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Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Creativity and Their Classroom Management

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Abstract
The present study was an attempt to extend our knowledge on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management. It was also intended to check the significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management. Examining the difference between male and female teachers regarding their creativity and classroom management was the other aim of this study. To achieve such goals, one hundred EFL teachers participated in the study. The sampling method was availability non-probability sampling. Two questionnaires were utilized, namely, Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index developed by Soh (2000) and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) developed by Martin and Sass (2010). By employing Pearson correlation coefficient and independent sample t-test, the findings highlighted that there was a statistically positive significant relationship between teachers' creativity and their classroom management. However, there was not any significant difference between males and females regarding the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management. In addition, the findings revealed that there was not any statistically significant difference between male and female teachers with respect to their creativity and their classroom management.
Keywords: classroom management, teacher creativity, gender

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 1990s, creativity has become a growing area of interest once more within education and wider society (Craft, 1999). In fact, creativity has been getting very popular in education and business life in recent years. It is seen as one of the most needed skills in business life (Friedman, 2005) and as a key feature in creating educational environments that enable creative thinking skills (Loveless, Burton, & Turvey, 2006).

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In fact, if our society legitimately expects school graduates to be not only educated, but also creative, it means that creativity is expected primarily from teachers. Most of teacher creativity is manifested in their creative work with the educational content of individual subjects; it is based on creative application of subject knowledge in instruction and it is characterized by creative didactic practices (Trna, 2012). Through their own creativity, teachers naturally affect creativity development of their students (Al-Suleiman, 2009). Creative education must be understood as an intentional activity, carried out using methods, including setting conditions to make these methods effective. Therefore, teachers themselves should be creative people in order to be able to apply creative science education in the classroom, not only the appropriate science content. As stated by Robinson (2006), teachers should know how to improve creativity in science education, support divergent thinking in students; they should pay attention to students' original, innovative and unusual ideas and encourage them to become creative individuals.

Consequently, due to lack of studies on teachers' creativity in the context of Iran, the present study is going to examine the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management.

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the world of technological and scientific development, creativity is a critical component; human skills and creativity are key resources (Robinson, 2001). Now creativity is as important in education as literacy (Robinson, 2006) and needs to be included in education as a fundamental life skill (Craft, 1999) that will enable future generations to survive and thrive in the 21st century (Parkhurst, 1999).

According to Sternberg (2006), our creativity is largely determined by our will. He defined 12 basic processes that give rise to creativity:

- The ability to define a problem differently
- Analysis of our own ideas
- Presentation of ideas
- Understanding of knowledge in context
- Overcoming barriers
- Acceptance of acceptable risks
- Desire to improve ourselves
- Belief in ourselves
- Toleration of ambiguity
- Search for our own interests
- Finding time to work
- Error tolerance

Moreover, creativity in educational contexts can be seen from two perspectives: the one of the teacher being creative and the one of the students being creative. Indeed, National Advisory on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) made a distinction between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. The latter refers to forms of teaching that are intended to develop students' own creative thinking and behaviors. It involves teachers

in identifying children's creative strengths and fostering their creativity (Cremin, 2009). This is strongly related to the former, as students' creative abilities are most likely to be developed when the teacher's creative abilities are engaged (NACCCE, 1999).

In fact, teaching creatively referred to teachers using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective. Indeed, teachers can be highly creative in developing materials and approaches that foster children's interests. Sale (2005) provided a simple operational definition of creative teaching: Creative teaching occurs when a teacher combines existing knowledge in some novel form to get useful results in terms of facilitating student learning.

Furthermore, Sawyer (2011) provided a list of behaviors in order to give advice for creative teaching, such as trust and safety (i.e. maintaining a psychologically safe classroom environment), problem finding (i.e. encouraging questions and different responses), encouraging surprise, humor, risk taking and allowing mistakes. Cremin (2009) identified a number of features of a creative pedagogical stance, such as adopting a learner-centered ethos, creating space, time and freedom, implementing multimodal teaching approaches, prompting full engagement, ownership and ongoing reflection, modeling risk taking and enabling children to take risks.

With respect to "Classroom Management", researchers generally described it as the full range of teacher efforts to oversee classroom activities, including learning, social interaction, and student behavior (Burden, 2005; Good & Brophy, 2006). Doyle (2006) added that classroom management revolves around teachers' and students' attitudes and actions that influence students' behaviors in the classroom. Brophy (1986) also defined classroom management as a teacher's efforts to establish and maintain the classroom as an effective environment for teaching and learning. Savage and Savage (2009) defined classroom management as two level of management: (a) the prevention of problems, (b) responses when problems do occur. Their focus is on prevention of problems more because of previous research which indicates that one of the key variables in successful classrooms is an emphasis on preventative, rather than reactive, management techniques (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Regardless of differences in the definition, the value of classroom management knowledge for teachers has been consistently supported through research literature (Shinn, Walker, & Stoner, 2002; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993) and classroom management strategies have been referred to as "the most valuable skills set a teacher can have" (Landau, 2001, p.4).

Martin and Sass (2010) defined the term classroom management with two broad dimensions: instructional management, behavior management.

- *Instructional management:* includes aspects of classroom life such as establishing daily procedures, allocating materials, and monitoring students' independent work (Martin & Sass, 2010). Well-planned lessons that provide for a smooth flow of instruction delivered at a sustained pace help to prevent off-task behaviors. The manner in which tasks are managed contributes to the general classroom atmosphere and classroom management style (Burden, 1995; Weinstein & Mignano, 1993).

- *Behavior management:* is any pre-planned intervention aimed at preventing misbehavior. It is a means of preventing misbehavior rather than a reaction to misbehavior. Specifically, this facet includes setting rules, establishing a reward structure, and providing opportunities for student input (Martin & Sass, 2010).

Classroom management is not a gift bestowed upon some teachers and though it is true that some teachers adapt to classroom management techniques easily, classroom management is a skill that can be gained through training and many years of experience in the field (Bosch, 2006). Experienced teachers identify the establishment of classroom management as one of the major goals that needs to be accomplished in the first week of the year. Beginning teachers cite classroom management as one of their most serious challenges. School administrators indicate poor classroom management as a major reason for low evaluations as well as primary reason why teachers are not hired (Savage & Savage, 2009).

Several researchers studied creativity in the classroom. For example, Darnell, Gallagher, Andrews and Amaral (2000) conducted a qualitative investigation of a supportive classroom environment for developing student creativity. Observations and interview data collected focused on assessment, classroom activities, and the teacher's effort in creating this supportive environment. Teacher-student relationships, de-emphasizing standardized assessment, and encouraging multiple perspectives was significant to this creative milieu. The study focused on the teacher's role in creating this creative environment.

Furthermore, Fleith (2000) investigated teachers and students' perceptions about those characteristics which either stimulate or inhibit the development of creativity in the classroom environment. Interviews were conducted with seven Connecticut public school teachers and 31 students (Grades 3 and 4). The findings suggest that both teachers and students believe that a classroom environment which enhances creativity provides students with choices, accepts different ideas, boosts self-confidence, and focuses on students' strengths and interests. On the other hand, in an environment which inhibits creativity, ideas are ignored, teachers are controlling, and excessive structure exists.

Al-Karasneh and Jubran (2013) investigated the leadership practices and creativity traits as perceived by social studies and Islamic education teachers in Jordan. Findings of the study revealed that teachers perceived themselves positively in all dimensions studied. They were also found to be creative, as they perceived themselves to possess all the creativity traits. The study also showed that there was a significant correlation between the results of the ten leadership dimensions together and the eight creativity traits of teachers were positively significant.

Khany and Ghoreyshi (2013) made an attempt to investigate the association between Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management, reflective thinking and transformational leadership style. 247 English Foreign Language teachers took part in the study. The results revealed significant internal correlations among the main as well as the sub-scales of the study. Multiple regression analysis further confirmed the direction of the path model proposed for the study. Generally, it was concluded that reflective thinking and

transformational leadership improve teachers' efficacy of classroom management which, in turn, facilitates teaching processes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management?

RQ2: Do males and females differ significantly with regard to the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management?

RQ3: Is there any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female teachers' with respect to their creativity?

RQ4: Is there any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female with respect to their classroom management?

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The population from which the participants were selected for this study included Iranian EFL teachers who were all native speakers of Persian. To conduct the study, one hundred English foreign language teachers in Fasa, Iran participated in this study. The sample consisted of 50 female and 50 male teachers whose age ranged between 26 to 37 years old.

Instruments

For carrying out the present research and finding the answers to the research questions, two instruments were utilized. To measure the degree of creativity among teachers, Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index developed by Soh (2000) was used. Moreover, Behavior and Instructional Management Scale developed by Martin and Sass (2010) was utilized by the researcher. Each of these instruments is thoroughly explained hereunder.

The first instrument was Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index (CFTBIndex). It was developed by Soh (2000) which was based on the principles of the nine teacher behaviors adopted by Cropley (1997). These nine teacher behaviors included:

- *Independence*: Encouraging students to learn independently;
- *Integration*: Having a co-operative, socially integrative style of teaching;
- *Motivation*: Motivating students to master factual knowledge, so that they have a solid base for divergent thinking;
- *Judgment*: Delaying judging students' ideas until they have been thoroughly worked out and clearly formulated;
- *Flexibility*: Encouraging flexible thinking;
- *Evaluation*: Promoting self-evaluation in students;
- *Question*: Taking students' suggestions and questions seriously;

- *Opportunities*: Offering students opportunities to work with a wide variety of materials and under many different conditions; and
- *Frustration*: Helping students to learn to cope with frustration and failure, so that they have the courage to try the new and unusual.

Moreover, they depicted the various kinds of behaviors teachers need to demonstrate in their daily interaction with the students during lessons. Five items were written for each of the nine principles thus forming nine subscales of the CFT Index. Each item took the form of a six-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to avoid the tendency to endorse the neutral middle-point and to maximize the item variance. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire represented by Soh (2000) was .91 while in this study, it was .83 which indicated a good level of conceptual relatedness among items.

The second instrument of the present study Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) developed by Martin and Sass (2010). It is used to obtain the teachers' attitudes toward what they do in class in order to manage the class. The questionnaire consisted of 24 Likert-scaled items of six categories, rating from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. Furthermore, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale presenting by Martin and Sass (2010) was .87 while in this study, it turned out to be .75 which indicated a good level of conceptual relatedness among items.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to gathering the data, the researcher explained briefly to the teachers the purpose of the study and the survey procedures, and then obtains each individual's consent. They were also told in detail what they are required to do. The researcher also reminded that there were no right or wrong answers on the questionnaire, and that they should answer them honestly and forthrightly. They were also told that the accuracy of the results depends on how honest they can be. Subsequently, the teachers were asked to answer the Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index (CFTB Index) followed by Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS). There was no limitation of time for teachers to respond the questionnaires.

Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data gathered through Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index (CFTB Index) and Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) were analyzed utilizing SPSS (Version 24), primarily for descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum as well as inferential statistics such as correlation coefficient and independent samples t-test.

RESULTS

The First Research Question

In order to answer the first research question regarding the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management, the researcher calculated the Pearson Correlation between teachers' creativity and their classroom management. The results are displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Creativity and Their Classroom Management

		Teachers' Creativity	Classroom Management
Teachers' Creativity	Pearson Correlation	1	.595**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Classroom Management	Pearson Correlation	.595**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

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

According to Table 1, there was a statistically positive significant relationship between teachers' creativity and their classroom management as the correlation coefficient was 0.595 and the ρ-value (0.000) which was less than 0.01. Moreover, the effect size was .35, indicating 35 percent of shared variances between teachers' creativity and their classroom management.

The Second Research Question

The second research question of this study tried to compare the strength of the correlation coefficients for two genders. In fact, it looked at the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management for males and females separately. To do so, first, Pearson Correlation between teachers' creativity and their classroom management for males and females was employed. Then, based on the formula, the correlations for two genders were examined to find if they were significantly different or not. Table 2 represents the results.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Creativity and their Classroom Management for Both Genders

Gender of Teachers			Teachers' Creativity	Classroom Management
Male	Teachers' Creativity	Pearson Correlation	1	.568**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	50	50
	Classroom Management	Pearson Correlation	.568**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	50	50
Female	Teachers' Creativity	Pearson Correlation	1	.616**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	50	50
	Classroom Management	Pearson Correlation	.616**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	50	50

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

Based on the results of Table 2, the correlation coefficients between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management for males was r=.568, while for females it was slightly higher,

r=.616, and the ρ-value for two groups (0.000) was less than 0.01. Following that, in order to test the statistical significance of the difference between these two correlation coefficients, the researcher made use of the following formula proposing by Pallant (2010, p.140).

$$Zobs \frac{z_1 - z_2}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{N_1 - 3} + \frac{1}{N_2 - 3}}}$$

Then, by putting values in the formula, the obtained *Z* value was Zobs = -0.34. As stated by Pallant (2010, p.141), "if the obtained Zobs value is between -1.96 and +1.96, we *cannot* say that there is a statistically significant difference between the two correlation coefficients". Therefore, there was not any significant difference between males and females regarding the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management as the *z* value was between two specified bounds (Zobs = -0.34).

Third Research Question

The third research question was designed to scrutinize if there was any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female teachers regarding their creativity. Table 3 discloses the results of group statistics of male and female teachers with respect to their creativity.

Table3. Group Statistics of Male and Female Teachers regarding their Creativity

	Gender of Teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Teachers' Creativity	Male	50	2.0644	.22788	1.67	2.82
	Female	50	1.9956	.17509	1.62	2.51

The analysis of data revealed that the mean score of male teachers was M=2.06 and the mean scores of female teachers was M=1.99 and the standard deviation of two genders were SD= .22 for male teachers and SD=.17 for female teachers. Furthermore, to assess the significance of the difference between two groups and their creativity, the researcher also employed independent samples *t*-test. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Independent Samples T-Test for Male and Female Teachers regarding their Creativity

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Teachers' Creativity	Equal variances assumed	1.220	.272	1.695	98	.093	.06889
	Equal variances not assumed			1.695	91.904	.093	.06889

Table 5 highlights that there was not any statistically significant difference in mean scores for male teachers and mean scores for female teachers respecting their creativity (t (98) = 1.695, p>0.05). Concerning teachers' classroom management, Table 6 reveals the results of group statistics of male and female teachers and their classroom management.

The Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question aimed at examining whether there was any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female teachers regarding their classroom

management. Table 5 illustrates the results of group statistics of male and female teachers with regard to their classroom management.

Table 5. Group Statistics of Male and Female Teachers regarding their Classroom Management

	Gender of Teachers	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Classroom Management	Male	50	2.4333	.45465	1.67	4.00
	Female	50	2.3275	.36529	1.58	3.17

Based on the Table 5, the mean score of male teachers was M=2.43 and the mean scores of female teachers was M=2.32 while the standard deviation of two genders were SD=.45 for male teachers and SD=.36 for female teachers. Additionally, in order to evaluate the significance of the difference between two groups and their classroom management, the researcher also run independent samples *t*-test. The results are offered in Table 6.

Table 6. Independent Samples T-Test forMale and Female Teachers regarding their Classroom Management

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Classroom Management	Equal variances assumed	2.719	.102	1.283	98	.202	.10583
	Equal variances not assumed			1.283	93.654	.203	.10583

The results of Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of equal variances was assumed since the significance level of Levene's test turned out to be .102 which is larger than the cut-off of .05. Based on the results of Table 6, there was not any statistically significant difference in mean scores for male teachers and mean scores for female teachers respecting their classroom management ($t(98) = 1.283$, $p>0.05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to extend our knowledge on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management. It was also intended to check the significant difference between male and female teachers with regard to the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management. Besides, it was within the scope of this study to see if there was any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female's view towards creativity and classroom management.

To achieve such goals, one hundred English foreign language teachers were considered to participate in this study. The sample consisted of both female and male teachers and the sampling method was availability non-probability sampling or convenient sampling. The teachers aged between 26 to 37 years old. To measure the degree of creativity among teachers, Creativity Fostering Teacher Behavior Index developed by Soh (2000) was used. Moreover, Behavior and Instructional Management Scale (BIMS) developed by

Martin and Sass (2010) was utilized to obtain the teachers' attitudes toward what they do in class in order to manage the class.

Based on the findings of this study, there was a statistically positive significant relationship between teachers' creativity and their classroom management. Therefore, the first research hypothesis denoting that there was not any significant relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management is rejected.

In fact, Iranian EFL teachers' classroom management could be affected by the level or the degree of their creativity. In other words, the more they are creative, the better they can manage their classroom. However, it should be mentioned that there are some limitations imposed on Iranian teachers in the educational context of Iran. In fact, the teacher's own creativity and creative processes are rarely publicly welcomed, supported or even acknowledged by the Ministry of education, and they should observe the rules appointed by this organization.

Moreover, the findings of this study are not in agreement with Khany and Boghayeri (2014) who inspected the extent to which Iranian EFL teachers are creative. They found that teachers' perception did not match the way they performed their activities in the classroom. In fact, the main discrepancies were seen in teachers' Expertise and Management perceptions with their real practice in the classroom.

Consistent with the results of the present study, although there was a relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management respecting teachers' gender, there was not any significant difference between males and females regarding the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management. In other words, the results revealed that gender did not affect the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' creativity and their classroom management. Indeed, it was disclosed that both male and female teachers had almost the same perspectives toward creativity and classroom management. Consequently, the second research hypothesis of the study proposing that there was not any significant difference between males and females with regard to the relationship between Iranian teachers' creativity and their classroom management is retained.

In accordance with the findings of this study, there was not any statistically significant difference in the mean scores for male teachers and mean scores for female teachers respecting their creativity and their classroom management. Indeed, the results showed that both male and female teachers had almost the same perspectives toward creativity and classroom management. In fact, because of the status of the Iranian culture in which men have more freedom and courage in expressing their own personal ideas and from sociological perspectives in which women are regarded as being cowards, conservative who accept society as it is, it was supposed that there was a significant difference between male and female teachers' perspectives with respect to creativity and classroom management; however, the results rejected this notion. Thus, the fourth research hypothesis of the study suggesting that there was not any significant difference between Iranian EFL male and female teachers' perceptions regarding their creativity and their classroom management is retained.

Furthermore, the findings confirm the study conducted by Al-Karasneh and Jubran (2013), who found that there was not any significant difference between teachers' gender and their perspectives toward creativity. In addition, the results are also in line with the study of Gürçay (2015). According to Gürçay (2015), there was not any significant difference between male and female scores on classroom management. Similarly, Kinai (2013) surveyed Kenyan student-teacher counsellors' creativity and its relationship with their gender, age, and teaching experience. Kinai (2013) found that there was not any significant difference between teachers' gender and their perspectives toward creativity.

The findings of the present study are also in accordance with the results of the study conducted by Martin, Yin, and Mayall (2008) who investigated the classroom management training, teaching experience and gender while examining the impact of teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward classroom management style. They found that there is no difference between male and female teachers' scores on the classroom management.

The results of this study may be of benefit to EFL teachers, students and syllabus designers, as well as to teacher trainers. Accordingly, taking creativity traits and classroom management into a proper consideration, teachers will be able to lead and manage their classrooms effectively and successfully. Besides, teachers will be able to lead their respective classrooms in a way that allow them to cope with the daily changes and be ready to face the future. Moreover, Courses on educational leadership in universities, colleges and teachers training institutions should incorporate the skills of classroom management and creativity. This will enable these institutions to produce sound, knowledgeable and skillful teachers and administrators who are able to serve Iranian society. Besides, teachers in educational institutions should practice the right way of classroom leadership and should make a great effort to create a sound and healthy environment for their educational organization.

Such research findings can also help teacher education programs and educators in revising their program or practicum experiences, resulting in enhancing teachers' conceptual understanding of management for successful teaching. Moreover, it would be interesting to generate opportunities for teachers to characterize and reflect on their own approaches to managing the classroom and so encourage them to explore other approaches by which the teacher becomes a leader manager as opposed to a boss manager or by which students can assume responsibility for their own behavior and take a more active role in building a more effective learning atmosphere.

Furthermore, the findings of this study have some pedagogical implications for foreign or second language teaching. Analyzing Iranian EFL teachers' creativity can lead to development a specific profile of the problematic components to help the teachers identify their weaknesses and enhance their creativity. Additionally, the results of this research will be useful to those university instructors who want to help students/researchers to achieve an acceptable level of creativity in their teaching.

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