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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFL teachers' teaching style, creativity, and burnout: A path analysis approach

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Abstract: The present study delved into a rarely explored construct in the domain of English as a foreign language (EFL), i.e. teaching style. We hypothesized that teacher creativity plays a role in the styles teachers adopt in language institutes. It was also conjectured that teaching style affects burnout. The role of burnout in teacher creativity was also investigated. To measure teaching style, Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory comprising five teaching styles (Expert, Authority, Model, Facilitator, and Delegator) on a continuum of teacher vs. learner-oriented styles was employed. The educator version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) and the English Language Teacher Creativity Scale (ELT-CS) were utilized to gauge burnout and creativity, respectively. To examine these causal associations, a path analysis was run. The results demonstrated the role of teachers' creativity in their preferred teaching style. In particular, it was found that teacher creativity predicts Facilitator and Delegator positively; whereas, it predicts Authority and Expert in a negative direction. The results also revealed that three teaching styles (Model, Facilitator, and Delegator) appear to contribute to burnout prevention whereas the other two teaching styles (Expert and Authority) have no significant role. Finally, the debilitating role of teacher burnout in creativity was demonstrated.

Subjects: Bilingualism/ESL; Education; Educational Psychology

Keywords: burnout; creativity; EFL teachers; path analysis; teaching style

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The present study explored teaching style. We hypothesized that teacher creativity plays a role in the styles English teachers adopt in language institutes. In this study, teaching styles were measured on a continuum of teacher vs. learner-oriented styles (Expert, Authority, Model, Facilitator, and Delegator). It was also assumed that teaching style affects teachers' level of burnout. Burnout refers to a state of emotional exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in an activity. The role of burnout in teacher creativity was also investigated. The results demonstrated the role of teachers' creativity in their preferred teaching style. In particular, it was found that teacher creativity predicts learner-centered styles. The results also revealed that learner-centered styles contribute to burnout prevention. Finally, the negative role of teacher burnout in their creativity was demonstrated.

1. Introduction

Individuals all have preferences or styles for doing things. Styles influence the person as an individual and differentiate him/her from someone else. One of the most widely known applications of styles pertains to the domain of education. In the realm of teachers, it is known as the teaching style and is defined as teacher's preferred way of solving problems, carrying out tasks, and making decisions in the process of teaching (Fan & Ye, 2007). For Grasha (2002), teaching styles are enduring personal qualities and behaviors that determine how teachers conduct their classes. Artvinli (2010) contended that teaching styles are the leading factors that shape and assure the success of a highly complex teaching-learning process. Taken together, it can be contended that teaching style refers to all of teaching techniques and activities and approaches that a teacher employs in teaching a certain subject in the classroom or "the sum total of instructional activities, techniques, and approaches that a teacher feels most comfortable using when he or she is in front of a class" (Cooper, 2001, p. 301).

In recent decades, teachers' teaching style stimulated plethora of studies (e. g. Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Yilmaz & Çavaş, 2008; Zhang, 2007). Teachers' teaching styles have been found to be associated with teachers' reflectivity (Akbari, Kiany, Imani Naeeni, & Karimi Allvar, 2008), their content knowledge (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), their behavior in the class (Zhang, 2007), their management skills (Yilmaz & Çavaş, 2008), the context of teaching (Rahimi & Nabliou, 2010), self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), and locus of control (Kennedy, 1991).

Due to the encompassing position of teaching style in teaching practices, the present study aimed at delving into potential factors influencing teaching style and the constructs influenced by it. In this study, EFL teachers were investigated primarily due to the researchers' educational and professional expertise in the field. Furthermore, EFL teachers' teaching style and the interaction between styles and other teachers' characteristics have not been adequately explored and remain an uncharted territory that awaits further research.

English teaching over the last half century has been in a state of flux and undergone numerous transformations and reforms. A host of second language (L2) learning and teaching theories and over a dozen of teaching methods and approaches have emerged in the past 50 years. These methods take different forms and directions from language-centered methods to learner-centered and learning-centered methods. More specifically, the 1990s witnessed the advent of strikingly new ideas that were used to fundamentally reconstruct L2 teaching and learning. These ideas highlighted the need to go beyond the constraints of the transmission model of education and articulated a quest of finding alternative ways of creating efficient teaching professionals. These innovations in turn resulted in a greater awareness of issues such as teacher cognition, teacher's sense of plausibility, and teacher's subjectivity (Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Prabhu, 1999). A common thread that goes through these mindsets is an emphasis on teachers' subjective understanding of the teaching they do as a replacement for mechanical teaching and overroutinization. This personal conceptualization calls for teachers' conscious and purposeful selection of teaching methods and styles based on immediate teaching context and through immediate activity of teaching. Such a framework enables EFL teachers to develop skills, knowledge, and autonomy required for implementing teaching styles and strategies which are situation-specific, creative, and dynamic (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001).

In this study, it was presumed that teacher creative skills might have some bearings on the styles teachers adopt in their classes. We set out to examine this hypothesis based on an incremental body of evidence demonstrating that teachers' teaching styles are consistent with their skills and abilities and vary among teachers (Cooper, 2001). So, it is plausible to presume the varying nature of teaching styles which entails employing different activities, practices, tasks, and behaviors demands variety, novelty, and creativity on the part of teachers.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the approaches and styles teachers employ in their classes require them exhibit various roles. These roles can range from that of authority and

information provider, to model, facilitator, and collaborator. Some of these roles are formal with designated responsibilities. Other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their students and their peers. The diverse nature and distinct characteristics of these roles might have different bearings on teachers' mental and emotional states. In light of this contention, in this study these styles are hypothesized to influence teachers' physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion, i.e. burnout level. In the followings, each of the constructs will be briefly discussed.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Teaching style

There is an ever increasing body of research demonstrating the position of individual differences in current models of educational psychology. One of the most highly debated issues in this domain concerns "teaching style". Snow, Corno, and Jackson (1996) in the Handbook of Educational Psychology stated that "no category we have covered contains a more voluminous, complex, and controversy-laced literature than that of personal styles" (p. 281, as cited in Dörnyei, 2005). There are a multitude of theories, models, and definitions regarding teaching style. Fischer and Fischer (1979) defined it as "a pervasive way of approaching the learners that might be consistent with several methods of teacher" (p. 246). To Kaplan and Kies (1995), teaching style "consists of a teachers' personal behavior and the media used to transmit data to or receive it from the learner" (p. 2). Grasha (2002) defined teaching style as the continuous and consistent behaviors of teachers in their interactions with students during the teaching-learning process. Jarvis (2004) stated that teaching style "includes the implementation of philosophy; it contains evidence of beliefs about, values related to, and attitudes toward all the elements of the teaching-learning exchange" (p. 40). In general, teaching styles are approaches, activities, and techniques which a teacher uses in front of a class (Cooper, 2001). Various classifications have been proposed for teaching style. In the present study, Grasha's model was used. This model includes five categorizations:

- (1) Expert: the teacher is concerned with to give correct information to students. Actually, he/she is very knowledgeable in the field at hand; this of course may intimidate many students.
- (2) Formal authority: the teacher has the role of a school member who emphasizes acceptable, standard, and correct ways to do things and the students are provided with the structures they need to learn.
- (3) Personal model: the teacher acts as a model and encourages students to observe and utilize one particular approach which is effective in teacher's point of view.
- (4) Facilitator: the teacher guides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encourages them to develop criteria to make informed choices which develop the capacity for independent action, initiative, and responsibility for students.
- (5) Delegator: the teacher is concerned with students' autonomy who expects learners to work independently and help them just when it is needed.

These styles can be mixed in different ways, as a result a teacher may have all these styles but the degree is different.

Previous studies have investigated the importance of teaching style in relation to some other variables in educational psychology. A study was conducted by Conti (1985) to find the relationship between teaching style and adult student learning. It revealed a significant correlation between the styles teachers adopt in their classes and students' academic achievement. Hein et al. (2012) carried out a study to find the relationship between teaching style and motivation to teach among physical education teachers. It was concluded that intrinsically motivated teachers employ more productive teaching styles and adopt more student-centered classes compared to non-autonomous motivated teachers with productive teaching styles whose classes are more teacher-centered. In the realm of EFL teaching, it seems that the importance of teaching style in shaping students' conceptions and motivation has been neglected thus far. Among the few documented studies, Akbari et al. (2008)

found a significant relationship between EFL teachers' teaching styles and their reflectivity. In a more recent study, Kazemi and Soleimani (2013) examined the most prominent styles teachers employ in an EFL classroom and revealed that EFL teachers dominantly adopt formal teaching styles in official settings of language teaching in Iran.

2.2. Teacher creativity

Another factor considered in this study is creativity which is not easy to define. Although it is one of the psychological constructs that can be understood by both professionals and laypeople, there is no single definition for creativity. The root of the word "creative" comes from the Latin *creare*, meaning to "to produce or make" (Piiro, 2004). A creative product or idea can be defined as appropriate and original finding, theories, or even imaginative conversations. As a result, stereotyped and reproduced products are not considered creative even if they are elegant and fine (Fisher, 2005). It is one of the basic aspects of Sternberg and O'Hara's (2000) theory of successful intelligence which is defined as generation of products or ideas that are original, useful, and valuable. Gardner (1993) considered it as the achievement of something new and remarkable which changes a field of endeavor in a significant way. Craft estimates a difference between "little c" and "big C" creativity. The former concentrates on everyday creativity but the latter carries a great impact on society. Rhodes (1961) estimated 50 definitions of creativity in his "4-p_s" model which consists of four levels as following: (a) person, which shows information about personality, (b) process such as, motivation, thinking, and learning, (c) press, which indicates the relationship between human beings and the environment and (d) product, which is the result of a creative endeavor. Torrance (1988) proposed four constituents of creativity as follow:

- (1) Creative fluency, in which the person is able to produce a large number of ideas,
- (2) Flexibility, in which novelty and variation in generating ideas are frequent,
- (3) Originality, which is the ability to produce unique and unusual ideas that are statistically infrequent and
- (4) Elaboration, which means developing ideas to produce many details.

One of the major aims of education is cultivating creativity, because the root of a creative world is in basic education. A number of studies have been conducted related to the learners' creativity. Pishghadam and Zabihi (2011), for example, scrutinized two factors which influence learners' creativity: cultural and social capital. Cultural capital refers to learners' access to cultural goods such as, computers, books, dictionaries, painting, and pictures (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is related to student's relationships with peers, siblings, parents, and teachers. They found a high correlation between these factors and learners' creativity.

Parental involvement is an important factor in explaining outcomes like creativity (McNeal, 1999). Thinking styles, self-esteem, and students' socioeconomic status are other factors influencing learners' creativity (Zhang & Postiglione, 2001). A study by Lareau and Weininger (2003) showed that even social class differences affect creativity. So, a mother from a working-class family had great difficulty in comprehending jargons said by her child's teacher, because of low level of cultural capital. As all these experimental studies and many others, not mentioned here, indicated that learners' creativity is pivotal to their academic achievement and social development. Nevertheless, it seems there is a paucity of research on teacher creativity and its contribution to teachers' teaching practices and learners' development and achievement. Due to the dearth of study on teacher creativity, we investigated the role of EFL teachers' creative skills and their role in the styles teachers adopt in their teaching practices. We hypothesized this association based on the varying nature of teaching styles which entails implementing different activities, practices, tasks, and behaviors. This in turn necessitates variety, novelty, and creativity on the part of teachers.

2.3. Teacher burnout

Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome of cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and reduced personal accomplishment which occurs among individuals working with other people (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Burnout contains three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

Emotional exhaustion/depletion: it is the most fundamental component of burnout and refers to a condition which is caused by excessive amounts of stress that can have social, physical, and psychological effects; however, there is no means to examine how much stress will cause people to become emotionally exhausted. This condition leads people toward the feeling as if they do not have the essential physical and emotional resources. Ulcers and headaches are some physical signs of this dimension of burnout and fatigue, anxiety, loss of energy, wearing out, insomnia, frustration, debilitation, passiveness, and irritability are the psychological symptoms of this condition which can vary among individuals. Whatever the causes of stress are, i.e. financial problems, work overload, demanding job, or struggles with colleagues and classmates, high coping skills in a person would reduce the amount of stress and consequently decrease the level of emotional exhaustion.

Depersonalization/cynicism: it refers to the state in which individuals become indifferent to other people and ignore them in order to put distance between themselves and others (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). It consists of recurrent and persistent feelings of being separated from mental processes or one's body and are outside observers of their lives. De-realization, depression, and anxiety are symptoms of this disorder. Cognitive or behavioral techniques and psychodynamic therapy can be used to treat such detrimental concept.

Reduced personal accomplishment/academic inefficacy: it refers to the difficulty of gaining a sense of accomplishment, a decline in one's successful achievement, and feelings of competence which takes place when people develop negative judgments toward their performance.

It is worth mentioning that concepts of stress and burnout are distinctive in many aspects. Stress leads to anxiety disorders which produce overreactive and urgency emotions, but physical damage is more primary. The person suffering from this detrimental barrier is characterized by over engagement, but can get everything under the control to feel better. Burnout, on the other hand, leads to depression and detachment which can produce hopelessness and primary damage is emotional rather than physical. People affected by burnout are emotionally blunted and had lost their interests, ideals, hopes, and motivation levels leading to disengagement.

A plethora of studies have been conducted to examine burnout levels of human service professionals such as social workers and nurses, (e.g. Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber, 2002; Escribà-Agüir, Martín-Baena, & Pérez-Hoyos, 2006). By the same token, in the educational context, teacher burnout has stimulated continuing lines of research in recent years. These studies indicated that teacher burnout is under the influence of a host of individual and organizational factors such as student misbehavior, demonization, lack of shared decision-making, workload, pedagogical barriers (Doménech & Gómez, 2010), self-efficacy (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2002; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), unpleasant emotions from judgments teachers make regarding student behaviors (Chang, 2009), role overload, work pressure, classroom environment, and self-esteem (Dorman, 2003), personality types and emotional intelligence (Unaldi, Bardakci, Dolas, and Arpacı (2013), changes in teachers' perceptions of classroom overload, students' disruptive behavior and autonomous motivation (Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012), and disrespect (Hastings & Bham, 2003).

In a recent study, Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015) reviewed 30 studies regarding teacher burnout to find the most salient sources and ramifications of this syndrome. Age, work pressure, lack of parental interest, reduced self-esteem, unpleasant classroom environment, student disrespect, role overload, teacher misjudgment, student misbehavior, lack of shared decision-making, pedagogical barriers, demonization, pupil's lack of motivation, personality types, role conflict, lack of

sociability, lack of received mindfulness intervention, lack of time to prepare lessons, number of students, and poor aspirations were among the most detrimental sources of burnout. It was also found that, alienation to professional identity, reduced self-efficacy, feeling of lack of social support, feeling of inferiority, leaving the job, and absenteeism were the consequences of teacher burnout which can affect students and ultimately the educational system.

In a similar vein, in the domain of EFL teachers, burnout has been a highly debated issue over the recent years. L2 scholars and educationalists contended that EFL teachers are even more susceptible to the syndrome in comparison with other educator groups given that they have to cope with the potential challenges of cultural and emotional barriers linked to language education (Penington & Ho, 1992). To cite a few studies, Garcia, Munoz, and Ortiz (2005) carried out a study to find the association of contextual and personality variables and explore the most effective ones in language teacher burnout. It was concluded that both types of variables were related to teacher burnout. It was also revealed that language teachers with high levels of neuroticism and introversion experienced burnout more than others (Unaldi et al. (2013). Another study was conducted by Ghanizadeh and Ghonsooly (2014) to find the relationship among EFL teacher burnout, self-regulation, and attributions. It was found that teacher burnout is positively associated with uncontrollable and external attributions and negatively with self-regulatory strategies. Ghanizadeh and Royaei (2015) probed the dynamic association between emotional labor strategies, emotion regulation, and burnout depletion. The findings documented that both emotional labor strategies and emotion regulation impact significantly, albeit negatively, on burnout among Iranian EFL teachers.

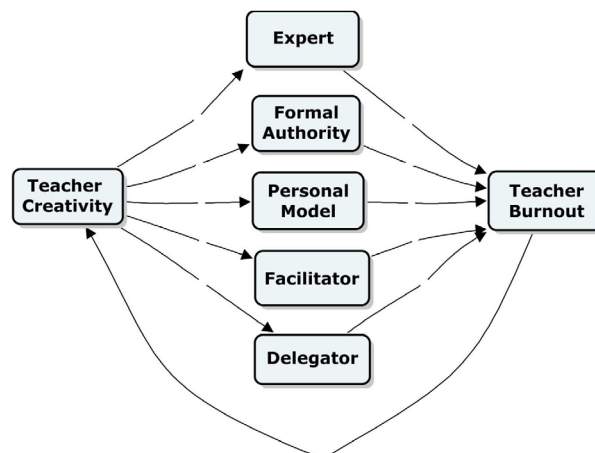
As it can be seen, various factors and resources with diverse underlying structures can cause or influence burnout among teachers. A potential factor which appears to be influential in burnout is teachers' personal qualities and behaviors that determine how teachers conduct their classes, i.e. their teaching style. Despite this fact, it seems the role of teaching style in teachers' burnout is quite unexplored among EFL teachers. One of the objectives of the present study is to investigate this association in a single framework.

3. Purpose of the study

As stated earlier, the purpose of this study is threefold: firstly, to examine the role of teacher creative skills in their teaching styles; secondly, to investigate the influence of teaching styles on teachers' burnout level, and finally, to delve into teacher creativity and teacher burnout by studying the impact of teachers' level of burnout on their creativity.

Figure 1 illustrates our hypothesized model. Path analysis was selected to study the casual relations. In our proposed model, teaching styles constitute the core of study, the role of which in burnout is explored; in turn, the predictive power of creativity in each teaching style is estimated. As

Figure 1. Hypothetical model of teaching styles, teacher creativity, and teacher burnout.



indicated in the figure, five teaching styles were assessed: Expert, Formal authority, Personal model, Facilitator, and Delegator.

To this end, the following research questions were formulated and investigated in the current study:

- (1) Does EFL teachers' creativity influence their teaching styles?
- (2) Do EFL teachers' teaching styles have any role in their burnout?
- (3) Does EFL teachers' burnout level have any impact on their creativity?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Two different samples comprised the participants of the present study. The first sample consisted of 193 EFL teachers teaching English in different language institutes of Mashhad and Tehran, two cities in Iran. The sample of convenience was utilized in this study. The teachers kindly accepted to participate in the study. The profile of the teachers is as follows: They were between 21 and 42 years old ($M = 24.21$, $SD = 6.52$) with 2 to 17 years of teaching experience ($M = 7.42$, $SD = 5.3$). Out of 193 teachers, 107 were females and 75 males from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Eleven teachers did not specify their genders. The majority had majored in the different branches of English [i.e. English Literature (12 B.A, 2 M.A), English Teaching (48 B.A, 36 M.A, 15 PhD), English Translation (17 B.A, 9 M.A, 2 PhD)] and those who had certificate in different majors except English had the necessary supplementary qualifications to teach English.

All participants completed the research questionnaires anonymously, and these were coded numerically. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the research, two sets of the questionnaires (teaching style and burnout) were distributed among teachers. The original English versions of the questionnaires were used as the participants were all experienced users of English. They took the questionnaires home and returned them to the researchers during next sessions. The data collection took place during two semesters from June to December 2013.

The second group of participants comprised 1,710 Iranian EFL learners (students of the above-mentioned teachers). About 8 to 10 students in each class were randomly selected to assess their teachers' creativity. They were briefed on the purpose of the study and were ensured that their participation was entirely voluntary. Almost all the selected students cordially agreed to take part in questionnaire completion. The students were 1,123 females and 568 males whose age ranged from 14 to 66 ($M = 22.15$, $SD = 5.73$). Nineteen students did not specify their gender. Their language proficiency varied from intermediate to advanced levels and their educational level varied from high school to Ph.D. With the kind cooperation of the teachers, these students completed the questionnaires in the class. Completion of each questionnaire took about 15 min. To observe anonymity and confidentiality considerations, the questionnaires were coded numerically and they were asked not to write their names.

4.2. Instrumentation

4.2.1. Maslach burnout inventory

The *Maslach burnout inventory* is the most frequently used instrument for assessing burnout. The educator version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-ES) developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) was utilized in the present study for measuring teacher burnout (See Appendix 4). The scale comprises 22 self-report items measuring three subscales as indicated in Table 1.

The frequency of the burnout symptoms is measured on a seven-point rating scale, ranging from "never" (0) to "every day" (6). Via this inventory, burnout is defined the presence of high scores on

Table 1. Subscales of the MBI-ES along with the corresponding descriptions

| Subscale | Definition | Alpha |
|---------------------------------|---|-------|
| Emotional exhaustion | Teachers' feeling that they have little left to give, at a psychological level, to their work | .76 |
| Depersonalization | Teachers' development of negative and cynical attitudes towards students | .63 |
| Reduced personal accomplishment | Teachers' evaluation of themselves and their accomplishments negatively | .73 |

Table 2. Classification of different items of burnout scale

| Sub-scales | Item number |
|-------------------------|--|
| Emotional exhaustion | 1, 4, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22 |
| Personal accomplishment | 3 ^a , 6 ^a , 7 ^a , 12 ^a , 13 ^a , 17 ^a , 19 ^a , 21 ^a |
| Depersonalization | 2, 5, 8, 11, 14 |

^aScored in reverse order.

the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization components but as the presence of low scores on the personal accomplishment component. The inventory enjoys high reliability and validity indices (Hastings & Bham, 2003). The reliability coefficients for emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment are .76, .63, and .73, respectively (Maslach et al., 1996). In this study, the total reliability of the questionnaire was .71. Table 2 represents the composing items of each burnout subscale.

4.2.2. Teaching style inventory

Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory (TSI) (1996) identifies five basic teaching styles (Expert, Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, Delegator) on a single dimension of teacher vs. student oriented, i.e. "Expert" being totally teacher oriented, and "Delegator" being totally student oriented. It contains 40 items and each item is scored using a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Table 3 displays the composing items of each teaching style.

Mean score ranges for each of the sets of items related to the individual teaching styles are calculated, and the mean scores are categorized as either low, moderate, or high where high corresponds to a preferred teaching style (based on the standards developed by Grasha, 1996). To develop a consistent basis for comparison, Grasha (1996) recommended dividing the obtained scores for each teaching style by 8 (Table 4). The scale has acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .68-.75$ on individual scales, and $\alpha = .72$ for the entire test) and validity (Grasha, 1996). The following table displays TSI Score Norms depicts levels of strength (low, moderate, high) in each of the five categories of teaching style. The reliability estimates obtained in the present study are as follows: Expert ($\alpha = .68$), Authority ($\alpha = .71$), Model ($\alpha = .65$), Facilitator ($\alpha = .73$), and Delegator ($\alpha = .72$).

Table 3. Classification of different items of TSI

| Teaching style | Items |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Expert | 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36 |
| Formal Authority | 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37 |
| Personal Model | 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, 28, 33, 38 |
| Facilitator | 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39 |
| Delegator | 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40 |

Table 4. Grasha’s TSI score norms depicts levels of strength (low, moderate, high) in each of the five categories of teaching style

| Grasha’s TSI score norms | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|---------|------------|
| Delegator | Facilitator | Personal model | Formal authority | Expert | Preference |
| 1.0–2.6 | 1.0–3.7 | 1.0–4.3 | 1.0–4.0 | 1.0–3.2 | Low |
| 2.7–4.2 | 3.8–5.3 | 4.4–5.7 | 4.1–5.4 | 3.3–4.8 | Moderate |
| 4.3–7.0 | 5.4–7.0 | 5.8–7.0 | 5.5–7.0 | 4.9–7.0 | High |

Table 5. Classification of different items of ELT-CS

| Subscales | Items | Reliability (of the item and person) | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------|
| | | Item | Person |
| Originality& elaboration | 12, 13, 26, 27, 48, 50, 51, 59 | .96 | .74 |
| Fluency & flexibility | 2, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 49, 52, 53, 56, 63 | .94 | .81 |
| Person | 5, 6, 21, 30, 32, 39, 45, 46, 57, 58 | .99 | .77 |
| Press and materials | 7, 8, 14, 20, 31, 36, 61 | .99 | .76 |
| Motivation | 9, 10, 19, 33, 34, 38, 42, 44, 54,60 | .98 | .70 |
| Autonomy | 11, 17, 18, 35, 37, 41, 43, 55 | .99 | .74 |
| Brain storming | 1, 3, 15, 16, 40, 47, 62 | .99 | .77 |

4.2.3. Creativity inventory

Pishghadam, Baghaei, and Shayesteh (2012) constructed an English Language Teacher Creativity Scale (ELT-CS) to measure EFL teacher’s creative skills and thinking as rated by their students. Rasch Model was used to assure the construct validity of the scale in the context of both learners and teachers. This scale (ELT-CS) contains 63 items and each item is scored using a five-point Likert scale from 1 (always) to 5 (never).

There are seven subscales in ELT-CS: (1) originality and elaboration, (2) fluency and flexibility, (3) person, (4) press and materials, (5) motivation, (6) autonomy, and (7) brain storming.

Table 5 displays items and their reliability related to these subscales. It reports an acceptable reliability of both item and person. In the present study, the total reliability computed via Cronbach’s alpha was found to be .72.

5. Results

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of EFL teachers’ teaching styles (Expert, Formal authority, Personal model, Facilitator, and Delegator).

As the table demonstrates, among teaching styles, Facilitator ($M = 37.005$, $SD = 9.62$), and Delegator ($M = 35.147$, $SD = 11.83$) have the highest means. The other three have slightly lower means as follows: Model ($M = 33.371$, $SD = 7.45$), Authority ($M = 31.852$, $SD = 9.70$), and Expert ($M = 31.005$, $SD = 11.56$).

To convert the scores to the TSI norms proposed by Grasha, the obtained scores for each teaching style were divided by 8. The results are present in Table 7.

Table 8 displays the descriptive statistics of teacher burnout and teacher creativity.

The descriptive statistics of burnout and creativity are ($M = 61.256$, $SD = 17.51$) and ($M = 207.694$, $SD = 49.85$), respectively. To check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of teaching styles

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Expert | 193 | 10.00 | 54.00 | 31.0383 | 11.56271 |
| Authority | 193 | 15.00 | 55.00 | 31.8525 | 9.70075 |
| Model | 193 | 18.00 | 50.00 | 33.3716 | 7.45342 |
| Facilitator | 193 | 18.00 | 52.00 | 37.0055 | 9.62397 |
| Delegator | 193 | 9.00 | 122.00 | 33.488 | 11.83193 |
| Valid N | 193 | | | | |

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of teaching styles based on Grasha's TSI norms

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean |
|-------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Expert | 193 | 1.25 | 6.75 | 3.879 |
| Authority | 193 | 1.875 | 6.875 | 3.944 |
| Model | 193 | 2.25 | 6.25 | 4.171 |
| Facilitator | 193 | 2.25 | 6.5 | 4.250 |
| Delegator | 193 | 1.025 | 15.25 | 4.186 |
| Valid N | 193 | | | |

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of teacher burnout and creativity

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Burnout | 193 | 29.00 | 99.00 | 61.2568 | 17.51121 |
| Creativity | 193 | 102.00 | 297.00 | 207.6940 | 49.85059 |

Table 9. The results of K-S test

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | |
|------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Statistic | df | Sig. |
| Burnout | .036 | 193 | .200 |
| Creativity | .067 | 193 | .060 |

Table 10. Acceptable criteria for fit indices

| Chi-square χ^2 | Not significant |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Chi-square/df ratio | ≤ 2 or 3 |
| RMSEA | $<.06$ or $.08$ |
| CFI | $\geq .90\%$ or 95% |
| NFI | $\geq .90\%$ or 95% |

was employed. This test is used to check whether the distribution deviates from a comparable normal distribution. If the p -value is non-significant ($p > .05$), we can say that the distribution of a sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution, therefore it is normal. If the p -value is significant ($p < .05$), it implies that the distribution is not normal. Table 9 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. As it can be seen, the obtained sig value for the two variables is higher than .05. Therefore, it can safely be concluded that the data are normally distributed across the two variables.

To examine the structural relations, the proposed model was tested using the LISREL 8.50 statistical package. A number of fit indices were examined to evaluate the model fit: the chi-square magnitude which shouldn't be significant, the normed fit index (NFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI) with the cut value greater than .95, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .07 (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). The acceptable criteria for fit indices are presented in Table 10.

As demonstrated by Figure 2, the chi-square value (25.57) and the chi-square/df ratio (2.5) reached the acceptable fit thresholds. The RMSEA is .131 which is slightly higher the acceptable criterion. The other two fit indices (GFI = .88 and NFI = .80) did not meet the acceptable fit thresholds but are slightly below those thresholds. According to Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006), in causal models such as structural equation modeling (SEM) and path analysis, it is normal for some indices to not conform to the majority trend. Overall, it can be concluded that the proposed model had a moderately good fit with the empirical data.

To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the variables, the *t*-values and standardized estimates were examined. As indicated in Figure 2, two estimates were displayed on the paths. The first one is the standardized coefficient (β) which explains the predictive power of the independent variable and presents an easily grasped picture of effect size. The closer the magnitude to 1.0, the higher the correlation and the greater the predictive power of the variable is. The second measure is the *t*-value (*t*); if $t > 2$ or $t < -2$, we call the result statistically significant.

The results demonstrated that among teaching styles, three styles have negative role in teacher burnout as follow: Model ($\beta = -.22, t = -3.77$), Facilitator ($\beta = -.38, t = -4.72$), and Delegator ($\beta = -.22, t = -3.46$). The other two teaching styles, Expert ($\beta = .0, t = .87$) and Authority ($\beta = .10, t = 1.51$) are positively associated with burnout. Their magnitudes, nevertheless, are not strong enough to reach significant levels and therefore do not warrant any significant relationship. It was also found that creativity is a positive and significant predictor of two teaching styles as follows: Facilitator ($\beta = .45, t = 5.78$) and Delegator ($\beta = .33, t = -4.04$). However, it negatively predicts two other teaching styles: Expert ($\beta = -.45, t = -5.76$) and Authority ($\beta = -.41, t = -5.08$), and has no impact on Model ($\beta = .04, t = .43$).

The correlation coefficients among teaching style, teacher creativity, and teacher burnout are presented in Table 11. As it can be seen, the highest correlation is observed between creativity and burnout ($r = -.723, p < .05$). Among teaching styles, Facilitator has the highest negative correlation with burnout ($r = -.608, p < .05$), Model does not correlate with burnout ($r = -.087, p < .05$), and Authority has the highest positive relationship with burnout ($r = .491, p < .05$). As far as the association between creativity and teaching styles is concerned, the following results were found: the

Figure 2. Schematic representation of relationships among teaching style, teacher creativity, and teacher burnout.

Notes: $\chi^2 = 25.57, df = 10,$
 RMSEA = .131, GFI = .88,
 NFI = .80.

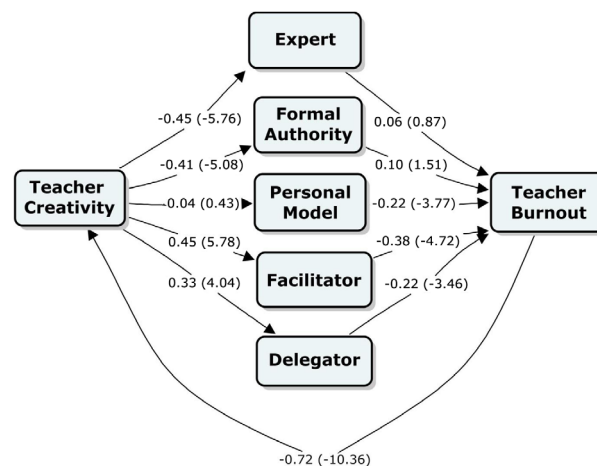


Table 11. The correlation coefficients among teaching style, teacher creativity, and teacher burnout

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------|
| 1. Expert | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| 2. Authority | .861 ^a | 1.00 | | | | | |
| 3. Model | .348 | .473 ^a | 11.00 | | | | |
| 4. Facilitator | -.560 ^a | -.381 ^a | .145 | 1.00 | | | |
| 5. Delegator | -.397 ^a | -.235 ^a | .094 | .634 | 1.00 | | |
| 6. Burnout | .491 ^a | .403 ^a | -.087 | -.608 ^a | -.365 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 7. Creativity | -.544 ^a | -.482 ^a | -.062 | .622 ^a | .394 ^a | -.723 ^a | |

^aCorrelation is significant at the level of .05.

highest positive correlation was observed with facilitator ($r = .622, p < .05$), and the highest negative correlation was obtained with Expert ($r = -.544, p < .05$).

6. Discussion

The present study aimed at delving into Iranian EFL teachers' teaching style. The results demonstrated that on the one hand, Facilitator and Delegator stand out as being the most widely mentioned teaching styles, respectively. On the other hand, Expert and Authority were stated less frequently than the other styles. Juxtaposing the yielded scores for each teaching style with the Grasha's teaching style norms, we can maintain that the teaching styles of the teachers in the present study ranged from low to moderate. The Grash moderate level specified for Expert is 3.3–4.8; teachers in our study scored 3.879. This clearly demonstrates that this teaching style falls within the moderate norm. The obtained score of Authority in the present study is 3.944 which can be categorized as low according to Grasha's norms for Authority (1.0–4.0). The same also goes for Model (4.17) which lies within the limits of low level (1.0–4.3). Facilitator scores 4.250 in this study. The magnitude of this score is moderate according to norms (3.8–5–3). Similarly, Delegator (4.18) can be ranked moderate in this study on the grounds that it is positioned within the norms of 2.4–4.2.

This finding implies teachers of our study tended toward adopting learner-centered approaches of teaching. In other words, it can be contended that in classes conducted by these teachers the personal nature of the student–teacher interaction would be highlighted. In addition, the teachers are liable to guide and direct students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encourage them to develop criteria to make informed choices. Overall, the main concern of these teachers would be developing in students the capacity for independent action, initiative, and responsibility (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015). This finding is not unexpected if the context of the current study is taken into account, i.e. private language institutes. In Iran, language institutes are private non-profitable organizations which present courses aligned with the most recent language learning methods and approaches. The learners took part in classes either of their own decision or that of their parents. A host of inspirations underlie attending language institutes, including, opening up better educational opportunities inside and outside the country, offering the prospect of living abroad, facilitating access to technology-based information resources, comprehending western movies, music, and scientific texts. These institutes are typically conducted based on communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching (TBLT). The principal features of these L2 teaching methods pivot around interaction (whole-class, group, or pair-work), discovery learning, and learners' personal experience, and active engagement. In classes conducted by these teaching methods, teachers and learners work together, and the boundaries between teachers and learners are not as formal and inflexible as classes conducted by traditional-oriented approaches. This in turn entails adopting more learner-centered and humanistic approaches in teaching (Ghanizadeh & Rostami, 2015). So it is not surprising that teachers in the present study were more inclined to act as the facilitator of learning process rather than the sole authority in teacher-fronted classes. As Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2013) contended, Iranian private language institutes aim to fulfill

students' communicative needs and teachers are expected to function as facilitators and participants in learning. Consequently, they require not just a solid base of content area knowledge, but high level of interpersonal competence to encourage and sustain student interactions and rapport (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011).

The first research question posed and studied in the present study concerned the role of teacher creativity in their preferred teaching style. The results demonstrated that teacher creativity predicts Facilitator and Delegator positively; whereas, it predicts Authority and Expert in a negative direction and had no predictive role in Model. In other words, this finding suggests those teachers who enjoy higher levels of creative skills appear to exhibit more learner-centered methods in their classes. Conversely, teachers with lower creativity are inclined toward teacher-centered styles. This finding can be explained in light of key characteristics of learner-centered approaches of teaching. In this paradigm, team projects, small group discussion, interactive tasks, and activities are indispensable undertakings. It is undisputable that devising and handling all these activities are contingent on implementing creative skills on the part of teachers. What's more, in such classes maintaining learners' interest and having them engaged in class activities are of prime importance. This necessitates teachers' creative thinking and skills in addressing a variety of learning styles, thinking up innovative tasks, and developing supplementary materials. In contrast, teachers who impose rigid and less flexible ways of managing students and their concerns, and teachers who stick to the course book and to their pre-determined syllabi and are reluctant to embrace change and variety, might feel less obliged to devise and execute creative and novel tasks and activities.

This finding corroborates research in the domain of education attesting to the nexus between creativity and learner-oriented educational paradigms. For instance, Eason, Giannangelo, and Franceschini (2009) stated that to be creative, teachers have to shift from a traditional subject teacher to a supportive facilitator of learning. Sternberg and O'Hara (2000) posited that teachers can create a creative learning environment in many ways such as: providing a large variety of useful materials and resources, creating a relaxed climate where students can make mistakes instead of just memorizing a mass of information, or giving them time to explore. This should be of particular prominence for L2 teachers and educationalists since as contended by Beghetto and Kaufman (2009), L2 education heavily depends on textbooks and educational materials which might hinder learners to demonstrate their own sense of creativity. So, they proposed supplementing L2 classes with a playful and fiction learning environment, cooperative activities and classroom discussions to warrant creative thinking and skills.

The second research question aimed at examining the impact of each teaching style on teachers' burnout. The results demonstrated the role of three teaching styles (Model, Facilitator, and Delegator) in preventing or reducing burnout. In other words, teachers adopting learner-centered approaches of L2 teaching are less prone to physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. This is in line with theories and models of teacher burnout pointing to the teachers' individual factors as one of the most determining sources of burnout (e.g. Burisch, 2002; Byrne, 1999; Chang, 2009). Farber (1991a, 1991b) contended that teachers' personal factors and styles can be responsible for different responses of individuals to the same stressors while they are in the same work environment, having the same educational and experience backgrounds, with the same supervisor. The teachers' personal qualities encompass a host of variables, including teacher motivation (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007), teacher personality (Mills & Huebner, 1998; Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005), teachers' coping strategies (McElpatrick et al., 2000), teacher self-efficacy (Evers et al., 2002; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010), teacher attribution (Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014; Vanheule & Verhaeghe, 2004), and teachers' emotional regulation (Carson, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005; Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015). The research for this study, nevertheless, did not find any documented study exploring the role of teaching style in EFL teachers' burnout. Hence, no cross-comparison can be made with reference to previous teacher-related research. Building upon the results of the current study, nevertheless, we can conceivably contend that the dynamic and interactive nature of EFL classes in private institutes, rooted in communicative, humanistic, and learner-centered approaches of teaching, entails creating an enjoyable

and mutually satisfying atmosphere. This in turn is expected to diminish emotional exhaustion and burnout level accordingly. Previous empirical research in the domain of EFL teachers also highlighted the overriding influence of teachers' interpersonal relationships as well as their ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures on their achievement in learner-centered educational contexts (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011).

Furthermore, it seems plausible to presume teachers who are more successful at establishing rapport and interpersonal relations (two important features of learner-centered teaching environments) are less susceptible to depersonalization, i.e. personal or dehumanized perception of others. According to burnout theorists, depersonalization occurs when teachers put distance between themselves and their students. It is also characterized by exhibiting cold or distant attitudes and turning out students through psychological withdrawal (Maslach & Jackson, 1986; Schwab, Jackson, & Schuler, 1986). In a closely related vein, Chang (2009) contended that teaching profession can lead to many pleasant emotional experiences such as excitement, passion, joy, hope, and pride if teachers feel closeness in student relationships.

The highest correlation in the present study was observed between teachers' creativity and their burnout level. The results of path analysis also revealed that teacher burnout negatively predicts teacher creativity. This implies teachers who are emotionally and mentally exhausted are less inclined or capable of exerting creative skills and thinking and are more predisposed of following routines. This finding can be explained in light of burnout symptoms and consequences. The overriding influence of burnout includes low job satisfaction resulting in helplessness, boredom, and irritability (Leithwood, Menzies, Jantzi, & Leithwood, 1996). These ramifications in turn have definite bearings on teachers' involvement and motivation, and ultimately on their teaching effectiveness and achievement. Accordingly, teachers low in motivation and reduced accomplishments are not seemingly apt and inspired at thinking out and implementing novel and creative ideas and tasks. Such teachers, on the other hand, might feel more secured at shunning variety and thereby shielding themselves with pre-practiced procedures and activities.

7. Conclusion

Taken together, the results of the present study highlighted the contribution of creativity in the adaptation of learner-oriented teaching styles on one side. On the other side, the impact of these styles in the reduction or prevention of burnout was demonstrated. Finally, the findings substantiated the debilitating role of burnout in teacher creative skills and thinking.

These findings should have important implications for teachers, educational policy makers, and material developers. Teachers are recommended to implement more interactional and learner-oriented methods in their classes. In so doing, they are expected to protect themselves against burnout while exploiting their potentials to manifest creative skills and thinking. Thus, teacher educators should appraise pre-service teachers' creativity level so as to ensure the prerequisite level of creativity for entering into the profession. They are also recommended to equip prospective teachers with skills and abilities required for effective and creative functioning in the classroom. When it comes to burnout, they are also advised to gauge teachers' burnout level regularly and to identify burnout symptoms. This should be followed by training programs familiarizing teachers with the syndrome and helping them prevent or overcome it. Policy-makers and materials developers are recommended to develop programs and materials which are more interactive, exploratory, and diverse.

The present study is nevertheless limited in a number of ways. The first limitation concerns the fact that it was conducted in informal, private educational contexts. Further research should be carried out in public educational contexts which are typically run through more teacher-centered approaches (at least as it is the case in Iran). This would pave the way for the cross-comparison of the results. Another limitation of this study is that the variables under study were measured through quantitative data and via questionnaires. Future research is required to complement the

quantitative data with qualitative-oriented methods such as interview or observation. In this study, the participants' demographic variables such as age, teaching experience, gender, and socio-economic background were not taken into account.

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