

# Attitudes towards Online Teaching: Gender, Experience, and Age among Iranian English Language Teaching Teachers

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**Abstract:** The field of education is currently experiencing a profound technological revolution, driven by the pervasive influence of the internet. This transformation has made the integration of technology indispensable. This research explores the nuanced influence of gender, age, and experience on the attitudes of 160 Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers toward online teaching. Central to this investigation is the 'Teachers' Attitude Towards Online Teaching' (TAatOT) questionnaire, thoughtfully adapted and validated for Iranian EFL teachers by Kianinezhad (2023). The study reveals a significant gender-based disparity, with male teachers exhibiting a more favorable perspective on online teaching. Additionally, the research establishes a negative correlation between attitudes and both experience and age, indicating that teachers tend to view online teaching less favorably as they gain more experience and age. This study underscores the critical importance of tailored training, well-designed support systems, continuous professional development, collaborative initiatives, and substantial investments in policies and infrastructure to foster a positive attitude toward technology integration among educators. In conclusion, the research not only highlights but also underscores the dynamic interplay of gender, age, and experience in shaping attitudes among Iranian EFL teachers. This understanding empowers educational institutions to develop strategies for promoting technology integration and, consequently, enhancing the quality of online education in the EFL context. Further research in this field is strongly recommended to refine and expand upon these insights, guiding evidence-based practices in teacher education and support in the future.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Online Teaching, Gender, Experience/Age, Iranian English Language Teaching (ELT) Teachers

## 1. Introduction

Education serves as a cornerstone of personal growth, commencing in early childhood and evolving continuously over time. Recent years have witnessed remarkable technological advancements that have profoundly impacted various aspects of our daily lives (Sungur & Ateş, 2023; Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). In this ever-evolving landscape, the pervasive influence of the internet has catalyzed a profound digital transformation in global education (Anderson & Tracey, 2001). Distinctively, technology has emerged as a potent tool for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of teaching (Lateef & Alaba, 2013; Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022).

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In today's world, where digital natives, especially millennials, are deeply immersed in technology, educators have a golden opportunity to harness the benefits of enhancing their digital competencies (Kalanda, 2005). Over the past decade, online education, championed by Philip et al. (2009), has made significant inroads into higher education. However, a rift persists within the teaching community concerning online instruction. While some researchers regard technology as a panacea for addressing accessibility challenges (Dhawan, 2020; Leiberman, 2020), others argue that it can never entirely replace the role of a teacher (Bryant, 2016; Merikko & Kivimäki, 2022).

Many educators perceive traditional teaching methods as inadequate in the modern era (Enayanti et al., 2012) and advocate for the integration of technology to elevate student performance (Costley, 2014; Kianinezhad, 2023). Consequently, the significance of technology, alongside digital literacy, has ascended to paramount importance in the current educational landscape. Thus, blended learning and online education have assumed pivotal roles in higher education since the early 21st century (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Nevertheless, in 2019, the world grappled with a global challenge as the pandemic unfolded (Spina et al., 2020). The severity of the pandemic compelled educational institutions to swiftly transition to online or synchronous learning, leaving educators with limited time to develop comprehensive plans for instructional delivery, assessment, technical infrastructure, and support (Sahoo, 2020).

Additionally, the evaluation of educators' readiness for online teaching and their perceptions becomes indispensable. In higher education, educators' attitudes exert a significant influence on their preparedness for online instruction (Martin et al., 2019). The successful integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into the classroom hinges on educators' cognitive patterns, beliefs, and attitudes toward ICT (Taghizadeh & Basirat, 2022).

Likewise, the success of any online course depends on factors such as the learning environment, assignments, and students' attitudes toward ICT (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019). To ensure equitable access to quality education for all, it is imperative to scrutinize the diverse factors influencing educators' acceptance of online teaching (Hung, 2016; Kebritchi et al., 2017). Consequently, the performance of online teaching predominantly relies on educators' attitudes toward online education (Wasserman & Migdal, 2019).

Furthermore, the attitudes of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers toward online teaching and learning have garnered significant attention in recent years as the field adapts to the evolving landscape of language education (Ng et al., 2023; Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez et al., 2019). Given the rapid advancement of technology and the global pivot toward online education, comprehending EFL teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and experiences in online language instruction assumes paramount importance for the effective implementation and continuous enhancement of online teaching methodologies.

Moreover, recent research has underscored the pivotal role of online platforms in nurturing learner autonomy and fostering self-directed learning among EFL students. These studies build upon the findings of earlier research (Han, 2021; Pham, 2023; Yu, 2022) and delve deeply into the specific ways in which online resources and platforms empower students to take ownership of their language learning journey, providing access to authentic materials, promoting independent practice, and facilitating collaboration with peers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Stickler et al., 2021). So, these findings offer invaluable insights into how EFL teachers can effectively leverage online learning environments to cultivate learner autonomy and nurture a sense of agency in their students.

What is more, Kianinezhad (2023) underscores the benefits of online language education, emphasizing flexibility, accessibility, and innovative teaching methods. The importance of

online communication tools, collaborative learning, and formative assessment in facilitating language instruction and cultural understanding is accentuated (Kianinezhad, 2023).

Remarkably, attitude, a multifaceted psychological construct, serves as a foundational explanatory framework for a wide spectrum of phenomena. It encapsulates the ability to discern and evaluate experiences, intellect, emotions, and subsequent behaviors (Schwarz, 2007). Plus, attitudes encapsulate individuals' unique perspectives and personal interpretations of significance (Krosnick & Petty, 1995). In the arena of technology adoption and transformation, attitude assumes a pivotal role (Krishnakumar & Rajesh, 2011).

Various factors, including knowledge, willingness to learn (Papp, 1998), comfort level (Nair & Das, 2012), beliefs, and the external environment, collectively shape an educator's attitude toward online education. In addition to that, cultural norms, values, and societal conditions have demonstrated their influence on an individual's mindset (Gardner et al., 1993). Educators harboring positive attitudes are often more adept at adapting to new technologies (Gregory et al., 2015). Despite numerous studies reporting favorable attitudes among educators toward e-learning (e.g., Khukalenko et al., 2022; Suri & Sharma, 2017), it is imperative to acknowledge that the actual integration of technology in the classroom remains relatively infrequent.

Hence, the primary purpose of this research is to comprehensively examine the intricate interplay of gender, experience, and age in shaping the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers towards online teaching. To address the aims of the present study, the researcher has formulated the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the mean scores of male and female participants on the 'Teachers' Attitudes Toward Online Teaching Questionnaire'?
2. Is there a correlation between TAtOT scores and participant' years of experience?
3. Is there a correlation between TAtOT scores and participants' age?

## **2. Review of the Literature**

The literature consistently highlights the advantages of online learning. Erfani and Ghapanchi (2019) emphasize positive student attitudes, but these benefits coexist with various challenges. Notably, there is a pressing need for teacher preparedness and robust technological support systems. In this regard, Mahmoodi Shahrebabaki (2014) proposed a comprehensive approach to strengthen e-learning. This approach involves government financial support, improvements in internet infrastructure, and the exploration of alternative education platforms. Overall, Shahrebabaki (2014) also underscores the significance of fostering public awareness and instilling student responsibility to establish e-learning as a viable alternative to traditional classroom education. Hence, in their study, Yaghoubi et al. (2008) highlighted the critical factors that influence students' preference for e-learning. They emphasized the significance of several key elements, including self-perceived e-learning abilities, computer proficiency, and an understanding of the limitations inherent in the traditional education system. These factors play a substantial role in shaping students' attitudes and inclinations towards e-learning, underlining the importance of addressing these aspects for effective implementation and adoption of e-learning methodologies.

Besides that, Raygan and Moradkhani (2020), and Kianinezhad (2023) underscore the vital role of teacher attitudes and innovative tools in the successful implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences. Therefore, these studies emphasize the pivotal role of educators in shaping students' perceptions and overall learning outcomes. Addressing obstacles in technology integration, as identified by Aslan and Zhu (2016), Fathi and Ebadi

(2020), Hedayati and Marandi (2014), necessitates the establishment of robust support mechanisms for educators. These mechanisms encompass resources, training, and technical assistance, underscoring the need for comprehensive support structures in educational settings.

Concerning educator and student attitudes towards technology integration, the success of technology in virtual learning heavily relies on educators' attitudes. These attitudes are influenced by their beliefs, technological proficiency, and perceived utility (Gill & Dalgarno, 2008). Inversely, students exhibit varying attitudes, often favoring traditional classrooms while recognizing the advantages of online modalities (Erarslan & Zehir Topkaya, 2017). Therefore, user acceptance of technology is a complex phenomenon shaped by social influence and facilitating conditions. Peer endorsements and accessible support infrastructures play pivotal roles in determining user acceptance (Mei et al., 2013).

Online course effectiveness depends on teacher preparedness, with some educators readily embracing technology while others approach it with caution (Canals & Al-Rawashdeh, 2018). Furthermore, students' attitudes towards e-learning, particularly those in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, reveal a balance between traditional preferences and recognition of online learning's convenience and accessibility (Erarslan & Zehir Topkaya, 2017; Wright, 2017). In the realm of student engagement and learning outcomes, diverse attitudes towards online tools emphasize the need for tailored solutions that align with individual student preferences (Manegre & Sabiri, 2020). In a similar vein, challenges and opportunities in online learning vary among students, with some expressing reservations about the online learning experience (Lengkanawati et al., 2021). So, the experience and proficiency of instructors in online teaching emerge as pivotal determinants of the efficacy of online education (Lengkanawati et al., 2020).

Additionally, teacher preparedness for technology integration is crucial for successful implementation, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive support structures and robust training initiatives within teacher education programs (Kessler, 2006). Also, factors shaping teachers' attitudes towards technology encompass computer anxiety, affinity for technology, and perceptions of ease of use (Yildirim, 2000). This underscores the indispensable role of ongoing training and support mechanisms (Yildirim, 2000). Finally, age has been identified as a significant factor influencing teachers' attitudes towards computers and e-learning. Consequently, older teachers exhibit more positive attitudes attributed to their extensive technology experience (e.g., Suri & Sharma, 2017).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants and Context**

In this comprehensive study, a total of 160 Iranian EFL teachers actively participated. This diverse group included 58 males and 102 females, demonstrating a significant variation across various crucial dimensions. These dimensions encompassed gender, educational attainment (spanning from Associate of Arts to Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. degrees), workplace settings (encompassing schools, institutes, universities, and other contexts), teaching experience, and the length of their tenure in the field of English Language Teaching. It is crucial to underline that all study participants were native Persian speakers and held Iranian citizenship. In this regard, the research meticulously adhered to stringent ethical standards to ensure the utmost confidentiality and anonymity for all individuals contributing to the study.

### 3.2. Instrument

The 'Teachers' Attitude Towards Online Teaching' questionnaire, originally developed in English by Sangwan et al. (2021), has undergone meticulous adaptation and validation for Iranian EFL teachers by Kianinezhad (2023) using Rasch model analysis. The validation process yielded a reliable and valid measure, providing significant outcomes and producing a comprehensive instrument tailored specifically for Iranian EFL context.

This questionnaire comprises two primary sections. First, the Socio-demographic Information section collected comprehensive participant details, including gender, educational background, workplace, teaching experience, and age. This extensive data collection provides valuable insights into the participants' backgrounds and the contextual factors influencing their attitudes towards online teaching.

Second, the Attitude Assessment section required participants to rate each of the 24 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (indicating 'strongly disagree') to 5 (indicating 'strongly agree'). This rating scale plays a crucial role in revealing instructors' perceptions and attitudes regarding online teaching, thus offering significant insights into their perspectives on this mode of education.

Additionally, the translation process was conducted with great care to ensure linguistic and cultural appropriateness. The questionnaire was meticulously customized for Iranian EFL teacher participants through a rigorous process of both forward and backward translation. Furthermore, the content validity of the questionnaire was rigorously established through consultations with experts in the fields of educational technology and educational psychology.

Significantly, the questionnaire exhibited strong reliability, supported by a high level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .94. Similarly, the Rasch separation reliability was determined to be .92, confirming the questionnaire's trustworthiness in evaluating attitudes towards online teaching. This thorough adaptation and validation process ensures the questionnaire's suitability for this study and the reliability of the data it generates.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Since this study employed a quantitative-correlational research design, it meticulously investigated the influence of gender, experience, and age on the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers toward online teaching. The analysis of the data was performed using SPSS software (version 21). It was crucial to examine how these key variables contribute to the understanding of attitudes toward online teaching in the context of Iranian EFL instructors.

Next, the study addressed the first research question, which sought to determine whether there was a notable difference in the mean scores of male and female participants on the 'Teachers' Attitudes Toward Online Teaching Questionnaire.' To explore the role of gender in shaping attitudes toward online teaching among Iranian EFL teachers, an independent samples t-test was conducted, providing insights into any potential gender-related differences in attitudes toward online teaching.

Moving forward, the second research question delved into the potential correlation between TAtOT scores and the participants' years of experience. A comprehensive Pearson correlation analysis was undertaken to examine how teaching experience influenced attitudes toward online teaching among the EFL teachers. This analysis aimed to reveal any relationship between the duration of teaching experience and the attitudes exhibited toward the integration of online teaching methodologies.

Lastly, the study examined the third research question, which focused on the potential correlation between TAtOT scores and the age of the participants. To unravel any age-related variations in perspectives regarding attitudes toward online teaching, a Pearson correlation analysis was used. This analysis aimed to reveal any potential influence of age on the attitudes exhibited by Iranian EFL teachers, shedding light on any generational differences that might impact their perceptions of online teaching.

#### 4. Results

During the data analysis phase of this study, the collected data underwent meticulous scrutiny using SPSS Statistics software (version 21). Firstly, the normality of the test distributions in this study was assessed by calculating skewness and kurtosis values, along with their standard errors (SE). Following this initial step, descriptive statistics for the scale were examined. Subsequently, the collected data was subjected to a rigorous analysis that involved the utilization of both an independent samples t-test and a Pearson correlation test, providing a thorough assessment of the gathered data.

##### 4.1. Normality Assessment

The normality of the test distributions in this study was assessed by calculating skewness and kurtosis values, along with their standard errors (SE). Skewness measures how much a distribution deviates from symmetry around the mean, while kurtosis indicates the "peakedness" or "flatness" of the distribution. Ideally, skewness and kurtosis values of zero indicate a perfectly normal distribution. Nevertheless, values between  $\pm 1$  are considered "very good," and values between  $\pm 2$  are deemed acceptable (West et al., 1995). As shown in Table 1, the calculated values for the test fall within the "very good" range, as defined by West et al. (1995). Thus, we can reasonably conclude that the distributions of the test in this study adhere to normality standards.

**Table 1.** Test of Normality for the Measure in the Study

	TAtOT
Skewness	.39
SE of Skewness	.19
Kurtosis	-1.04
SE of Kurtosis	.38

##### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the scale, encompassing key parameters, including the number of participants (N), range, variance, standard deviation, mean, maximum, and minimum values.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for Scale

	N	Range	Variance	Std. Deviation	Mean	Maximum	Minimum
Scale	160	69.00	457.79	21.39	88.73	130.00	61.00

### 4.3. Results of the First Research Question

To address the first research question, an independent-samples t-test was performed to assess the attitudes of male and female teachers toward online teaching. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for both genders who participated in the study. Notably, the results displayed in Table 4 indicate a significance level (sig-value) below .05, signifying a statistically significant difference in mean scores between male and female teachers. Moreover, analyzing Table 3 reveals that, on average, male teachers tend to have a more positive perspective on online teaching ( $M = 97.18$ ,  $N = 58$ ,  $SD = 22.51$ ).

**Table 3.** Group Statistics for Males and Females Participants

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Female	102	83.9314	19.24324	1.90536
Male	58	97.1897	22.51273	2.95607

**Table 4.** Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Online Teaching

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Total	Equal variances assumed	3.936	158	.000	-13.25828	3.36852
	Equal variances not assumed	3.770	104.064	.000	-13.25828	3.51692

### 4.4. Results of the Second Research Question

To address the second research question, the study examined the relationship between TAtOT scores and the participants' years of experience. Table 5 reveals a noteworthy correlation between TAtOT and experience, as determined by the Pearson correlation ( $r = -.40$ ,  $n = 160$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding, in essence, strongly suggests a significant negative relationship between TAtOT and experience. That is, as teachers accumulate more experience, their attitudes toward online teaching tend to become less favorable.

### 4.5. Results of the Third Research Question

To answer the third research question, the study explored the potential correlation between TAtOT scores and the age of the participants. Table 5 also reveals a significant correlation between TAtOT and age, as determined by the Pearson correlation ( $r = -.30$ ,  $n = 160$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Therefore, this discovery suggests a substantial negative relationship between TAtOT and age. That is, as teachers become older, their attitudes toward online teaching generally become less favorable.

**Table 5.** Results of Pearson Correlation between Experience, Age, and TAtOT Scores

		Experience	Age
TAtOT	Pearson Correlation	-.402**	-.306**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

N	160	160
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\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## 5. Discussion

In this comprehensive study, the intricate interplay among gender, age, and experience, and its consequential impact on the attitudes of a cohort of 160 Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers towards online teaching were meticulously examined. This diverse assembly included 58 males and 102 females, representing a multifaceted spectrum of gender. Furthermore, the study encompassed a wide range of participants, with varying educational backgrounds, workplace environments, teaching experiences, and ages. The primary objective was to investigate how these pivotal demographic factors influenced attitudes towards online teaching, utilizing the 'Teachers' Attitude Towards Online Teaching' (TAtOT) questionnaire. This questionnaire was thoughtfully adapted and rigorously validated for this specific research context by Kianinezhad (2023). This investigation aimed to uncover the nuanced relationships and effects of these demographic dimensions, offering valuable insights into the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers in the contemporary landscape of online education.

The study yielded several noteworthy findings supporting valuable insights into the factors that shape EFL teachers' attitudes towards online teaching. Primarily, a significant gender-based difference in mean scores was observed among the participants. Notably, male teachers tend to maintain a more positive perspective on online teaching, which aligns with prior research that has consistently illustrated gender disparities in technology adoption and attitudes (Suri and Sharma, 2017).

Additionally, a negative correlation was observed between attitudes towards online teaching and both experience and age, aligning with findings on technology adoption (Suri and Sharma, 2017). This underscores the need for continuous training and support, as emphasized by Kessler (2006), to bridge the generational gap in technology acceptance.

These findings, therefore, underscore the multifaceted nature of attitudes toward online teaching and the necessity for tailored approaches in supporting EFL teachers to effectively adopt and integrate technology. They further emphasize the importance of considering gender, age, and experience when designing professional development programs for educators (Canals and Al-Rawashdeh, 2018).

The significance of these findings is in line with the critical role of educators in shaping students' perceptions and learning outcomes (Kianinezhad, 2023; Raygan and Moradkhani, 2020). The success of online education is intricately linked to educators' attitudes and technological proficiency (Gill and Dalgarno, 2008). While students may vary in their attitudes toward online learning (Erarslan & Zehir Topkaya, 2017; Wright, 2017), the alignment of educator and student attitudes is pivotal for effective online education.

Furthermore, the importance of ongoing training and support mechanisms for educators is highlighted (Yildirim, 2000). Addressing obstacles in technology integration requires comprehensive support structures, as evident in the work of Aslan and Zhu (2016), Fathi and Ebadi (2020), Hedayati and Marandi (2014). These support mechanisms play a critical role in bridging the gap in attitudes toward technology adoption among educators of different ages and levels of experience.

In light of these insights, this study offers valuable contributions to the understanding of the factors influencing Iranian EFL teachers' attitudes toward online teaching. The results underscore the significance of gender, age, and experience in shaping these attitudes and highlight the need for tailored professional development programs and support mechanisms. Thus, by addressing these factors and promoting a positive attitude toward online teaching,



educational institutions can more effectively leverage technology to enhance the learning experiences of both educators and students in the evolving landscape of language education.

## **6. Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this comprehensive study illuminates the complex interplay of gender, age, and experience in shaping the attitudes of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers toward online teaching. It underscores the significant influence of these demographic factors on EFL teachers' perspectives on online education. Specifically, the research reveals that, on average, male teachers maintain more positive attitudes toward online teaching in comparison to their female counterparts. Moreover, as educators gain more experience and age, their attitudes tend to become less favorable toward online teaching. These findings highlight the crucial role of gender, age, and experience in shaping the landscape of online education in the context of Iranian EFL teaching.

### **6.2. Implications**

The implications of this study extend to several critical areas. Firstly, the recognition of the diversity within the teaching community is vital for developing inclusive and effective educational strategies. The study's findings on the influence of gender, age, and experience in shaping attitudes toward online teaching underline the importance of tailoring educational approaches to meet the unique needs of different educators.

Secondly, understanding the challenges experienced educators face emphasizes the necessity for personalized support and resources to facilitate their transition to online teaching. As the research reveals that attitudes tend to become less favorable as teachers gain more experience and age, it becomes clear that ongoing training and support mechanisms are crucial for helping them adapt to the evolving landscape of education. These personalized resources can aid in mitigating the challenges and concerns that might arise, ultimately leading to a more seamless transition to online teaching. In doing so, educational institutions can better serve both their educators and students in the dynamic realm of online education.

### **6.3. Recommendations**

Based on the insights of the study, practical recommendations can be offered for English teachers, educators, and language school supervisors. It is advisable for educational institutions to develop customized training programs that consider the specific needs of teachers based on factors such as gender and age. Additionally, providing targeted support and mentorship to experienced teachers transitioning to online teaching is crucial for their success, including guidance through the unique challenges of the online learning environment. Next, elevating continuous professional development to a top priority is also essential to foster adaptability and a growth mindset among all educators in an ever-evolving educational landscape. Besides, encouraging collaboration among teachers of different age groups and varying levels of experience can facilitate the exchange of best practices and the adoption of innovative teaching methods, promoting a dynamic and enriching educational experience. Furthermore, policymakers should prioritize investments in internet infrastructure and accessibility to ensure equitable online educational opportunities for all, bridging the digital divide and creating a level playing field for learners from diverse backgrounds.

In view of that, this study offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of gender, age, and experience in shaping the attitudes of Iranian EFL teachers toward online teaching. Thus, by understanding these dynamics, educational institutions can develop more effective strategies to encourage technology integration and enhance the quality of online education within the EFL context. Consequently, further research in this domain can continue to refine these insights and contribute to evidence-based practices in teacher education and support.

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