
	In my online English classes, …….					
1	I can use Microsoft Office tools such as Word and PowerPoint to create documents and presentation					
2	I can perform file management on my computer, such as coping, moving, renaming and deleting files or folders.					
3	I can encrypt (lock with passwords) files on my personal computer to protect important data					
4	I can send and receive emails, including opening and sending email attachments					
5	I can use internet browsers, such as Google Chrome, Firefox, or Safari, to locate resources for teaching.					
6	I can record audio/ video using phone, tablet or computer					
7	I can add audio/ video files to my presentations					
8	I feel comfortable communication through writing					
9	I feel comfortable communicating through speaking					
10	I feel comfortable using social media tools to communicate with students and colleagues					
11	I am ready to timely respond to communication requests from students and colleagues					
12	I am comfortable using the learning management system tools to develop an online course.					
13	I am comfortable using tools in the learning management system (such as: uploading learning materials [reading materials, audio/videos files]] , synchronous and asynchronous communication, posting feedback, building forums etc.) to facilitate student learning.					
14	I am comfortable using the learning management system or other online assessment tools (such as: quizzes, exams,					

	assnnmnn ts, rubrcs etc.) to evaaaae student performance.					
15	I am comfortable using the learning management system to record and report student grades.					
16	I am familiar with at least one synchronous online teaching pttt for,, iike ooo,, Mcrosoft aaass , Canvas… etc.					
17	I expect online teaching to take more time than face-to-face instruction, and I am prepared for it					
18	I enjoy online lecturing to my students for most of the class period.					
19	During teaching, I incorporate online learning activities that are connected to real-world applications (ie, using real clinical cases, reflecting on applying knowledge in life uses… etc.)					
20	I am willing to provide timely and constructive feedback to student performance					
21	I am available to my students on a regular basis for questions and assistance.					
22	I feel comfortable conducting interactive learning activities (eg, small group case-based discussions, PBL, TBL, semaaars)) where students can interact wtth theeeeers and tutor					
23	I know how to check for pgggrris studentsswrttten assignments.					
24	I am always keen to participate as a learner in online workshops, discussnnnforuss , webaaars etc., to update my knowledge and skills in online teaching.					
25	I am oriented with online course planning.					
26	I am good at creating online teaching materials (eg, lectures, handouts, nnn uass assignments etc.).					
27	I am able to create schedules for myself and stick to them.					
28	I feel comfortable writing measurable learning outcomes based on the taxonomy of the cognitive domain					
29	I feel comfortable designing online interactive learning activities that provide students opportunities to interact with their peers, their instructor, and course content					
30	I understand the copyright law and Fair Use guidelines when using copyrighted materials in education.					

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Appendix B

Iranian EFL Teachers' Creativity for online environment scale

Dear respondents:
The purpose of the present questionnaire is to collect data on the Iranian EFL teacher's creativity in online environment.

Demographic Information:
Gender: male female Years of Teaching Experience:……
Academic Degree: BA MA Ph.D. Years of Online teaching Experience:……
Place of teaching …….. . Age:……

Instruction:
Please choose one of the choices given to state to what extent you agree with the following statements about your job as a teacher:
Not really / To a minor extent / To a moderate extent / To a great extent / To a very great extent
1 2 3 4 5

No.	Statement	Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
In my online English classes ……						
1	I interrupt my learners while expressing their ideas.					
2	I ask them synonyms and antonyms.					
3	Students are required to guess the meaning of the new words in the first place.					
4	I administer various teaching methods.					
5	I don't get tired of my students' numerous questions.					
6	I use supplementary books along with the main coursebook.					
7	I assign several rules for the students to obey.					
8	I appreciate students' right and wrong responses.					
9	I offer students more than a single topic to choose for the writing task.					
10	I teach them how to learn more effectively.					
11	I ask students open- ended questions rather than multiple choice.					
12	I care a lot for class discussions.					
13	I make use of flash cards and videos in my teaching.					
14	Mocks learners' seemingly irrelevant ideas.					
15	I comment on the truthfulness of students' responses on the spot.					
16	I talk more than the students in the class.					

17	I answer different questions immediately without getting help form students.					
18	I value students' learning more than their grades.					
19	I remind students dos and don'ts.					
20	After teaching new grammatical forms, I help them make similar examples.					
21	Before starting a new conversation or reading I let students guess the theme from the provided pictures.					
22	I accepts aaarners eeeas that contradcc meee					
23	I asks students to talk about their favorite topics for a couple of minutes.					
24	I encourages students' novel and original ideas.					
25	I help students to be clear in discussions.					
26	Learners who comment more are encouraged more.					
27	Students are required to put the learned materials into use.					
28	The students who do not observe the class rules are punished.					
29	I insist on carefully covering the whole book.					
30	It is necessary for students to learn the basic materials accurately.					
31	I applies students' favorite topics in the class as far as possible.					
32	I chooses writing topics that are closely related to everyday life.					
33	Students are expected to check their work before I do.					
34	We play different games in the class.					
35	I write the meaning of the new words on the board without asking students' interpretations.					
36	Some of the exercises are done in groups.					
37	Asks students to listen to a conversation for the first time while their books are closed.					
38	Before starting a new topic I review students' background knowledge.					
39	Students read their writings in the class for their classmates.					
40	Competitions are chiefly cooperative rather than individual.					
41	I ask successful learners to talk about their learning strategies.					
42	I mention the goal of each exam or exercise.					
43	I take students' opinions serious and follows them up.					
44	My behavior in class is predictable.					
45	I point to the title of each section and appreciates students to guess the subject.					
46	Encourages students ornnnal and nove interpretations.					
47	I ask the similarities and differences of the pictures, sentences and texts.					
48	I ask questions to make students think deeper.					
49	I ask students repetitive questions.					
50	Students are allowed to give *only* one response to my questions.					
51	I believe that questions constantly have one correct answer.					
52	Students are allowed to talk about their experiences in the class.					
53	Some questions are left unanswered for students to explore.					
54	Examples of grammatical points are related to everyday life.					
55	I listen carefully to students' questions and answers.					
56	I take exams regularly.					

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57	I interpret the text irrespective of students' opinions and interpretations.					
58	I chooses students' favortte topics for cssss discussions.					
59	I keep the atmosphere of the class happy.					
60	To facilitate the process of writing, I review students' background knowledge and write them on the board in categories.					
61	After covering each conversation, I expect students to make a change or create a new conversation based on the situation.					

Appendix C
Iranian EFL Teachers' competency for online environment scale

Dear respondents:
The purpose of the present questionnaire is to collect data on the Iranian EFL teacher's competency in online environment.

Demographic Information:
Gender: male female Years of Teaching Experience:……
Academic Degree: BA MA Ph.D. Years of Online teaching Experience:……
Pccœ of aaachggg ……... . Age:……

Instruction:
Please choose one of the choices given to state to what extent you agree with the following statements about your job as a teacher:
Not really / To a minor extent / To a moderate extent / To a great extent / To a very great extent
1 2 3 4 5

		Not really	To a minor extent	To a moderate extent	To a great extent	To a very great extent
	In my opinion, to be a successful teacher in online cssses teachers shou…….. .					
1	possess technological skills					
2	have online communication skills					
3	have pedagogical knowledge					
4	know teaching methods for online classes					
5	know teaching strategies for online classes					
6	pass some training courses about online education					
7	be able to design online content					
8	own field expertise					
9	be proficient in facilitation of online learning					
10	know planning for online teaching					
11	be prepared for online classes					
12	be proficient in course management in online context					
13	know about online evaluation and testing					

14	have high amount of self- efficacy					
15	possess digital competencies					
16	be familiar with online learning difficulties					
17	provide a research- based situation					
18	have the ability to use the resources to enhance their teaching quality					
19	be able to maintain a useful syllabus for their online classes					
20	be able to manage their time effectively during the class					
21	select instructional tasks and exercises based on students' needs					
22	choose materials based on students' needs and abilities					
23	select appropriate resources for the students					
24	be able to sustain students' motivation					
25	be able to actively engage students in self-assessment					
26	be able to engage students in setting their personal goals					
27	be able to model ethical practices for using technologies					
28	have the ability to teach students with diverse learning styles					
29	have friendly social relations with students					
30	be patient during the online class					
31	be available for the students outside the class					
32	be flexible professionally					
33	have self- confidence in teaching online					
34	have high level of leadership					
35	use the newest pedagogical and technological materials					
36	have the ability to promote collaboration and interaction among students					
37	give students prompt feedback					
38	respect diverse talents among students					
39	encourage active learning in class					
40	establish a student- centered environment					
41	respect the privacy of individuals in and out of the class					
42	help students take responsibility for their own learning					
43	challenge and support participants in class					
44	encourage their students to share their expertise with the class					
45	assist students in resolving conflicts and misunderstandings during the class					
46	create a safe and supportive online learning environment					
47	demonstrate proficiency in helping students to solve problems in teamwork					

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