Teacher Autonomy and Teaching Styles: A Gender-Comparative Study of Iranian EFL Academics

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Abstract

The education norms are influenced by teacher autonomy as well as learner autonomy. In this gender-comparative study, we followed the debate concerning the link between EFL academics autonomy sense and their styles of teaching. The data was gathered through convenience sampling by online distributing two sets of questionnaires namely Pearson and Moomaw's Teacher Autonomy Scale and Grasha's Teaching Style Inventory which was completed by 156 Iranian EFL teachers (both male and female) to respond to the two research questions. Then, SPSS (version 26) was used to analyze the data obtained from our three sample groups: males only, females only, and mixed. The analysis showed the female participants' autonomy sense was significantly lower than the males'. However, females gained stronger correlations between their autonomy and the teaching style sub-constructs. Moreover, the following results could be inferred from our statistical results: a) Males naturally feel more sense of autonomy than females do. b) As teacher autonomy increases, its correlation to different teaching styles becomes weaker. c) As a teacher's sense of autonomy decreases, his/her tendency increases to use the formal authority style which does not need much expertise and qualifications. d) The high tendency to use the facilitator style by our participants in this study can be related to the fact that about 70 % of the participants of each group have got a teaching degree.

Keywords: EFL Academics, Gender, Iranian Teachers, SL Teaching Styles, Teacher Autonomy

1. Introduction

One of the challenges of Iranian EFL teachers in universities, high schools, and even English language institutes is obeying their education system's curriculum and instructions which is mostly in contradiction with teachers' methodologies and styles of teaching, as Esfandyari (2017) also mentioned. Therefore, teachers forfeit their ability to make their educational instructions based on each learner's different psychology. Saha and Dworkin (2009) noted that teachers' practices are the most significant factors in all stages of education. This is occurring despite the fact that there is a substantial body of literature linking teacher autonomy to variables such as empowerment and professionalism, school environment, job satisfaction, motivation and inspiration, and tension and stress.

Transcending the limitations of methodology and not simply being recipients of ideas proposed by others, Kumaravadivelu (2001) stated that language teachers should create their own "context-sensitive pedagogical data" (p. 541) that will shape their everyday teaching a worthwhile activity. Teachers should study, hear and reflect on their everyday instructional experiences and find the positives and shortcomings of the approaches and techniques which are suggested to be used in the

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educational contexts. They should also provide a comprehensive view of what happens in the classroom, be able to measure outcomes, identify challenges, and notice responses and feedbacks which can lead to the development of appropriate techniques that meet the needs of the students in the educational system. Independent teachers are more desired than those who simply follow their employers, colleagues, and guidebook writers' instructions. Being a professional autonomous teacher in the teaching context is underlined by many researchers such as Webb (2002), Castle (2004), Pearson and Moomaw (2006), and Ingersoll (2007). We use the term "being autonomous" to refer to the teachers' independence and control over the decisions they may make to fulfill their responsibilities in the classroom. Webster (2002) defined autonomy as "the quality of being self-governing" (p. 78). Peck and Havighurst's (1960) concept of autonomy, is "ego-directed actions, free of arbitrary outer constraints or unreasonable inner pressures" (p. 17).

There are several other perspectives on teacher autonomy, all of which must be geared toward the growth and success of both teachers and learners. The first concept of teacher autonomy was proposed in the 1990s by Little (1995) as the capacity of teachers to indulge in self-directed instructions. Others, on the other hand, agree that teacher autonomy refers to the right to choose curricular directions without any supervision or interference. For example, Aoki (2002) defined it as teachers' ability and obligation to choose their methods of teaching. Javadi (2014) also called teacher autonomy as an ability in which teachers are free to create their own teaching conditions. The key concern of teaching autonomously and freely is that teachers should be free to make vital decisions in the teaching process to fulfill the interests and needs of students. Singer (2006) also believed that teacher's autonomy is his/her authority over the curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, student discipline, and classroom environment.

Others still considered the capacity of teachers to direct the autonomy of learners. Yan (2010) defined teacher autonomy as the capacity of the teacher to monitor the learner's skills, knowledge, and behavior during the language learning process. With this definition in mind, if teachers behave independently, their learners would act independently and autonomously, too (Esfandyari, 2017). Moomaw (2005) also explained how a teacher could create his/her own curriculum to meet the demands of the classroom. Furthermore, Reinders and Balçkanl (2011) stated that an autonomous instructor is the one who is able to understand students' needs and to guide them toward autonomy. Teacher autonomy as Mollaei and Riasati (2013) stated will then contribute to the creation of a successful atmosphere for learners to learn and develop skills independently.

However, it should be remembered, as suggested by Hanson (1991), that if a teacher requires independency for running his/her curriculum in the classroom, first he/she should have the freedom and right to plan and arrange his/her own teaching instruction, and then he/she should have extensive expertise and skills in that specific domains he/she want to teach. On the other hand, acting autonomously within curriculum obligations and limitations may be a challenge for contemporary teachers; although educational programs define certain instructions for teachers, it poses a range of difficulties in the procedure of language teaching, because it disregards the role of teachers as a mediator. Teachers will be more motivated and consent if they have the requisite autonomy, according to Esfandyari (2017), so they will be able to choose their teaching styles, materials, and assessment techniques. If teachers do not believe in being autonomous, this autonomy is worthless (Nelson & Miron, as cited in Skinner, 2008).

The choice of teaching styles as Krek put it is within teachers' control (cited in Smith, 2005), suggesting that the association between teachers' autonomy and teaching styles aware teachers of positive and negative points about a specific style or method which a particular learner needs in a particular context of education. Adamson and Sert (2012) also stated that if autonomy is achieved successfully, it would be an encompassing philosophy of life that forms personal behavior and personal awareness within the society. Contrary to Lamb and Simpson (2003) describing teacher autonomy as the freedom to "escape from the treadmill" (p. 56) of the conclusive views we have about how matters should be carried out, Arkott (1968) stated that some teachers are unable to act autonomously and dependently. In supporting this statement, Sayles and Strauss (1966), Hughes

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(1975), and Willner (1990) noted that some teachers preferred to pursue advice and guidance of the administrators and the instructors of their workplace.

On the other hand, some researchers have started to participate in gender-oriented discussions and studies. For example, in a single-gendered study, Baradaran (2016) discovered no substantial relationship between the autonomy and teaching styles of female EFL teachers. Other findings, however, confirmed that there is a major association between teacher autonomy and gender. For instance, according to Brew (2002), factors such as gender, learning process, and educational level can influence teaching styles.

Therefore, extending the debate followed by Ololube (2006), Karimvand (2011), Amini, Samani, and Lotfi, (2012) (2012), Usop, Askandar, Langguyuan-Kadtong, and Usop, (2013), Behnam and Bayazidi (2013), and Qashang (2015), among others, we carried out this study to see whether there is a correlation between the autonomy and the teaching styles of EFL male and female teachers as two experimental groups and the sex-mixed group as a control group. To do so, we conducted this comparative research by distributing the two questionnaires among Iranian EFL academics to determine their level of autonomy and teaching style preferences. As a result, we suggested the following research questions, bearing in mind the findings of previous studies:

Research Question One: How does autonomy of an EFL teacher affect his/her sub-constructs of teaching style if one is male or female?

Research Question Two: In case teaching styles are differently affected by teacher autonomy due to gender, what are the possible reasons behind it?

2. Review of the Literature

There are several conflicting claims and studies about autonomy and its influences on education, implying that further studies are required. Yet, it has become obvious by the past studies that each teacher's personality including autonomy can be reflected in the methods, styles, and techniques he/she administers in the classroom for managing the students' learning process. Some of the related researches to the current study are mentioned hereafter.

In a single-gendered study, Baradaran (2016) found no important relationship between teaching styles and autonomy of female EFL teachers. Ololube (2006) and Usop et al. (2013) also reported that gender had no significant role on teacher autonomy. Even, the study of Behnam and Bayazidi (2013) indicated no impact of gender on teaching styles. Furthermore, Qashang (2015) stated that no effect of gender was observed on teacher's autonomy.

Other outcomes, on the other hand, indicated that gender does have some fundamental effect on teacher autonomy. For example, according to Brew (2002), factors such as level of education, gender, and the procedure of learning may influence teaching styles. According to Grasha (2002), teachers' styles vary from one another, almost like the palette of an artist with various colors; however, they can be combined. Investigating which gender has got the superiority, Karimvand (2011) observed that males typically dominate teachers' teaching styles. Amini et al. (2012) also found that female faculty members preferred the delegator and expert styles, and male faculty members preferred the expert style.

However, in this study we hypothesized that males' teaching styles are generally more affected by their autonomy than females as they naturally feel more sense of autonomy than females do. Also, there is a relatively-high positive significant correlation between the teachers' autonomy and some of their sub-constructs of teaching styles. Wentzel declared that higher grades, school adjustment, and more school engagement are associated positively with autonomy-supportive teaching style (cited in Aoki, 2002).

Similarly, Mahmoodi (2017) discovered no significant relationship between teachers' autonomy and their various teaching styles. Baradaran and Hosseinzadeh (2015) also acknowledged a negative correlation between curriculum autonomy and the personal model, expert, and delegator styles. In Paiva and Braga's (2008) study, autonomy is inseparably related to its environment since it

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encompasses the properties and conditions needed for dynamic emergence, in the perspective of complexity. Similarly, Masouleh and Jooneghani asserted that the dynamic structure of autonomy governs the nature of its interactions with the environment in which it is nested cited in Baradaran, 2016). Therefore, the selection of teaching styles by teachers can be both externally and internally motivated due to the fact that autonomy is more or less an innate or instinctive capacity, which all people have regardless of their gender.

Any kind of behavior can be regarded as resting along a continuum ranging from less to more autonomous. A teacher who chooses a teaching style only because he/she feels his/her supervisors or bosses want him/her to do so is externally motivated, so he/she may feel not very autonomous. When one's supervisor is replaced, his/her teaching styles may also change. In addition, choosing between several options to do can be intrinsically motivated, which means they are innately fun or enjoyable. A teacher who, for example, follows a particular teaching style just because he/she feels to be skillful in it or it does not burn him/her out is intrinsically motivated and would feel autonomous in doing it. In this regard, autonomous people are described by Easterbrook as individuals who have a high degree of independence of judgment, self-expression, and self-reliance; they accept responsibility for their actions (cited in Moomaw, 2005, p.101).

However, as Aoki (2002) pointed out, teacher autonomy has two sides: on the one hand, it can contribute to learner autonomy and growth, while on the other hand, it can be against the learner's success and development; this means that if a teacher has a great independence and freedom, he/she may perform his/her ideas and believes in the process of teaching without taking any responsibility for managing the class which would be unethical in any way. Teacher autonomy can also contribute to learner autonomy, but restrictions of education administrators and supervisors may limit their autonomy which resulted in conducting a narrower range of teaching styles. Of course, before this happen for academic English teachers, as Fadaee, Marzban, and Najafi Karimi (2020) put it, "granting autonomy and empowering them is an appropriate starting point, if the authorities of education systems are to take some steps toward building enhanced educational environments".

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

For analyzing the relationship between teachers' autonomy and teaching styles, the two chosen questionnaires were distributed in English language groups through online social networks such as Telegram and WhatsApp, among which 156 Iranian EFL academics (mostly form Mashhad and Tehran), returned their responses to the researcher; therefore, the data was gathered by convenient sampling.

Table 1: Male Participants' Age and Experience

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	63	21.00	55.00	34.2857	8.34233
Experience	63	1.00	25.00	7.4762	6.17189
Valid N (listwise)	63				

These academics participants having got the university degrees from B.A. to Ph.D., were 63 males and 93 females aged between 21 to 55; they all practicing teaching in universities, state and private schools, and English language institutes across Iran, with a wide variety of teaching experience ranging in years from 1 to 25.

Table 2: Female Participants' Age and Experience

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	93	21.00	55.00	34.3333	7.40349

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Experience	93	1.00	25.00	7.2366	6.33383
Valid N ((listwise)	93				

The details of the participant's age and experience were presented in Tables 1 and 2, while the information regarding their fields of study are presented in tables 3 and 4, divided by gender.

Table 3: Male Participants' Fields of Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ling	3	4.8	4.8	4.8
	Teaching	45	71.4	71.4	76.2
	Trans	15	23.8	23.8	100.0
	Total	63	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Female Participants' Fields of Study

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ling	5	5.4	5.4	5.4
	Literature	3	3.2	3.2	8.6
	Teaching	65	69.9	69.9	78.5
	Trans	20	21.5	21.5	100.0
	Total	93	100.0	100.0	

As the figures in Table 1 and 2 indicate, the participants' average years of experience is around 7, and as Table 3 and 4 indicate, almost 70 percent of the 2 groups have got teaching majors.

3.2. Instrumentation: Assessment of Autonomy and Teaching Styles

Two instruments (i.e. questionnaires) were used to explore the relationship between the teachers' autonomy on one hand and their teaching styles on the other:

3.2.1. Teacher Autonomy Scale (TAS)

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) presented an 18-item scale with the following five options: always true for me, often true for me, sometimes true for me, almost never true for me, and never true for me. Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 were recoded so that the high score denoted increased autonomy (e.g., I am free to be creative in my teaching approach), and the remainder would reflect low autonomy (e.g., in my situation I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching).

This questionnaire has been administered in previous studies and is a well-documented one in many studies such as (Fallah & Gholami, 2014; Lepine, 2007; Saljoughi & Nemati, 2015, among others). Moomaw (2005) found that the construct validity was adequate and that the internal consistency was $r = 0.83$. As a result, it has a high level of content validity and reliability. The TAS used in this study has a 0.92 rating of reliability

3.2.2. Teaching Style Survey (TSS)

The Grasha's (2002) scale for teaching styles is presented here which is the foremost documented questionnaire (see for example, Lucas, 2005; Kazemi & Soleimani, 2013; Baradaran, 2016; and Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2016). It consists of 40 questions each of which assesses one of the 5 subcategories of teaching styles as expert (Qs:1-6-11-16-21-26-31-36), formal authority (Qs: 2-7-12-17-22-27-32-37), personal model (Qs: 3-8-13-18-23-28-33-38), facilitator (Qs: 4-9-14-19-24-29-34-39), and delegator (Qs: 5-10-15-20-25-30-35-40). A five-Likert-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree should be chosen to answer each item. The acceptable reliability for this instrument, according to Grasha (1996), is 0.72; so the reliability estimates from 0.78 to 0.91 which was gained for each of the five subscales.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

After distributing the two questionnaires among EFL academics and gathering the necessary data, the participants' autonomy and their teaching style preferences were assessed in 3 different groups by descriptive statistics: Distributing the two questionnaires among EFL academics and gathering the necessary data, descriptive statistics were used to assess their autonomy and teaching style preferences in 3 different groups: Group M which consisted of all the 156 participants as a sex-mixed control group. Group A consisted of 63 males, and group B of 93 females as our two experimental groups. Following that, Intraclass Correlation was administered to explore the possible association between each group's autonomy and their five sub-constructs of teaching styles. SPSS-26 was used for all statistical analyses in this study.

4. Results

The obtained data were categorized to answer the two research questions. Five tables were used to illustrate the findings, which are then accompanied by more detailed explanations. Table 5 presents the autonomy average score of each group of teachers divided by gender. The possible range of scores for the selected test is between 18 and 90.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Autonomy Score Based on Gender

Groups		Number of teachers	The lowest score gained	The highest score gained	Mean of the groups	SD
Autonomy	A (males)	63	33	79	63.44	12.16
	M (mixed)	156	33	79	56.55	13.34
	B(females)	93	33	77	51.88	12.00

Table 5 indicates that the mean score of the mixed group's autonomy is 56.55, lower than that of Group A (63.44) and higher than that of Group B (51.88), measured separately. Table 6 presents descriptive statistics of Group A and Group B's teaching styles.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Teaching Styles Based on Gender

Style sub-construct	Groups	The lowest score gained	The highest score gained	Mean	SD
Delegator	A(male)	17	36	29.22	4.64
	M (mixed)	16	37	25.76	5.89
	B(female)	16	37	23.41	5.49
Model	A(male)	15	37	30.25	6.44
	M (mixed)	13	37	24.97	5.61
	B(female)	13	37	21.38	8.04
Authority	A(male)	15	36	24.59	4.40
	M (mixed)	15	36	24.44	3.69
	B(female)	15	33	24.33	3.14
Expert	A(male)	20	38	30.85	3.92
	M (mixed)	15	38	27.32	5.33
	B(female)	15	37	24.93	4.82
Facilitator	A(male)	21	40	31.79	3.34
	M (mixed)	20	37	28.30	4.90
	B(female)	20	35	25.94	4.36

Obviously, the facilitator sub-construct stands on top in both Groups A and B; the authority and the personal model are also the least used sub-constructs by males and females respectively. To answer

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the first research question, Intraclass correlation was administered to find the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' autonomy and their adopted sub-constructs of teaching styles. Table 7 shows the due results categorized by the participants' gender in three groups: mixed, males only, and females only.

Table 7: Autonomy/Teaching Styles Correlations in 3 Groups of Mixed, Males, & Females

Styles		Delegator	Model	Authority	Expert	Facilitator
Autonomy Groups	A (males)	0.310*	0.099	0.006	0.231*	0.045
	M (mixed)	0.646**	0.543**	-0.090	0.461**	0.541**
	B (females)	0.696**	0.592**	-0.233*	0.340*	0.581**
	A's Significancy	0.013	0.439	0.963	0.046	0.728
	M's Significancy	0.000	0.000	0.264	0.000	0.000
	B's Significancy	0.000	0.000	0.025	0.001	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 7 illustrates that in Group M, there can be observed some significant positive relationships between the participants' autonomy and four of the 5 sub-constructs as follows from the strongest to the least strong: the delegator, facilitator, model, and expert. The formal authority is left behind by a weak non-significant negative correlation with autonomy (-0.09).

In Group A, there can be seen some relatively-weak positive relationships between the participants' autonomy and two of the 5 sub-constructs namely the delegator (r=0.3), and the expert (r=0.2); however, there can be seen a very weak positive relationship between the males' autonomy and their tendencies for the model (r=0.09), and the facilitator (r=0.04) sub-constructs of teaching styles. The formal authority is again put aside by a 0.0 correlation with autonomy.

In Group B, which its data is more similar to that of Group M, there are some significant positive relationships between the participants' autonomy and four of the 5 sub-constructs as follows from the strongest to the least strong: the delegator, model, facilitator, and expert. The formal authority is again separated by a relatively-significant negative correlation with autonomy (r=-0.23). According to this descriptive grading and the figures of Table 6, the ranking of the 5 style sub-constructs based on the average scores gained by the two groups is illustrated in Table 8:

Table 8: The Ranking of Male/Female Tendencies to Utilize the Style Sub-constructs

Groups		A (males)	Tendency to use	B (females)	Tendency to use
Rankings	1st	Facilitator	High	Facilitator	High-Average
	2nd	Expert	Relatively-High	Expert	Average
	3rd	Model	Relatively-High	Authority	Average
	4th	Delegator	Relatively-High	Delegator	Average
	5th	Authority	Average	Model	Low-Average

As illustrated by the above table, male participants have a high tendency to use the facilitator sub-construct which is standing on top; their tendency to use the expert, the model, and the delegator style sub-constructs is also relatively-high, while the formal authority stands on the last rank by an average tendency to use by them. On the other hand, most of the females in Group B, tend to use the facilitator which is standing identically on top. Unlike the males, females do not tend much to use the model style which stands on the last rank in this group.

These facts are reflected in Table 8 which shows the qualitative grading of the participants' tendencies toward utilizing the five different style sub-constructs. However, this diversity of tendency to use different styles of teaching can also be due to the contexts of use, since the data acquired in this analysis was obtained by a number of EFL academics employed in universities, schools, and

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language institutes. Table 9 shows our participant's context of teaching and the percentage they work in each:

Table 9: The Participants' Context of Teaching Divided by Gender

Groups		Formal schools	Lg. institutes	Universities	Other	Sum
	GA (males)	14.3 %	36.5 %	42.9%	6.3%	100%
	GB (females)	28 %	40.8 %	28%	3.2%	100%

By comparing the data recorded in Table 8 and Table 9, a consonance can be observed between the participants' tendency to use these sub-constructs and the percentage they work in different contexts. As Grasha (1996) also suggested it can be concluded that EFL teachers of universities and schools use the delegator style to assign more obligations to the students, and to give more activities and tasks; besides, they consider the expert style to communicate more information, facts, and experience to them, which indicates that these types of teachers are more book-centered and rule-based ones. Table 9 also indicates that nearly more than 1/3rd of the participants in each group work in English language institutes. These teachers, on the other hand, put a stronger focus on the facilitator style, indicating that they are more independent than teachers in universities and schools. Since they are not constrained by class-bound decisions, they conduct a broader range of activities and tasks in the classroom encouraging the learners to participate more in communications and interactions. If teachers act more autonomously by using, for example, the facilitator style in their teaching curriculum, according to Reeve, Jang, Carrell, and Jeon (2004), their students would be more involved in class roles, tasks, and interactions.

The acquired statistics show that although female teachers were 50% more than male teachers in number, their overall autonomy's mean score was remarkably almost 4.5 points lower than that of the mixed group, and the mixed group's autonomy was about 7 points lower than that of the male teachers, meaning that females' autonomy was significantly 11.56 points lower than males':

Group A's TA > Group M's TA > Group B's TA

While, as indicated by Table 7, females, lower than males in the autonomy sense, gained stronger and higher correlations between their autonomy and the teaching style sub-constructs they tend to apply in classrooms. Interestingly, we observed some relatively-weak positive relationships between our male participants' autonomy and only two sub-constructs, the delegator ($r=0.3$), and the expert ($r=0.2$); there were also seen no significant relationship between their autonomy and their tendencies for the model ($r=0.09$), and the facilitator ($r=0.04$), and the formal authority($r=0.00$) style sub-constructs.

5. Discussion

Richards and Rogers (2014) pointed out that nowadays the teachers' commander role is being replaced by the facilitator role. Rather than becoming a knowledgeable or an expert teacher, the emphasis of teaching should be on outgoing collaborative teachers with unique capabilities and autonomy, as Fischer and Fischer (1979), Pearson and Moomaw (2005), and Belcher (2006), expressed.

What is expressed by Richards and Rogers (2014) has obviously come true in the two experimental groups, A and B. As shown by Table 6 above, the participants' tendency to use the facilitator sub-construct stands on top in both groups. The findings gained by Group A are to some extent consistent with Kassaian and Ayatollahi's (2010) results. They acknowledged that in content situations, the expert and formal authority styles were more focused, while in interactional contexts the facilitator and personal model styles were more considered. In addition, Esfandyari (2017) noted that EFL teachers prefer personal model and facilitator styles, contributing to have more autonomous learners, again more in line with the style tendencies of males whose autonomy mean score is 11 units more than that of females in the current study.

Kassaian and Ayatollahi (2010), and Zhang (2007), all avoided using the delegator style, since the learners did not want to act individually or autonomously. In Esfandyari's (2017) study, also EFL

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teachers would not like to administer the delegator style, as the learners do not prefer to learn alone and in isolation, without having a friendly relationship with their teachers. Due to our statistics, however, the delegator style is considerably used by our male and female participants. Nonetheless, the delegator teachers are those that can strengthen independence and autonomy inside the learners. They must, however, ensure that the learners be free of any stress or tension, as they since they may not feel secure or be ready enough to have that much independency or autonomy.

The majority of autonomous teachers do not prefer a common and unique style or method of teaching; according to Thompson (1997), teachers can conform to teaching styles that they prefer more or with which they have more experience and expertise. Wise (1996), and Baker (2001) all agreed on the value of using a variety of approaches, styles, and techniques in the process of teaching. In an English institute, for example, the facilitator style may be administered by the same teacher, but in a school or university, the expert style. Nonetheless, teachers can choose a variety of teaching styles in their educational context, implying that the styles of teaching are context-bound. (McCollin, 2000; Karimi Moonaghi, Dabbaghi, Oskouie, Katri, & Binaghi, 2010; Rahimi & Nabilou, 2011; Wilkesmann & Lauer, 2015).

Nonetheless, McCollin (2000) discovered a substantial association between the teaching style and some predicator variables such as the educational level of the teachers or the kind of course they taught. He also believed that the teacher, the nature of the learner, the context of teaching, and the instructional material all can have effects on the teaching style. However, Liu, Qiao, and Liu, (2006), do not agree with the significant influences of the mentioned factors on the teaching style.

Thus, as the sense of autonomy of teachers decreases, their tendency increases to use the formal authority style and decreases to use the personal model style which the former does not need more expertise and qualifications but the latter does. Now, keeping in mind the above descriptions, it can be concluded that a high-autonomous teacher does not feel like he or she is imposed to follow a particular teaching style, while a low-autonomous teacher may feel he or she is forced to teach in a certain way. That is why as the teacher's autonomy sense decreases, its correlation to different sub-constructs of teaching styles seems to have got stronger; conversely, as the teacher's autonomy sense increases, its correlation to different sub-constructs of teaching styles becomes weaker, and finally fades away.

6. Conclusion

In this research, we followed the debate concerning the relationship between EFL academics' autonomy and their styles of teaching based on their gender. To do so, we conducted this comparative and correlational study by distributing online the two questionnaires among the Iranian academics assessing their autonomy level and teaching style tendencies. The statistical inferential results are as follows:

Our statistics showed that the autonomy mean score of female participants was significantly lower than that of the males. In addition, we observed some relatively-weak positive relationships between our male participants' autonomy and only two sub-constructs, the delegator and the expert; there were also seen no significant relationship between their autonomy and their tendencies for the personal model, the facilitator, and the formal authority styles' sub-constructs. On the other hand, females, lower than males in the autonomy sense, gained stronger correlations between their autonomy and the teaching style's sub-constructs they tend to apply in classrooms. Consequently, the following assumptions can be inferred from the results in tables 5 to 8:

a) Males naturally feel more sense of autonomy than females do. b) As teacher autonomy increases, its correlation to different teaching styles becomes weaker. Teachers with a strong sense of autonomy *feel free* in choosing their teaching styles. c) As a sense of autonomy in teachers decreases, their tendency increases to use the formal authority style and decreases to use the personal model style which the former does not need more expertise and qualifications but the latter does. d) If a teacher is educationally qualified, regardless of how much his or her autonomy level is, he or she will be likely to utilize the facilitator style in different contexts of teaching. The high tendency to use this

style by our participants in this study can be related to the fact that about 70 % of each group's participants have got a *teaching* degree. It was suggested that a high-autonomous teacher *does not feel like he or she is imposed to* follow a particular teaching style, while a low-autonomous teacher *may feel he or she is forced to* teach in a certain way. That is why as the teacher autonomy sense decreases, its correlation to different sub-constructs of teaching styles seems to have got stronger; conversely, as the teacher autonomy sense increases, its correlation to different sub-constructs of teaching styles becomes weaker, and finally fades away.

This survey can facilitate EFL teachers to become acquainted with more autonomous teaching styles; also, learners' learning styles being in line with teachers' autonomy and teaching styles build a meeting between learning and teaching styles or learners' and teachers' autonomy. On the other hand, curriculum planners will use empirical information of teaching styles bestowed here to facilitate curricular policies and programs, the ones which do not put constraints on teachers' autonomy; educators will adapt the results of this analysis to use in their educational courses, educational curriculum, and course examinations, and to also reinforce autonomy in their trainees; and test developers become more convenient in choosing the test sorts and assessment sorts in accordance with teaching styles and can cooperate with teachers to prepare their own questions.

Applying such frameworks in teacher education system helps them to teach with more awareness and they may engage in autonomous practices and pedagogical strategies which are in harmony with the needs of their students and help their students to understand content knowledge appropriately, because each classroom and each teaching strategies have their own strengths. By investigating the relationship between teaching style, personality traits and their relations with autonomy, teachers can see the effectiveness of their teaching from the perspective of their students, what has been ignored by other researchers.

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Appendix A: Teacher Autonomy Survey

Teacher Autonomy survey by Pearson and Moomaw's (2005). This part includes 18 statements and 5 alternatives:

1=Always true for me / 2=Often true for me / 3=Sometimes true for me / 4=Almost never true for me / 5=Never true for me

Questions	Response
I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.	
The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.	
Standards of behavior in my classroom are set primarily by myself.	
My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.	
In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.	
I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.	
The scheduling of use of time in my classroom is under my control.	
My teaching focuses on those goals and objectives I select myself.	
I seldom use alternative procedures in my teaching.	
I follow my own guidelines on instruction.	
I have only limited latitude in how major problems are resolved.	

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What I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself.
I have little control over how classroom space is Used.
The materials I use in my class are chosen for the most part by myself.
The evaluation and assessment activities are selected by others.
I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.
I have little say over the scheduling of use of time in my classroom.
The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.

Appendix B: Teaching Styles Survey

The following is a Grasha-Riechmann (1996) teaching style survey. Respond to questions below by using the following rating scale:

1 = strongly disagree | 2 = moderately disagree 3 = undecided |4 = moderately agree | 5 = strongly agree

Questions	Response
Facts, concepts, and principles are the most important things that students should acquire.	
I set high standards for students in this class.	
What I say and do models appropriate ways for students to think about issues in the content.	
My teaching goals and methods address a variety of student learning styles.	
Students typically work on course projects alone with little supervision from me.	
Sharing my knowledge and expertise with students is very important to me.	
I give students negative feedback when their performance is unsatisfactory.	
Activities in this class encourage students to develop their own ideas about content issues.	
I spend time consulting with students on how to improve their work on individual and/or group projects.	
Activities in this class encourage students to develop their own ideas about content issues.	
What I have to say about a topic is important for students to acquire a broader perspective on the issues in that area.	
Students would describe my standards and expectations as somewhat strict and rigid.	
I typically show students how and what to do in order to master course content.	
Small group discussions are employed to help students develop their ability to think critically.	
Students design one of more self-directed learning experiences.	
I want students to leave this course well prepared for further work in this area.	
It is my responsibility to define what students must learn and how they should learn it.	
Examples from my personal experiences often are used to illustate points about the material.	
I guide students' work on course projects by asking questions, exploring options, and suggesting alternative ways to do things.	
Developing the ability of students to think and work independently is an important goal.	
Lecturing is a significant part of how I teach each of the class sessions.	
I provide very clear guidelines for how I want tasks completed in this course.	
I often show students how they can use various principles and concepts.	
Course activities encourage students to take initiative and responsibility for their learning.	
Students take responsibility for teaching part of the class sessions.	
My expertise is typically used to resolve disagreements about content issues.	
This course has very specific goals and objectives that I want to accomplish.	
Students receive frequent verbal and/or written comments on their performance.	
I solicit student advice about how and what to teach in this course.	
Students set their own pace for completing independent and/or group projects.	
Students might describe me as a "storehouse of knowledge" who dispenses the fact, principles, and concepts they need.	
My expectations for what I want students to do in this class are clearly defined in the syllabus.	
Eventually, many students begin to think like me about course content.	
Students can make choices among activities in order to complete course requirements.	

My approach to teaching is similar to a manager of a work group who delegates tasks and responsibilities to subordinates.
There is more material in this course than I have time available to cover it.
My standards and expectations help students develop the discipline the need to learn.
Students might describe me as a "coach" who works closely with someone to correct problems in how they think and behave.
I give students a lot of personal support and encouragement to do well in this course.
I assume the role of a resource person who is available to students whenever they need help.